

## CHAPTER 2: HOMELESS IN CORK

*"We are Cork's forgotten people"*

### Introduction

Apart from legal definitions of homelessness, a broad general definition is often taken to include people who are either literally "roofless" or who are forced to live in insecure, overcrowded, dangerous, illegal or very temporary accommodation (e.g. bed and breakfast hotels, women's' refuges, hostels, friends/relatives floors, squats, and women forced through lack of alternatives to remain in abusive situations). Homelessness in Ireland has increased significantly in recent years. This has been due to a number of economic and social factors, including the decline of availability in rented accommodation, lack of affordable accommodation for those on low incomes, rising unemployment, and the growth in single households.

In 1987 the Irish government of the day decided to stop building public housing, precipitating the crisis that we have today. Although the policy lasted only until 1992, the number of house currently being built remains a fraction of what is required. It is estimated that there are approximately 28,000 households on the waiting lists of local authorities countrywide. This number, also does not take into considerations those who have "fallen-off" the list because they have given up waiting and those who don't bother to place themselves on the list. Although a recent phenomenon to Ireland, it is not unique in European terms that the majority of these households are lone parents. The merge local authority housing stock that exists continues to cater mostly for the standard nuclear families. Most single people have to either rely on the privately rented sector or live rough.

In Cork, a massive jump has been reported in the number of people seeking emergency accommodation in the city and housing shelter agencies are unable to cope with the demand for emergency shelter. Both secondary data sources and information collected from this survey estimate that up to 100 people a night is turned away from the existing shelters. Increasingly this group is reflective of a younger age profile, 21 to 35, reflecting a new generation of homeless people. There is a Cork Corporation reported waiting list housing of over 1,300 families, yet last years 150 completed new houses has only been increased to 200 for this year.

Homelessness is about social exclusion which itself can be defined as the inability of society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what is expected from that society. It is about the tendency to push vulnerable and difficult individuals into the least popular places, furthest away from its common aspirations. This manifests itself in marginalising some people to the extent that they feel excluded from the mainstream, as though they do not belong. Such marginalised groups of people, who cannot participate in the usual activities of the society they live in, often react in two ways. They either isolate or exclude themselves from the mainstream; or they group with others in a similar position to form subgroups, where they do not feel excluded; some do both.

Cork is no exception and although this was an exploratory study, it is felt that there is a homeless population culture in the area, with the homeless feeling more included amongst themselves (people on the street or in shelters) than with the mainstream. At the same time there is an element of rejection of both themselves and their environment, resulting in a dichotomous set of love:hate emotions that perpetuate their already fragile socio-psychological make-up. Essentially this means that reintegration transition back into mainstream society cannot simply be solved through the provision of formal housing, but must be accompanied by a lengthy program aimed at dealing with their physical, emotional and psychological state.

Thus for this process of exclusion to be reversed, a process of inclusion needs to be set in place. Social inclusion is not complete once a person has been moved into his or her own accommodation. Indeed, if the homeless are to recover from homelessness, they often have to go through a second form of social exclusion, by excluding themselves from the homeless community, but without necessarily feeling included into mainstream society.

### **The Logistics**

The research was undertaken during November and December 2001 and was conducted amongst a group of 13 homeless people in Cork. A predetermined open-ended questionnaire was applied, which due to the fact that similar studies were being conducted in five other cities across Europe, was severely limited in its ability to probe numerous issues that emerged during the different sessions. Of the 13 respondents, six lived in shelters, four slept rough (on the streets), two squatted in tenements and one was temporarily housed with family.

With the exception of the sole respondent who was staying with his family, all the other interviews were conducted at the respondent's "place of residence". This meant that external interference, such as street noises; poor weather and unwelcome intrusions by non-participants curtailed any rapport that may have been created between the interviewer and respondent. In many instances this meant that some of the latter questions in the interview schedule were improperly answered, and although attempts were made to rotate the order of questions, this was not always possible. Finally, the study is not gender representative, in that only two women were interviewed. Finding women living rough proved extremely difficult and because these interviews could only be conducted during the evening, it also proved awkward approaching women in the dark and asking for their time. This is an unavoidable implication of this type of research. A total of ten of the interviews were scribed and three were taped.

### **Profile of Respondents**

Listed below is a brief profile of all the respondents. Although some of the homeless are a transient group, the overwhelming majority are spatially stable; hence all the names of the respondents have been altered.

1. **Martin** – 22-year-old adolescent, from Dublin – been in Cork since April 2001 - no home for 2 years - drifts around with mates and lives "wherever". Interview conducted in at 21:45 – 23:00, in a pub opposite the railroad station Cork.

2. **Kieran** – 50 something, disadvantaged by dependence on substance abuse, homeless for “about 8 years”, hangs out Station-Tivoli area.
3. **Niel** – 25 years old, unemployed and sees limited prospects for himself, lives with lover and others in a squat just past the cathedral – north side.
4. **Con** – ex military who was decommissioned due health problems. Can’t find a place in life and is currently staying with family, but never for more than a few weeks with any one in particular.
5. **John** – 37, been living at a refuge in Cork since the beginning of October. Is currently “between jobs” and hopes to soon establish him here. Originally from **Neal????**
6. **Thomas** – 34 walked the streets for 27 weeks before his brother “took him in” to cook for his elderly mother. He was previously employed with Cork Corporation for 14 years and spent all his pension money in a fortnight. He is illiterate.
7. **Alan** – 27 an (ex-) drug addict and dealer who since first starting with substance abuse at the age of 14 (following the death of his mother) has spent over eight years in prison – Mount Joy.
8. **Neville** – 40 homeless since leaving his family 3.5 years ago, spent most of his time in shelters. Has lived abroad in the UK and USA for many, where his family still resides.
9. **Helen** – 42 a chronic depressant who is now living with Neville and has not seen her family in over five years.
10. **Morris** – 51 recently returned from the UK after the death of his wife and were completely unable to re-integrate into Cork society, which he had left about 20 years previously. His only daughter and family also moved to Cork, so he feels that he must stay here rather than return to the UK.
11. **Clark** – 34 an ex-builder who has been an alcoholic since his early teens got forcibly removed from his lover’s house a few months ago, and are drifting around whilst hoping to sue her for slander.
12. **Jean** – 52 got dislocated from her family and wen to live with her lover in Greece 23 years ago and recently after suffering much physical and mental abuse returned back to Cork. Her family here will have nothing to do with her. She is an alcoholic and lives in a shelter. (She started in the focus group but dropped out during the early stages)
13. **Nick** – 45 has recently moved to Cork (three weeks prior to the interview), after having met one of the above that is now in the shelter and “helps” nick out

occasionally. But he was soon to depart for Dublin, for there were more opportunities for a better life there.

### **The results**

In order to facilitate an easier synthesising process for the project co-ordinators, the remainder of this document follows the interview schedule layout. Each question is followed by a short commentary that has been provided by the researchers and then by a series of bulleted comments in *Italics* as collected during the administration of the interviews. Where particular comments have sometimes been similar, this is noted at each relevant point. Given that the study is not reliant on statistics, respondent has given no regard to sequencing responses, but rather the quotes grouped according to themes. Nevertheless, some of the yes/no responses have been grouped in tabular format to allow the co-ordinators the opportunity to glean trends.

### **Discrimination Plotting**

1	<b>In your daily life, do you feel discriminated?</b>	Yes <b>13</b>	No	<i>Don't Know</i>	<i>Total Responses</i> <b>13</b>
	<b>If yes, why do you feel you are discriminated against?</b> <i>Detail principal factors for discrimination</i>				

Overwhelmingly respondents felt that they had been and continued to be discriminated against because of their status at being homeless. Many referred to the stigma attached at not having an address, which they placed at the core of many of their problems. All but two of the respondents were single but most previously lived within familial environs and have adapted their situation to being single. Resentment of society is often intermingled with bitterness displayed towards their own families, whom they feel have rejected them. There was little difference in their definition of discrimination, regardless whether the respondent resided on the streets or in an institution.

- *Discrimination happens every day when you are homeless, for the moment you open your eyes you know that you are different and people treat you differently and they make you know it. You try and avoid it and try and ignore it, but it is impossible.*
- *I don't have a job and because of that I can't get a bank account and don't have any debit cards and also because I am mostly without money, people can't get anything from me. I am of no use to them so people tend to ignore me or actively attempt to limit what I can do. When I go into places where people know who I am, I often get funny looks, as if to say, "it's him again". I sometimes go to Western Road (main road out of Cork leading west) to where I collect monies, and you can see the looks of people when they look down at me sitting on the pavement. If only they knew how numb your arse gets. The old ladies are the best because they help you out most, small amounts, but it's something. However, they also give you those pitiful looks, I don't like that, I don't want anybody to pity me. I prefer those others who look away; they won't look at me in the eyes. Sometimes, they make as if they have something*

else to do or look elsewhere. They are sad people as well because they can't confront reality.

- *I have not been able to fit into society with other people because of the drink and because of this people treat me differently. Even when there are times when I am sober and have tried working, people do not want to have anything to do with me because it is too much of a bother. When I was growing up it was different, for although men drank, they were still important members of society. My dad liked to drink and his street did not shun him. Also, because I don't have an address I can't get anything sent to me and I can't join the library.*
- *I am discriminated against because I never got a proper education and because of that I can't get a proper job and all the things that come with being successful. If one can't create a successful life one is left on the outside and society does not want to have you around. My partner is successful, she finished school and has a job, and you can see that when we are together that people treat her with respect and give me none at all. I used to work, but got laid off and it is not easy getting a new job. Many foreigners (awkward moment as he realises I am a foreigner) come to Ireland and it is good for all of us, but it cuts down on opportunities. I would like to study further and think I should do computers. Everything today is about computers.*
- *Discrimination is a funny thing; it sometimes comes from your family and sometimes from strangers, yet sometimes understanding can come from either. I feel that when people hear that I was in the army they start to stereotype me and then when they hear that I was discharged due to ill health, then they automatically think that I can't do anything. As such they cry away as they are worried that I might be asking for things. I never have asked and will never ask anybody for anything that is not mine. Having said that, I believe that I have paid taxes for a long time and therefore I have some dues coming to me.*
- *I used to have a job and a family, but then things went wrong (describes in detail the break-up of his family) and one thing led to the other and now I am without either and also unemployed. Since all these happenings my life has been turned upside down and I find that people generally treat me as being different. I understand why friends and family might shun me (reference to his ex-wife) but don't understand why ex-work colleagues and other people I used to know, as well as strangers avoid me. I am still the same person even though I have nowhere to live and no family to go to. Since being here (the refuge) I have met some good people, some like me, but some that are stuck into this way of life and even if they want to break out, they cannot. I will not stay here forever and will in fact leave for Belfast (has family in Ulster) where there is a potential for work.*
- *I am treated like dirt after I was retrenched from my job and spent all my monies. I soon had nothing left and my family got tired of supporting me so I lived on the streets for 27 weeks over winter last year. I slept rough because I had no money in my pocket. I also lost all my identification papers and my license and ended up on*

*the side of the road. I tried to get into a shelter but could not. I got so depressed that I tried to commit suicide and climbed to the top of the Opera House (a tall building in Cork) but could not jump. Then, I finally got up the courage and jumped into the River Lee (runs through the centre of Cork City), but some people jumped in after me and pulled me out. I was then taken to a Christian shelter and they clothed and fed me, but eventually I left and went to Limerick because it is easier to be looked after there. But the Guards there were worrying me and in the end they arrested me for jaywalking and suggested that I go for a good swim. They were hinting that I should go and commit suicide again, as it would rid them of their problems. I returned to Cork and went to Cork Simon (Cork's largest shelter) and they got me in during the last week of March, but because I was so used to walking I could not sleep and had swollen feet so I went to Mercy hospital where they treated me sort-of and then threw me out because I was sleeping on the hospital benches. Throughout this time some people gave me food, but mostly I ate throw outs. I had no heat and slept in boxes and churches.*

- *Because I stay in a home for the destitute I get classified as being different. It's a web and as it grows your chances of success get more and more limited and impossible for you to get ahead. I am also used to making my point and this people on the outside don't like. They are followers and if somebody does not follow, they don't want you as part of the system.*
- *Quite simply, I cannot get or qualify for a home because I have no family. I have tried and applied all over the place, but have now for almost 3 years been living in Cork Simon. At this stage in life I do not think I have another chance to make anything of it.*
- *There is a stigma if you are unemployed and homeless. You cannot get a credit, without credit you cannot get a house and without a house you cannot get an account. Basically you cannot get anything. It is impossible to even rent a video, for these days you need an account. Basically you can't get anything without an address. All the time and everywhere: in the pubs, on the streets, in the shops, wherever you look. There are no specific places.*
- *Slander is at the root cause of all problems. One day you are having a normal life and the next somebody slanders you and the bottom falls out. The guards and the solicitors have advised me to leave town if I don't want to be slandered, but I am from Cork, why should I leave. I want to stay here; this is my home, even though I do not have a home. Yes, when people need to access basic resources like electricity and fuel, they can't get them if they don't have an address and this can't benefit from such basic rights. No place specific, as already mentioned, it is never outright but hidden but always there.*
- *If you are Irish and you live abroad and then you have you have to come back and you have no money and you have nor record than you have no chance of creating a life. All these people left Ireland, but if they try and return they will fiend a place that*

does not want them. My family did want me and after all these years I had no more friends and the authorities thought I was a problem and should return back to where I came from. That is to go back abroad where I was living in Corfu (Greece) where I was abused every day for almost 24 years.

- *I left my family six months ago and then tried to apply for a house and was told that there are no single units. All these years I was a family unit and now that I am no longer with my family I am a single unit. Because of this I had to sleep the streets after friends got tired of having stay over. Once on the streets your job goes soon after that and then all your spending go and there is nothing left. Then you are stuck on the streets. I came to Cork a few weeks ago, but here it is worse than Dublin. In Dublin there are shelters and the people will give you food and few pennies. Here the people are tight and will not give anything. I shall return next weekend.*

2	<b>By what individuals or groups do you feel particularly discriminated against? Could you explain with examples please?</b>
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All the respondents articulate their own experience of alienation and exclusion from their families and society, and although some dismiss it as an attitudinal problem, others are more specific putting it down to society's ignorance, fear and resentment at their existence.

- *Everybody, but especially those with power and money. My family also discriminates me against. I think they were glad that I left, although my mom worries about me. I am a disappointment to them. People in shops discriminate against me. Young people at the tills discriminate against me, these are people younger than I am and they look at me, as I shouldn't exist. There is little compassion. The people at Welfare are sometimes confused, but generally helpful. I once needed treatment for my tooth (in Dublin) and at the hospital they made it difficult for me. I left after the first time, but had to go back because it was painful. They just ignore me, they avoid me, and they wish I were not there. I don't exist for many people.*
- *Everybody shuns me, especially those who know me and those who don't know me. Not being able to have a home makes you look like scum and that's how people see me. I am scum without a home. Because I don't have a home I don't have an iron and I cannot wash so I look untidy, even if I am clean. But I can't clean my face early in the morning without a bathroom, so without a house you are dirty, and people don't like the dirty ones. I am a dirty one. Individuals and groups are all the same, they don't care who you are, if you drink a little, they keep away from you. In pubs and dinners people don't talk to me because they think I will want to them to get me a drink. I'm not a bum and sometimes I just want to talk. Also, if you meet ladies, you can't ask them home because you don't have one. So I don't have ladies anymore.*
- *My wife's family is the worse, and they say that charity starts at home. There is no charity here, and if your own kin can't look after you or even have a kind word for you, then who would. In fact strangers are generally OK and they sometimes help or*

*give you time to do your own thing. The worse people are the banks, as they always intimidate you, as do doctors at the hospital, but at least they help you. The teachers at my children's school are a little odd to me, but that's because they don't know me. Not real discrimination, but the welfare officer I used to see started taking sides with my ex-wife, (we agreed that this was specific to his separation and not necessarily discrimination, but he insisted that I note this down as discrimination against men).*

- *People who are closest to you or people, who might have to relate to you in any way, like a landlord or an employer or a welfare officer. I find the way that they treat me as very off-hand, as if I have nothing to offer to anybody except to be a bother. This discrimination is not up-front, nobody says anything to you at all, and it's just a thing that you feel and you know it's there. It was not there before – it's attitude and nothing else. If you show that you can do something alone, then they treat you like a schoolboy whom did well at something. In the beginning it bothered me, now I ignore it, but it's there the whole time.*
- *On the side of the road, people spat at me and kicked out at me. I spoilt their day when I spoke to them. I got no sympathy and nobody tried to help me by advising me what to do. It was only after 6 months that I found out about Cork Simon. Shops especially, I don't go to restaurants or hotels.*
- *People are simply ignorant, fearful and resentful and treat you like you are way below them. The guards are the worst, for they harass you all the time, as do doormen at clubs. People are preoccupied with themselves and their own circle of people around them and you don't exist. The main reason for being harassed is that I have a crew cut and maybe some of the guards know that I have been to prison. But if you think this harassment is bad, you should try the prison – Mount Joy, where they would not let you go to the toilet if you wanted to and you were locked up 23 hours a day.*
- *I walk into public places and get told that I am not welcome at all, for only those that they know are allowed to be served. There is a law in Ireland and it says "regulars only" and if you are not a regular you will not be served and if you cannot be served you can never become a regular. The Pubs, hotels and restaurants work like that. Libraries are bad and won't let me take books out and so I can't read anymore. The hospitals and welfare are no problem, as long as I don't mind waiting and I don't mind waiting.*
- *I got a job as a park attendant through a scheme by FAS (government training and employment agency), but then they found out that I was living in a shelter and soon the conditions for me to work were unbelievable and difficult so eventually I had to leave. The system works as such that if they don't like the look of you have no right to entry. I go to the pub when there is money from odd jobs, and there I have no problems at all. It's at the shops where people who know me that they wish I were not around. I don't steal from shops at all. They are all the same, one look at me and they think I am going to cause trouble. They stop me near the door and ask me what*

*I want and then get in my way so I leave. I don't want trouble, anyway, most times I like to look and it's warm. It's the young ones, they don't understand.*

- *Attitudes are the biggest discriminator. It is the way people look and behave towards you. You can change many things but you can't change attitude for it's always been like that. In the shops near the homeless shelter they know that I live there and they treat me like shit. I have to walk to other side of town to go to shops, for they do not know who I am. There is no love lost between shopkeepers and the homeless; they are the worst people around. But this also applies to others, for once they find out who you are, they try their best to destroy you.*
- *People never you a chance. When you go out, you just never get the opportunity to get in anywhere. What is the use of going out if you can't get in? Also, it is those with money who discriminate the most, together with publicans. If you are from the wrong side of town you have no chance and if you come from a shelter, you have even less chance.*
- *It is you family and the medical system that discriminates against you. My sisters and brother gave up on me long ago and after I returned wanted to punish me for what I had done and did not provide a home for me, even if it was only for a short while. The hospitals would not treat my broken foot properly and told me to go back to Greece and get the doctors there to fix it. Eventually they gave me treatment, but the pills do nothing for me.*
- *Basically, I don't know where I can get help. I am not in my own parish and even there they treat me odd like, for I am no longer with my family. When you get here you are from the outside; it is like being in a different world altogether. You would think that Ireland was one country! Banks are also odd for I still have a few bob and go and get it, but otherwise people don't really know who I am until they get to know me, and most times I don't like them and don't let them get to know me.*

5	<b>Are there other people generally in society suffering from discrimination?</b>	Yes 12	No	Don't Know 1	Total Responses 13
	<b>If yes, who are they?</b>				

Travellers and homeless (like themselves) emerged as the dominant group that the respondents felt bore the brunt of society's discriminatory stance. The unemployed and poor, as well as men recently separated from the families were other categories of people that were mentioned.

- *The downtrodden, the Travellers, the poor and those who are on the outside. People don't want anything to do with them. Travellers just have their own ways (and although he disagrees with these ways) and people wont accept them. There is no tolerance.*

- *Those who don't have a fixed address, they can't visit you, so unless you chase them, they won't look for you. Because they are different and they challenge society to accept them and society does not like that. In the army we all had a number, it's the same on the outside, except the number is on small cards.*
- *People like me who can't get a mortgage are discriminated against. I can't even cash a cheque in the bank without people looking at me odd like. I go just before they close the bank, that way I don't feel bad about being chased out. Because it has always been like that. Men get the raw end of the deal when it comes to separation. It comes from the past when men hit women and acted differently from today. I mean if you smack your little ones, the welfare authorities are onto you, imagine if you hit your wife!*
- *Travellers and the physically handicapped are definitely discriminated against. Also some foreigners, but they cause their own problems because they don't understand our system and try to take from it all the time. The travellers too, they are loud in bars and hotels and make the rest of us feel annoyed. Also they drink a lot and get into fights with people. Mostly with themselves though.*
- *Travellers, because they are not alike and won't do what society tells them to do. They don't care about County Hall, they are free and because of that they are discriminated against. People always think the worst of them.*
- *Blacks and foreigners have it worst of all, for if they are on the streets it's like double discrimination. In London everybody on the streets is of different colours and it makes no difference to who you are, in Cork it is different. Imagine if you saw a homeless Black of a Romanian wino – they would kill him.*
- *People on the dole and those not working. Winos are also discriminated against are drug addicts. The worst though are ex-criminals, for you never pay your debts to society. But here we have to blame the system for being at fault for it is not open to opportunities and giving people a chance.*
- *The poor and the unemployed have it worst of all for the cake is far too small to share with everybody.*
- *People who are victims of alcohol, the disabled and the mentally ill. Also there are a lot of people who are depressed and they end up on the streets. Society does not look after the depressed and then when they are on the street society turns their back on them. Also being on the streets makes you depressed.*
- *It's the people who stand up for their rights that are discriminated against and they could be just about anybody and nobody in particular. Also those with mental problems get discriminated against. As well as people without families, even if they homes.*

- *Irish people who come from abroad are discriminated against for the society here only wants to see those Irish people that were successful and does not want its failures to return to Ireland.*
- *Yes, there are – men who get divorced or separated are not given equal chances by the law. It is always the women who get the children and the houses. Men are treated second hand in such cases (reference made to a Scandinavian country where he thought that the law was gender indiscriminate). People say that women are discriminated against and this is true, but nobody mentions men at all.*
- *Divorced men or those separated from their families are always discriminated against for they did not keep their vows and do not have happy families. It is difficult for single men that have been married to get ahead in Ireland, because people want to see happily married men regardless whether they are happy not.*

6	<b>Besides your personal case, what are the main causes for discrimination in society?</b>
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This question was not always properly understood, not because of the way it is composed or asked, but because of its sequencing, as respondents, immediately reverted back to their own personal positions and it was difficult to wean them back to the issue on hand. Subsequently the response range across a variety of different topics that do not say much. If there was a common theme to emerge it was that they as a marginalised group are not understood, implying that if they were, then although their problems might not disappear, at least they would have been understood. There is a cry for a forum where the homeless, and not their proxies, can put forward their case. This emerges throughout this text and from the focus group on the homeless.

- *Everywhere, especially in public places when people have to confront you and must interact with you, they just avoid you. Sometimes, it is worse than being told that they will not speak to you.*
- *Blindness to people. After prompting – admitted that the physically different and ethnic minorities are discriminated as well, but that the latter groups were actually better off than he was.*
- *People not caring or being understanding to those who don't do as they do. Also, those with habits and who are not physically and mentally 'correct'.*
- *Unequal chances that people get. Sometimes the school system is bad, family life can be bad and the children don't study and then when you get out, there are no chances. It comes down to the schools, they need to understand that not all children can come to school and be ready to learn and be taught. Sometimes there are problems. Also, not everyone is smart and can do well at school.*
- *Society not liking people with the wrong numbers.*

- *The law and society are far apart. The justice system has not kept with the times and belongs to a different era that does not reflect the changes that have taken place. Ireland needs to take a look at its (gender) laws. That's where the problems lie, and because of that they spread. If I had better access to my children, then I would have a better chance of getting a house.*
- *Just simply being different means that society will have a problem and will discriminate against them.*
- *There are people with their own space and their own chair and these people do not want to share what they have with those who have nothing.*
- *It is the fear of being swamped that causes discrimination in society there seems to be an inability by those in per and those with possessions to either use that power to help or share these possessions.*
- *Discrimination is all about mind over matter and happens in many guises all the time. It is difficult to pin down to just one thing. Apartheid was discrimination, but apartheid happens everywhere all the time like. In many places they don't call it discrimination.*
- *Discrimination, which is a crime, happens because people don't understand the problems of others.*
- *Cutting off people from their society because society does not want to deal with these people is the worst cause of discrimination. This happens within homes, within neighbourhoods and within cities. That's the root cause, wanting to get rid of people because they can't deal with them. It is better to look at people across the channel than face them net door.*
- *The main cause for discrimination is that people do not fit into the common mould and therefore are blots in society. Like a blot on the window you want to clean it of, therefore society wants to get rid of you in the same way.*

7	<b>Who discriminates more often or in a more serious way?</b>
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Family and class emerge as the major organs of discrimination, although politicians and the justice system are also noted by a number of the respondents. The guards (police) are rarely mentioned as a direct source of discrimination, but often mentioned in passing or in an off-hand manner, suggesting perhaps that this should be taken for given. This came through much clearer in the focus groups.

- *Everybody discriminates the whole time, even if they are not showing it. You can tell by the way look at you and the way the avoid facing you.*
- *People's own families.*

- *Family is at the root cause of discrimination. In every family somebody gets discriminated and then the families step outside and discriminate people in their society and then in the country and circle just grows and grows, but for everybody that somebody discriminates about, there is a family member that is discriminated against.*
- *Family and priests and the worst culprits and then the law and judges which award everything to women and leave men destitute. It used to be different, it was not better but at least men had some dignity in the past, but today that is has all gone and it will get worse.*
- *The rich.*
- *It's the ones who control the businesses and the government. It is a small circle of people who run Ireland and make the rules to suit them.*
- *Those with power and influence because they have to discriminate to keep it.*
- *It is the law and women who agitate thing ion society. Also those that drown the homeless discriminate because they take away lives.*
- *The justice discriminates most of all, but also employers, landlords and the welfare system.*
- *Politicians because they just talk to you and talk to you and talk to everybody telling everybody what they want to hear and then do what they feel like.*
- *Older people, publicans, politicians, social welfare and the police. But it is the higher classes who control these people therefore they discriminate the most. Of the higher classes only doctors are decent people for they help the weak and the poor. Prison officers and governors also discriminate.*
- *Doctors discriminate because they won't give you the right pills and medicines.*
- *It's the shopkeepers and publicans (bar owners) that are the most discriminatory. Publicans steal characters and then throw them away; they are also an aggressive bunch. If you are an intellectual in the pub, then they don't like that, they put you down, spit at you and throw you out. They really are aggressive the publicans. The guard also discriminate not because they do anything, but discriminate by doing nothing. Also sometimes they create situations out of all proportions and make it out as if you are to blame and you are an easy target, for being homeless there is nobody to defend you. It is a case of you against everybody else. Also against the law even if you did not break the law.*

8	<b>Which forms of discrimination do you perceive as the worst ones in contemporary society?</b>
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There were three forms of discrimination mentioned by most of the respondents as being amongst the worst forms of discrimination today.

- Homelessness,
- Travellers, and

- That are aimed at the weakest and vulnerable people in society

Minority views included:

- discrimination against blacks,
- the poor and the unemployed and
- those that are aimed against men.

### Services

All the respondents were asked a number of questions related to various services and these have been recorded in the following tables. Explanatory responses are bulleted beneath the relevant table. Please note, that in order to bind the survey to a specific period and avoid telescoping, all the respondents were asked to confine their responses to the last 12 months.

SERVICES	10															Were your expectations fulfilled or disappointed?	
	With which of these services do you deal?	Which have been the most NB <i>Rate in order</i>													Fulfilled		
	yes	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13			
Healthcare services	13	1	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	3	6	7	
Care services	7		6			1		4	3	3	2	2			5	2	
Registry services	1					5									1	0	
Housing	12		1	2	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	12	
Schooling	1					6									1	0	
Vocational training	1			3											0	1	
Work	7	2	3	1	1	4		3						2	0	7	
Culture and leisure	3	3	4			7									2	1	
Worship-religion	6		5			8	3		4	3			3		4	2	

#### 11 | Generic response - What did you expect of these services?

Overwhelmingly, all the respondents wanted was fair treatment and in the case of health and housing the all felt that they did not get this. Access to employment would seem lower than the two services just noted, but it should be borne in mind that not all respondents had tried to seek access to work during the year preceding the interview. Responses have not been collated, for we wish to make the point that that simply a little dignity and understanding on behalf of service providers can go along way to limiting the extent of social exclusion felt by this marginalised group.

- *To be treated like all the others who use them. I just want to be the same. I know that because I don't have a job and I don't have an address and no bank account makes me different, but there are a lot of people like me, they cannot all be ignored.*

- *I just wanted to be treated with respect like everybody else who uses these services, not like somebody who wants a handout. People who work there should look at you in the eyes rather than shuffling away. They say I shuffle, but these people shuffle as well.*
- *I expected to be treated with more respect and to be better understood. These organisations have fixed models that are not flexible; if you do not fit in you can't get ahead. When you try to get into vocational training there are fixed ideas about what you can do and why you must do it. Courses are offered and there is no corresponding demand. You can become a bricklayer, but it is impossible to become an interior decorator or designer. I can draw, but all I was offered was a bricklayer's course. Also these courses are full of secondary school kids who don't take life seriously. (Prompted) Adult based courses with only adults attending would be good and would make me feel better about sharing experiences with blokes my age and in my situation.*
- *I expected people to deal with me in a straightforward manner and not to push me away when the going gets tough and when I really need to look for help. Prospective employers have predetermined ideas about who you are and where you have come from and it does not help when you try to explain matters to them. Also they are always looking for fully fit people and those willing to work a full week. If I can't prove that I am working, I can't get a home. And if you come from welfare, then your chances of finding decent accommodation are zero.*
- *I just wanted to be treated with dignity and equal to everybody else, regardless whether I am married or not or a man or not or unemployed or not. I just want people and especially officials to recognise me for who I am as a person and not for what I represent—a single separated man without a job and home of my own.*
- *I expected a little kindness but treated like a dishcloth. They were generally not interested in my case.*
- *I just wanted a service, nothing more. Trying to get treatment from a hospital is impossible. Whilst if one looks at the issue of housing, then you could say that blacks are better treated than us. This is OK, but this country should look after their own as well.*
- *Help and treatment and nothing else were looked for. Just wanted to be given some respect and some time of the day. Welfare does give you a small cheque, but that's just to buy you off.*
- *The church generally is a joke, and it can be said that the priests are nothing more than business, they don't listen until you have given them a few pound. Also doctors won't help.*

- *Just to be treated normal like and treated on a first come first serve basis and not put to the end of the line and given the worst treatment. We are treated sub-standard.*

SERVICES	11			
	Which services were difficult to deal with?	How did you react?		
	yes	no reaction	angry	N/A
Healthcare services	7	4	3	6
Care services	2	1	1	11
Registry services	0			13
Housing	12	6	6	1
Schooling	0			13
Vocational training	1	1		12
Work	7	6	1	6
Culture and leisure	1		1	9
Worship-religion	2	2		11

#### 11 What kinds of difficulties were experienced? – Link to specific service

Neglect and a sense that the homeless are treated as an underclass of Irish citizenry emerges from the responses to this question. The degree of inflexibility as perceived by the respondents would seem to be a problem, although in this instance a corresponding comment by service providers would provide an objective assessment. It is fair to say, that some respondents are also trapped within the confines of their own self-pity and are unable to distinguish reality from their own woes, thus no matter how efficient the system, the perceived problem will remain. It must also be noted, that the cognitive abilities of many of the respondents were impaired from substance abuse, and although the majority of interviews were conducted when most were *compus mendis*, it does mean that often issues being discussed were mingled with other realities incomprehensible to the researcher.

- *I am ignored and I am not given the correct treatment and the correct procedures. It is more effort for the people working there to deal with people like me. They are lazy and also ignorant, but in some cases they deliberately like to make life difficult for me.*
- *The authorities are not interested because I they have already given up on me and they think that all I will do is give them trouble and not meet my obligations. I can't get started so I don't get any chances at all.*
- *Because authorities are not flexible, you do things by the book or you don't do it at all. In the work sector they don't even give you a starting chance.*
- *Employers won't let you in through the door and if you do get through, they won't listen to you. Also, when you can't give a stable address, it's like saying that you will fail before you actually start. It's the same with landlords, who are probably the same type of people anyway, exploiting you in one form or the other.*

- *The major difficulty is that I have no work and have recently separated, this stereotypes you in the eyes of care and housing officials. The care officials are on the outside polite and efficient, but you sense that they either resent or pity you, and you are just another problem that you have to deal with. Trying to get a house is impossible, and unless you are a refugee or have come from prison and they are trying to rehabilitate you, then you have no chance of getting proper accommodation. That is why I leaving, for in Belfast they have a different approach to things, there they are not hang-up about where you have come from or what your personal situation is like.*
- *The service providers simply look straight through you as if you are not human and do not exist. They give you the minimum and expect you to go away. Only when escorted by a priest or a welfare officer, the same people are polite to you, because they being polite to them.*
- *I was abused in prison and the social welfare authorities did nothing about that. I had my human rights trampled, was degraded and not allowed contact and welfare were on the side of the prison authorities. I humiliated for not being assertive enough and was treated for not being assertive and then the treatment worked well and I became assertive and then they humiliated me for being assertive.*
- *Waiting, waiting and waiting some more, unable to find a solution to my problem, they simply said I should go to Sarsfield Court (Hospital for mentally challenged). On the outside, landlords would not return deposits.*
- *Simply nobody listens to what you have to say, they treat you and put you through the system, but nobody ever listens.*
- *I felt that there was something wrong with me and the hospital kept saying that I was OK, but I still feel that there is something amiss. I do not think that they have done the proper tests. Also once when I got to a flat before everybody else, I waited all day and in the end I was not offered the flat even though I had the deposit money on me.*
- *I had a broken leg and they kept saying there was nothing wrong, until it got swollen like a balloon and then they decided to treat it. Today I walk with a limp.*

SERVICES	10	
	Were there any conflicts?	Did you feel discriminated dealing with these services?
	yes	yes
Healthcare services	2	9
Care services		3
Registry services		0
Housing	2	11
Schooling		0
Vocational training		1
Work		7

Culture and leisure		1
Worship-religion		2

### 11 What kinds of conflicts were experienced and how were they settled? – Link to specific service

The definition of conflict is varied and attempting to standardise it's meaning to group of respondents whose daily survival could be described as being one in conflict with society was problematic and as such, this question has not been properly answered.

- *I was denied “proper” access to my children (taken to mean unqualified visitation rights to his children) and was treated worse than a criminal who would be up on a murder rap. Many of these discussions and arguments were had in front of my ex- and this did not help with either the current or future relationship. I have decided to move away and see my children when I can afford to come and visit or when they can come to me. This is a bureaucracy that individuals cannot beat, you simply have to go away or you will become insane. If I had money I could have hired proper solicitors to fight my case, but when you are unemployed and don't even have a roof of your own over your head then you have no chance.*
- *I was refused service in a hospital and simply had to walk away, as I was in no position to fight them. I am illiterate and I don't know what I can do. Anyway, at the time I was so weak from lack of food, that I did not have the energy.*
- *My sister sold my shares of the family house and I was too young to do anything about it. Later I tried to get legal help, but because I had done time, nobody took me seriously. I have given up and also broken all links with my sister who now lives in a fancy house in West Cork.*
- *I found accommodation and had signed the forms, but when the landlord found that I was on welfare, after I paid my first months rent (deposit was paid in cash and the respondent lied about his work status) I was thrown out and I also lost my deposit. This was in Dublin and I went to the Guards, but they were not interested in my case and said that I should go to a solicitor. I can't afford a meal, never mind a solicitor. I have just had to give up on this.*

Do you think that the following services are always accessible to people like you? Total Responses 13		Yes	No	Don't Know	N/A
12	HEALTHCARE SERVICES	12	1		
	CARE SERVICES	3	1	1	
	REGISTRY SERVICES	3		2	8
	HOUSING		13		
	SCHOOLING	1	1		11
	VOCATIONAL TRAINING	1	1		11
	WORK OPPORTUNITIES	3	10		
	CULTURE AND LEISURE FACILITIES	5	4	3	1
	WORSHIP-RELIGION SERVICES and FACILITIES	9	4		

Although the responses to this question are varied, underlying most, is an inferiority complex that the homeless respondents attached to themselves. Namely, they perceive that lack of access to notes services emanates from their own inability to engage with service providers rather than the latter not reaching out.

- *Ignorance and fear and too much of an effort to do anything.*
- *Because I am a man I am denied proper care in the same way that women are. There are shelters especially for women and children, but you can't find the same for men and children. That is just the tip of the iceberg. The social workers are trained to be sympathetic to women and treat men as perpetrators. even if they have committed no real crimes.*
- *I can't afford a home, so landlords want nothing to do with me.*
- *I don't fit the normal person profile, so I don't get a normal person opportunity.*
- *I don't think that I would get access to a house for I would have to have it on welfare and landlords are not keen on this.*
- *I was discharged from the army and am unemployed and although I get a grant and a pension, it is not sufficient for landlords. They think I will shoot the place away. It is the same with some of my other mates outside Cork, so don't go thinking that it is a Cork thing, it is the same throughout Ireland.*
- *No, not unless you are prepared to wait for eternity and beyond. I don't think that the situation in Ireland can deal with unemployed men who don't have a family. You would think that those renting accommodation think that we are going to destroy the very same homes that we want to live in.*
- *No, if you have learning disabilities or if you can't fit into the system you stand no chance*
- *It is far too inflexible and does not offer the right choices for everybody.*
- *I have no experience and because of that I can't get a job. Employers give up before I can even start to make an impression. I stopped trying some years ago.*
- *If I can't dress-up properly I won't get a job and if I can't get a newspaper I won't know about jobs. The welfare people don't care if I work or not, in fact if I had a job and did not need them, then they would not have a job themselves. Sometimes I think I am deliberately kept here to keep them in a job.*
- *I don't have the right credentials, so I will never get the right job. If I can't show experience I can't get the job, but if I don't get a job, I can't get experience.*
- *Again, my army qualifications don't stand me in good staid in the job market and because I can't work a full week, I am discriminated against. In France they shorten the week and here they won't allow people to voluntarily work less.*
- *No, these are difficult times for everybody, the Celtic Tiger is no more, and the only people with a chance are those already in fixed (permanent) employment, if you are on the outside it will be a long time coming before the opportunities arise. Then, employers will be looking for people with families and homes. I mean what do I fill in for an address when asked - the ...(name of shelter where he was staying).., which would not even get anywhere.*
- *Because we can't afford to pay the entrance fee we cannot use the facilities, there are very few places that people without money can go if they want to enjoy*

*something. This is unfair for these places should belong to everybody and just to those who can afford to pay entrance fees.*

- *People don't want me around because they think that I am trouble, even though I have never caused a fight here in Cork (recounted an experience elsewhere).*
- *I don't know and I don't understand why, maybe I have a disease that I don't anything about.*
- *If these services were available to all, then system would collapse, because there are not enough services and we are the first ones to be left out of the system.*
- *If you do not have an address you do not have any chance in life. The first thing that people ask you to do is fill in a form and after your name comes your address, if you can't fill that line, forget the rest and forget the service.*
- *The homeless do not get chances.*

12	<b>What obstacles are there in the fruition to these services?</b>
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As a result of how the previous question was answered, it was difficult to probe for and engage in meaningful discussions with the respondents on this issue. It should also be borne in mind, that this is a sector in society that has problems attempting to articulate their own environment, therefore, in a 45-minute interview, asking them suggestions on how to improve service provision, is often beyond comprehension. In order to enable a proper discourse on the subject repeat sessions are necessary to engage the respondent through their life experience and together then attempt to create a framework as to how their interactive processes with service providers can be improved.

- *The people are the problem, for they don't want to confront me, so I just can't get on with anything and I have to spend my time like this (on the streets).*
- *The rules and those who interpret them are the problem and until people are willing to interpret them differently we will always have a problem.*
- *Unless they change how society thinks and unless they change the rules about work, nothing will change.*
- *The justice system has to change with the times and accept that in Ireland all people are equal, men and women and we should all have equal rights.*
- *Attitudes are at the root cause of most of the problems. You can make changes, but unless you change attitudes, you won't change anything.*

SERVICES	13	14
	Are you interested in accessing these services?	Do you think that it would be possible to improve these services? (improvement is intended in regard to discrimination)
	yes	yes
Healthcare services	11	13
Care services	10	13
Registry services	0	13
Housing	11	13
Schooling	0	13
Vocational training	3	13
Work	10	13
Culture and leisure	7	13
Worship-religion	5	13

#### 14 Explain your response to the improvement of services

Notwithstanding what was previously said, some of the respondents could commented on this question and what emerges is that there needs to be an attitudinal shift on behalf of service providers at the level where the institutions and the homeless inter-act.

- *People need to be told (trained) to care and to recognise that we too are also people who have needs. I think with the recession there will be more people unemployed and over time there will be more people in the same situation that I am in. If the services are not going to react to us, then there will problems in Ireland and things will get worse.*
- *The government must be told that we exist, we are also Irish and must be treated like all Irish people. There must be laws that force the government to take notice and make sure that they provide shelter for us. This must not always be left to the priests, for they too have little money.*
- *People must show more flexibility and innovation and be adaptive to individuals needs for they may not be the same as everybody else's.*
- *The system is too well entrenched and it serves the interests for those who are on the inside and they are the majority, so it is impossible to change it. We can't just a vote and do away with all the restrictions of the past. I simply have to work through or around it.*
- *Greater awareness and a better attitude amongst those people working in the various departments would be a great start. Workers in these institutes (services) should go on courses and there made to listen to people like myself, then maybe they would better understand us.*
- *The people working at these places need to be pushed little by little, a bit like elbow grease. But for many of these places if the down and outs are to stand a chance, then we must have private rooms so that they are kept out of sight of the rest and*

*they can get a service. It is because we are visible that they discriminate against us. If we were to hide ourselves from society they would treat us and quietly but at least they would treat us.*

- *It's all about attitude and the system cannot change if the attitude does not change.*
- *Need to make more funds available for housing, for if you house people then you remove many of the other problems.*

**DISCRIMINATION ACTIONS**

15	Do you feel protected against discrimination?	Yes 1	No 12	Don't Know	Total Responses 13
	If not, why?				

The message here is very mixed, but essentially the first two points encapsulate the issue on hand, and that there is recognition that law's to protect people against being discriminated exist, but they have not been articulated to the homeless. In addition, even if legal rights are understood, access to legal help, is simply prohibitive rendering them fairly ineffective. Should legal aid exist, it has certainly not been properly expressed to the homeless.

- *There are laws that protect me, but they are not interpreted properly and because of that they are meaningless. Information is not passed to those who must apply the law and they don't care to hear these laws anyway.*
- *It's all about a lack of information. We know that there are agencies out there, but unless they tell you which they are and what they stand for, how on earth can we access them. These agencies do not come to us, so we have to go to them and we cannot do that unless we know where they are. Maybe the people in Dublin know where they are, but here in Cork, you can't find them.*
- *There are laws, but they are designed to make you walk around in circles. You can start something and then a few months later you are back to where you started and absolutely nothing has happened. /.*
- *Yes and no, there are rules that stop people from discriminating against you, but the self same rules means that they also discriminate against you, so what is there to protect you also hammers you.*
- *No I do not feel protected against discrimination, because even if there were laws, nobody takes any notice of them. If there is nobody interested in making everybody feel the same, and then no law can change that at all. It is down to people and common manners and the law means nothing.*

- *No – the justice system is stacked against me and those who interpret it follow the same discriminatory course. You can't expect a judge to act against the constitution, and if the constitution favours women over men, then he must apply it as such. That's what happens. These studies that you do are a waste of time, for only the constitution will change things.*
- *No only the Christian people do anything. The government has passed everything onto the Christian people.*
- *No, no laws cannot erase a criminal record, and once you have that, there is no law in the world that can protect you.*
- *For the law to work for you must have a solicitor to represent you and without a solicitor, what use is the law. It is a meaningless thing that has no value for those living on the streets.*
- *Guards and the law have no interest in applying the law. Those with the law will not explain it to those without the law; it is their secret so they can use it. We therefore don't understand it. It is a powerful thing and without it, you cannot get anything done.*
- *The law has changed so much and changes all the time. Changing the law is big business, but if you do not know what is changing and for whom, then it is of no protection to you.*
- *There is talk about things being equal in Ireland, there are studies like your one, but all this is a waste of money (Sarcasm about my earnings) Nothing is ever done because nobody hears what happens to these studies. They are undertaken because the government must do them otherwise they will not be seen as doing anything for the downtrodden. You cannot win an election if you are not compassionate. But also you cannot win an election if you are going to help the downtrodden, for it is the "fat cats" that vote. I have never voted once in my life (eligible only for one vote). I don't think I'll vote again because I don't like any of the politicians and anyway, I don't have an address. We should bring Nelson Mandela here (reference to my being a South African), he did things for the poor and liberated them We need to be liberated, and except everybody thinks that everybody is free here in Ireland. They just need to come and live with us for a while before they find out that this is not the case.*

16	<b>Do you think you can do something to fight discrimination against you?</b>	Yes	8	No	4	Don't Know	1	Total Responses
	<b>Explain your response?</b>							13

On the one side, there is a mix of helplessness and on the other an idea that lobbying is a way to publicise their plight and thus contribute in the fight against discrimination.

- *I can shout and lead a protest march, but the guardi will arrest us ands we will just be locked up. Nobody wants to listen anyway, so what is the point of having a go. When you are down, you just kicked all the time.*
- *No, because nobody will listen to failed army dropout.*
- *No, I cannot do anything for nobody listens to me. It would not help if I tried to do anything as it would just go past people and end up meaning nothing.*
- *No, I suffer from depression.*
- *No, I cannot fight the country, the newspapers should start a campaign in favour of men’s right, but they won’t for they will be accused of sexism. That’s the way it is these days.*
- *Yes, if I tell enough people what the problems are, and they tell more people finally the people who cause the problems will get to hear about the problems and in that manner they may be solved. I might also run for parliament (translated from Irish).*
- *Yes, through lobbying and talking and going to conventions. I could also join Greenpeace and Amnesty International. I would like to change things at Mount Joy.*
- *Yes, through lobby through the papers, radio and television.*
- *Yes, I can publicise the case of the homeless by tackling City and County Hall.*
- *Yes, I am gifted with my hands and want to paint things. I can help with church restoration work and want to help the Christians for they helped me.*

17	<b>Are you presently doing something to fight discrimination?</b>	Yes	2	No	11	Don't Know	Total Responses 13
	<b>If not, why?</b>						

One out of thirteen respondents took on an activist role and the other repays his debt to the church through restoration work.

- *I help at local churches repainting statues.*
- *I camped for four nights on the steps of the City Hall in protest to the plight of the homeless.*

18	<b>Are there other people, groups, institutions (etc) that can do something to fight discrimination?</b>	Yes	8	No	1	Don't Know	4	Total Responses 13
	<b>If yes, what?</b>							

Although just over half of all the respondents mentioned that there are groups that are fighting discrimination on their behalf, only one respondent made mention of a charity institution in Cork, with another noting the Equality Authority and a third Amnesty International. Apart from that, there is no specific knowledge amongst this group of homeless as to who might be preventing discrimination against them.

- *Everybody who wants to can take a stand.*
- *Everybody could, but we must start with the teenagers for they will be the next ones who must make decisions. If at school he was taught about differences, then he is sure that others would understand him.*
- *The government, for they can force people to listen, but they can only go part of the way for if people do not want to listen, there is not much you can do to make them listen.*
- *The Equality Commission makes laws and tries to understand what is happening (reference to this study), but otherwise the Justice Department tries, but there are too few of them and many more outside who don't listen nor give a #\*!*
- *The Christian Upper Rooms.*
- *Amnesty international.*
- *The Guards.*
- *The foreigners and the blacks are fighting against discrimination and fair play to them, but the homeless Irish are not.*

19	<b>Do you think that being different form others automatically means being discriminated?</b>	Yes 8	No 1	Depend s 2	Don't Know 2	Total Responses <b>13</b>
	<b>If yes, what?</b>					

Following the hypothetical nature of the following set of questions, it was both difficult to specifically probe for responses and to collate what have been received into focused groupings. They are therefore presented as noted:

- It depends what different is, if you are a good singer, then you are different and you make money. If you have three ears you could join a circus and earn a living, if you are like me or like others like me, then yes – you will get discriminated against.
- People don't like to deal with those of us who are not the same as the rest, it makes them uncomfortable.
- If you don't look sober or are well dressed you will be discriminated against. If you are black and well dressed they will discriminate against you because you are black. So being different means that you will be discriminated against.
- If someone stands up for his or her rights, you will be pulled down and that is discrimination. Also it is about have's and have not's, who are automatically different form each other.

- Blacks are still called gollywogs because they look different, so ofcourse you will be discriminated against.
- Does not matter wherever you come from you will be discriminated against? In Greece being Irish I was discriminated against, here I am Irish and I am discriminated against and the Greeks discriminated against Greeks.

19	<b>Do you think that differences among people are positive, negative or it varies depending on the kind of difference?</b>	Positive 6	Negative 2	Depends 2	Don't Know 3	Total Responses 13
	<b>Why?</b>					

- *Difference causes discrimination and therefore it is negative.*
- *People do not accept or understand differences so it cannot be positive things. Today everybody must conform and have money or they there is no chance of being accepted as being the same and equal. You must also have a house and a car and a job otherwise people think there is something wrong, unless you are a student.*
- *It depends on the differences, if they mean that you are in demand, like smart people who may be different from the rest, then it is a good thing, but if people don't value you for being different then it is a bad thing and it would be better if we were all the same.*
- *It depends if that difference is on the side that people think is correct as opposed to being on the side that people think is not correct. Like, being a man fighting for custody means that it is negative, but being a woman, regardless what type of women (he qualified that there was nothing wrong with his ex-wife) would mean that you are on the positive side.*
- *It is important to have a balance amongst people.*
- *It would be boring if we were all the same.*
- *It is important for different cultures to learn from each other. That is why Bob Marley played such a big role in helping anti-discrimination, for he taught us a new culture and that was good.*
- *There is good and bad everywhere and it is the same with differences. Germans for instance confuse the Irish for being English because we all speak English and they hate the English, but when you tell them you are Irish and that is different from being English, then it is a positive thing.*

19	<b>Are there differences that are acceptable and differences that aren't?</b>	<i>Acceptable</i> 2	<i>Unacceptable</i> 4	<i>Depends</i> 4	<i>Don't Know</i> 3	<i>Total Responses</i> 13
<b>If yes, which ones are acceptable and which ones are unacceptable?</b>						

- Depends on what the differences are.
- The politicians will tell us about that one.
- It depends whether the differences result in discrimination or not. If they do, then it is not acceptable, but if they don't then it is acceptable.
- Yes, some people are different and society must just accept this.
- Everybody should have equal rights and no differences should be seen as acceptable.
- If the differences are skin colour, then acceptable but if it is about those that drink and those that do not drink, then it is not acceptable.
- The Nigerians are dripping with jewellery, drive fast cars and wear smart clothes and the government gives them houses. Such differences are unacceptable.

19	<b>How should society deal with differences?</b>
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- *Understand them and not look down at people.*
- *Deal with them in a fair and straightforward manner.*
- *Society should not have to deal with differences if the differences make no difference to society.*
- *Create opportunities for those who are different. Must give people a chance.*
- *Education and adverts on TV.*
- *Create more facilities to deal with it by expanding people's knowledge.*
- *Tell people that differences are positive things.*
- *Wasting your time here because society can't deal with differences.*
- *Should put all publicans through psychological testing to see if they are capable of dealing with the public.*

### FOCUS GROUP HOMLESS IN A SHELTER

Using the same themes as for the individual interviews, a focus group of nine respondents was convened at Cork Simon for the purposes of understanding discrimination against the homeless. Soon after the initiation of the group – respondent #4 dropped out, whilst during the group a transient set of respondents drifted in and out of the meeting. The nature of the environment was such that the meeting could not be held behind closed doors and was conducted in the cafeteria of the shelter. Regardless, of this though, in the spirit of the nature of the study, the researcher did not wish to create an exclusionary environment and therefore preferred to keep the group “open”. Only in one instance was a participant asked to leave and that by the rest of the group because his level of intoxication had diminished his cognitive skills to such an extent that he could not meaningfully participate. The focus group was conducted on December 03<sup>rd</sup>.

All the comments made by respondents have been treated in the plural, and where there is a difference in opinion, or the opinion expressed was a minority opinion, this is accordingly recorded. In addition, it should be noted that notes were taken during the focus group, and the researcher spent considerable time after the focus group speaking in a one-to-one situation with a number of the respondents clarifying some of the issues that emerged during the discussion.

### RESPONDENT PROFILE

#	Name Given	Age	Gender	Place of Origin
1	Niall	43	M	Cork (lived most of adult life in London)
2	Bernadette 1	45	F	Cork
3	Kenneth	38	M	Cork (lived a short time in Germany)
4	Esther	52	F	Cork (lived all her adult life in Greece)
5	Billy	45	M	Cork
6	Rose	58	F	Dublin
7	John	37	M	Tralee
8	Mike	55	M	Cork (lived most adult life in Liverpool)
9	Bernadette 2	46	F	unclear

#### 1. Let us begin by me asking you, that as people living in a shelter, do you feel that when dealing with people outside, you are discriminated against? And if so why?

Yes, there is a stigma attached to living in a shelter and it sticks like mud. People simply put a label on you and whatever you do it can't be washed away. We are treated low. It's about money, it's all about money they have it and we don't. But also they think differently, we know that for we too think differently. We are not normal, that's what the people outside think. They are right in many ways for this is not normal. We were not born here or grow up here. Some of us are here now for over 6 years, but we had lives before. Some of us don't have any lives in the future and we are not being given a chance, for the longer that we stay here the more difficult the things will be when we want to get out. Also the outside will change and it will get worse. Already there are lots of foreigners coming in and the businesses are closing up.

**2. By what individuals, groups or institutions do this discrimination take place?**

By the rich and the publicans. They are the worst, they control everything and also the politicians and the landlords. Politicians lie all the time, they come when they need votes but the closets they get otherwise is the hotel next door where they have conferences on the homeless, but even then they will not come into this place and see what is happening. They will not build corporation houses and they don't care. All the new housing is private housing and the landlords won't let that to people on welfare. What is being let is poor and pigs should not live in it. Some of us have tried to get into some of these homes but even then they won't let us get in, that's why we say that we are treated as low.

**3. How does discrimination against them take place?**

It's about money, it's about not having a job and not having an address and coming from here. Even if we have money and go the pub for a drink, we are often told to leave because of whom we are. Once people know that you live in an institution, then that's it, they have a way of treating you that is different to the way that they treat others.

Look 10 years ago or 20 years ago things were the same and here is the problem, for at least by the year 2000 you would have expected more improvement. You would have expected during the times of the Celtic Tiger for something to be done for the homeless, but nothing was done. Indeed, everything that has happened is private, it's the people with money and they don't want to have anything to do with us at all. That's why we fall further behind and will never be able to get back into the system again. Ireland has gone private, even the church has gone private and unless you dip your hands in your pocket they won't come to your help.

**4. Are there other subjects in society suffering form discrimination? If yes, who are they? Why are they discriminated?**

All people living on the streets, the handicapped, the winos (alcoholics) and the foreigners. All these foreigners are coming here and taking our things. Actually fair play to them they are trying there best, you find Irish people in every country in the world. However, some of us think that they should all be thrown out and if they don't leave we should put a bullet in their heads. This is just a small group, and many of these foreigners have lived in worse places before they came here. Some however, took a lot of money, like the Romanians and that's why they can afford to come to Ireland and then still take up homes and we don't get the opportunity. That's the real problem, it is sometimes OK to give homes to the foreigners that have nothing, for they human beings as well, but what happens to us. We are also human beings and even if we were not Irish would we have got homes. I don't think this government looks after it's own well. This is a big reason for discrimination, because if they looked after us as well as the foreigners then nobody would say bad things to the foreigners would they?

**5. Who has lived abroad before and how were things these? (In terms of discrimination)**

Four of nine participants had lived abroad and those in England said that there was discrimination there, but it was not too bad because there were many foreigners and nobody really knew who was a foreigner and who was not. There you also could not

really make out the homeless. Things were much more relaxed. One of the problems in Ireland is that because it is so small people see everything and the other problem is that entrance is reserved. It is difficult to come without being invited. In England anybody who want to go there can and people just accept it as part of life. In Ireland if anybody just arrives they look at him suspiciously. In Ireland you must have a reservation before being allowed to enter into anything. Even in the shelters there is no automatic right of entry. Some of us have at times been scared to leave in case we can't come back again. In Germany the people like the Irish and everybody made me to feel welcome. So long as I worked like everybody else I was even invited to their homes and flats and went to parties. It is not so easy here, and since living in the institution, even being invited to family homes is difficult. The respondent who lived in Greece suffered terrible physical, economic and emotional abuse, but left the group rather than discusses it.

**6. In general, what are the main causes for discrimination in society?**

Problems. People just grab what they can get. But also people drink and this aggravates the problem. If someone, who meets a drunk in the street, they take out their problems on them. A lot of problems also started when the Romanians came into the country, for the government still looks after them better than their own. We would not be looked after the same way in Romania. But even if this was not the problem. It is the government to blame. It is there laws and there lacks of willingness to do anything to assist the homeless. The government is not responsible for bringing in the foreigners, but after they came, they took our jobs and our homes and the government has done nothing.

**7. Who discriminates more often or in a harsher way?**

It is the government. They have a lot to answer for because they do nothing. All the people who are homeless have at one time or other tried to get a home, how many actually succeed. Then you come and stay in the shelter and it is your only address and as soon anybody sees it you are pushed further out of the system. The landlords need you to have a thousand pounds in your pocket before they even ask you your name. They are the worst forms of people we have come across in our lives. The employers are also bad, and they always need a reference, where can we get one. Without a reference you are classified the same as everybody. The City Hall as well discriminates; they judge us all, as one and they never have come here. Thus has been going on for donkey years and it is not a refugee issue at all. The refugees are not responsible for us being here, it is the City Hall and the Cork Corporation. During the last 10 years developers and less than 40 houses have built more 40 thousand houses by the corporation. Nobody elects the people in the City Hall it is an inner circle. There is no democracy here.

**8. Which forms of discrimination do you perceive as the worst ones in contemporary society?**

Against those having a drink on the street. Against anybody walking on the street that does not have a home to go to. Also against those that do not work. Also being refused entry in a pub is bad, but the law is changing a bit now, and they are doing something to improve this. Defamation of character is awful discrimination. We are called lot of things and then we can't do anything about it. If you have money you take people to court.

**9. Which are the social contexts in which these kinds of discrimination take place?**

In the streets, in the pubs, in City Hall – basically everywhere people meet and get together. It happens also on housing estates and at the workplace. It is not unique to anyplace.

**10. With which of these services (Healthcare services, Care services, Registry services, Housing, School, Vocational, training, Work, Culture and leisure, Worship-religion...) do people you represent deal with? Which ones do you regard as the most important?**

Hospitals are terrible, at the infirmary they won't give you the correct medicines. But doctors are helpful, they help and we all agree with that. At the vocational training centres people help, but most of us are over 40 and there is not much advantage to going there, but some of us disagree with that and think there are opportunities, but we don't know what opportunities actually exist. Employers do discriminate, so most of us don't apply for jobs with wit any address. The other problem those of us who live in shelters have is being able to get a job; it is difficult to go to work by walking out of here and then knowing that you must return in the evening. It is an impossible situation. Anyway, some of the employers immediately think that if you don't have your own home address you are an alcoholic. But we know that many people who work are winos, but they are not called drunk and they have a job. It is about stigma. In stores people treat you awful. Last year a friend had a heart attack in a large department store and most people walking past ignored her thinking that she was drunk. The guards are absolutely biased and even if you are at deaths door, they will not help you out. Many of us get mugged and robbed and assaulted and they drive past. Once they know that you are homeless they put that labile on you. The solicitors also discriminate against people like us, for without money and an address a proper solicitor will not look at you twice. The law does nothing for us, even worse it is against us.

**11. Do you think that these services are accessible to the people you represent? If not, which ones are not, and why? Which obstacles are there to the fruition of these services?**

No, if you don't have money you cannot get anything. Furthermore, when you have been classed you can't break out of that class.

**12. What do you expect of these services for the people you represent?**

Dignity.

**13. Do you think it would be possible to improve these services? If yes how? If not, why? (improvement is intended in regard to discrimination)**

No, because there is nobody whose interest it is to improve these services. The people at the City Hall and County Hall are too good to come in here. If people who can make the difference do not meet with us, then it is impossible for them to understand who we are and what we need.

**14. In general, do you think that people you represent are protected from discrimination? If yes, by whom? If not, why?**

No – drifters out. City Hall passes this law and that law because they must pass laws and they pass these laws to suit themselves. The laws are not for the people. The laws are for people who live in neighbourhoods and for nobody else. The law does not care whether we live in a healthy environment or not. They long ago discarded the homeless. The law is made by others and is discriminating. No, down through the years the government has not passed any anti-discriminatory thing. They make some laws, but when people like us opens our mouths, and then even those who should be working the laws for us look down on us. These laws mean very little. The government creates agencies like the Combat Poverty and Equality Authority because they created the problem in the first place and now they are hoping they can clean it up. How can someone who creates the problem then clean it up? What does the law do about white-collar crime? The prisons are fill of kids who commit trivial offences but the white-collar criminals that steal millions of pounds just walk away from it. That is the way of the law.

**15. Do you think you can do something to fight discrimination against people you represent? If yes, what? If not, why?**

We have, some of us camped outside City Hall, but after the photographs we left and waited and are still waiting. What more can we do? We can talk to people, we can tell our story, but before we start we are labelled and nobody listens.

**16. Are you presently doing something to fight discrimination? If yes, what? If not, why?**

No, because nobody listens to us.

**17. Are there other people, groups, institutions (etc) that can do something to fight discrimination? Is yes, what? If not, why? Are other subjects presently doing something?**

Not at the moment, nobody does anything, but eventually something will happen. Because the problem is getting bigger. A parliamentarian came here Mike Noonan and he looked around posed for pictures and then left without talking to us. He said that a few beds were grand, but never counted how many of them there were. Who can do anything? Who is doing anything to solve the housing crises? Once some people came down and swore in our faces that not one place was empty, yet the next day we saw the adverts, but the problem is that everything is occupied why can't they build new ones. It took us 3.5 years to get to see people. We should be honoured. Basically, nobody talks to us. The City Hall is a few minutes away for them to walk here; even they don't want to, we will send them a taxi. We don't vote in this country. It is a problem though, because if you don't vote you have to keep your mouth shut.

**18. Do you think that being different form others automatically means being discriminated? If yes, why?**

Depends who you are. You can be a foreign and rich and it makes no difference. It depends if the difference is about having money. Then you are discriminated against and it makes no difference if you are Irish or not.

**19. Do you think that difference among people is positive, negative or it varies depending on the kind of difference? Why?**

Difference is positive for we learn from each other when we are different.

**20. How should society deal with differences?**

Must just sit and listen that's that entire people should be doing? If those that want to change things just listen, then maybe we will get changes, but then there are still the politicians to contend with.