



# *The Seeds of Exclusion*

a major report by The Salvation Army into the causes and symptoms of social exclusion

## Executive Summary



### Introduction

The Salvation Army's *The Seeds of Exclusion* report investigates how patterns of early life experience contain the seeds of future social exclusion and provides an insight into the nature, complexity and severity of problems facing homeless people in Salvation Army social service centres.

The report, produced in collaboration with the University of Kent and the University of Cardiff, involved a series of in-depth interviews with 438 homeless people using Salvation Army centres in various regions of the United Kingdom between January 2006 and March 2008. The study focused on interviewees' current needs in relation to their early life experiences, relationships, mental health issues, substance misuse and the support respondents received for their complex needs. This research was supplemented by consultations with several focus groups and detailed interviews with leading experts in the areas of social exclusion, social reform, mental health and spiritual matters.

The Salvation Army, as a Christian church and registered charity, is one of the largest providers of social welfare in the UK and comes into daily contact with people both at the beginning and the extreme end of social exclusion. It presents *The Seeds of Exclusion* report in the context of the complex interactions between the social, physical and mental wellbeing of the nation in 2008.

*The Seeds of Exclusion* challenges us all to do more to address the causes and outcomes of social exclusion, and highlights the importance of the role of third sector organisations that currently provide much of the support received by this marginalised and largely forgotten group. The worsening financial situation will make this an even greater challenge, but it is one that must be addressed if social exclusion is not to become a perpetuating cycle of deprivation in our society.

Download the full *The Seeds of Exclusion* report at [www.salvationarmy.org.uk/seeds](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/seeds)

The Salvation Army Registered Charity Nos 214779, 215174 and in Scotland SC009359, SC037691

## Setting the scene

*The Seeds of Exclusion* identifies key issues and trajectories which have led some people into social exclusion and provides a clear and detailed picture of their complex needs. Significant common themes highlighted in the report are reflected by some of the main health determinants identified by the World Health Organisation, including social status, work, social support, early life experiences, addictive behaviours, food and social exclusion. The full report contains details of the work of The Salvation Army and an outline methodology and bibliography.

## A lack of supporting relationships

Among people who are socially excluded, relationship breakdown issues are key factors leading to them becoming homeless. The findings of this study indicate that current and past relationship problems are a characteristic of people who use the homeless services provided by The Salvation Army. A high frequency of respondents had few friends and limited or no contact with family members. A large proportion of homeless people who were surveyed had a disruptive childhood, and suffered abuse and problematic relationships with their family and friends both now and in the past.

### Key findings

- A significant number of interviewees (43%) reported being emotionally abused by their parents and 40% felt neglected at home. Interestingly, 15% indicated they did not have enough to eat as a child, indicating poor nutrition or, at best, poorly-developed eating behaviours whilst growing up.
- If the seeds of social exclusion have been sown in the childhood experiences of this generation of homeless people *The Seeds of Exclusion* report warns that these seeds will be further propagated in the next generation unless action is taken. Those who had poor relationships with their parents were more likely to have been homeless as children, with nearly 30% of respondents reporting they were homeless before they were 18 and individuals being an average of 15 years old when they first experienced homelessness. This cycle continued as more than half of the women interviewed, and slightly less than half of the men interviewed, were also parents: 38% of women and 42% of men had no contact with their children.
- Where respondents noted they had a poor relationship with their father this was found to be linked to the person's criminal behaviour as an adult. The relationship with a person's mother was equally essential, as poor maternal relationships were linked to an individual's anti-social behaviour throughout their life. This suggests good relationships with parents may be crucial to preventing homelessness in childhood and at later stages of life.
- Having good relationships with parents becomes even more important when considering the evidence that those who were homeless as a child were significantly less likely to have close friends as adults. Over half of interviewees (54%) spent most of their time alone. Nearly one third considered themselves to have no close friends which may have led them to be devoid of a vital support network.

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## Support for vulnerable people

*The Seeds of Exclusion* has revealed that homeless people have a much higher level of severe and untreated mental health problems than has been previously documented. Mental health issues and the problems people face when transitioning from controlled environments to independent living are key seeds of social exclusion. The voluntary sector, often working at the grass roots, is well placed to be the bridge which enables people to access services.

### Key findings

- There is a need for improved understanding of the link between mental health and particularly the link between personality disorder and socially inappropriate behaviour. Two-thirds (65%) of respondents were found to have two or more psychological problems, such as personality disorders, a range of mental illnesses, and drug and/or alcohol abuse. More than 40% had Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder with 30% of trauma associated with the death of close friends and family, 20% involving child abuse and neglect, and 11% over relationship breakdown. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is the second highest mental health disorder, with depression the most common.
- Despite the many problems faced by homeless people in the research report these issues are not being addressed and services are not being accessed even if they are available. Only 11% of respondents had access to mental health care.
- *The Seeds of Exclusion* identifies that people moving from institutional environments, such as a health care facility or prison, may struggle as they move into independent living. Nearly a quarter of interviewees reported that they had been in a controlled environment within the last 30 days, with 12% stating they had been released from prison during the 30 days before arrival at a Salvation Army centre. Former armed service personnel are another group who may become socially excluded once they are outside the relatively controlled environment of military life.

## Recommendations

- There needs to be greater recognition of the role of third sector and faith groups that are working in communities to identify families and individuals at risk. These organisations also play a leading role in helping to address poor relationships and family experiences in a way that is non-threatening and easier for people to engage with. This is particularly the case for people with complex and severe problems, who would otherwise fail to engage with statutory services which they may perceive as threatening or inaccessible.
- Support services need to be developed which facilitate the nurturing of good quality relationships between children and their parent(s). Families at risk of social exclusion need to be engaged with services that reach the wider community with the emphasis on building social networks and consequent social capital. The role of faith-based organisations, already well placed to do this, should not be underestimated.

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## Response

The Salvation Army commits to continue its work with vulnerable people whatever their needs. In response to the key findings in *The Seeds of Exclusion* report, and in the context of its review of current social issues in Britain, The Salvation Army is dedicated to addressing the problem of social exclusion in the long-term by building on its existing services with renewed focus and investment.

The Salvation Army will:

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

