Author's response to reviews

Title: Pathways into homelessness: recently homeless adults problems and service use before and after becoming homeless in Amsterdam

Authors:

Igor RAL van Laere (ivlaere@ggd.amsterdam.nl)
Matty AS de Wit (MdWit@ggd.amsterdam.nl)
Niek S Klazinga (N.S.Klazinga@amc.uva.nl)

Version: 2 Date: 1 September 2008

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

We are grateful and pleased with the reviewer’s reports in which comments and suggestions have given us insights and thoughts, with adjustments in the manuscript accordingly.

Here we give a point-by-point response to the concerns.

Referee 1: Thomas P O’Toole

1) Methods and instruments are adjusted in the method section.

2) Pathways into homelessness, immediate and structural loss of housing, is the focus of our study. We performed a logistic regression analysis for pathways related to underlying problems. The two major problems were debts and domestic conflicts. Additional analysis was performed to study factors associated with debts and with domestic conflicts. The results of these analysis are included in the results section to contribute to the knowledge of underlying problems and the cascade of events that add up to a pathway to step into homelessness.

3) The investigation of demographic differences is hampered by the small numbers, especially for women, and can therefore not be presented separately.

4) The information available about debts is described in detail in the results section "pathways and problems". Although creditor are mentioned in the results section, the behaviour of organisations of debt restitution practices is a very important item, but goes beyond the scope of our study.

5) Again, the referee makes a strong point related to self reported care seeking and expectations. In the results section ‘service use’ we address this issue. However, expectations were not included in the questionnaire. We have added a section on the wishes and dreams of the homeless concerning service provision at the end of the results section. In these answers some of the expectations are covered.

6) Strategies for prevention of homelessness are described in the discussion section "homelessness prevention strategies" also in relation to the observed pathways. The evaluation of the effectiveness of these strategies is beyond the scope of this paper, but would be an option for further investigation.

Referee 2: Jeffrey Turnbull

1) Ethical approval, encouragement for participation, duration of interview, exclusion of adolescents and families, and limitations of self reporting, are addressed in the methods section, in the results section and in the discussion.

2) We agree that narrative summaries can add to a better picture of the accumulation and cascade of problems that (nearly) homeless people undergo during their pathways into homelessness and beyond. Narrative items have been added in the results section when addressing service use by describing the vision of the participants how to improve services and their biggest dream. An attempt was made to collect data from different sources. As described in the methods section, staff at the shelters and research workers on rough sleepers were interviewed and this information was used to compose the questionnaire.

3) A strong point is made when addressing the reasons for evictions. In previous papers, mentioned in the reference list, we have focussed on this subject in depth, including the social housing sector and care system. In this paper we aim to focus on the processes along the pathways that lead to homelessness, and for
services to pick up signals that barricade these process steps to prevent people from losing their house.

4) Some language corrections were suggested. The authors have critically reviewed the language and made some adjustments.

Thank you for your time and clear comments.

Best regards,

Igor van Laere, Matty de Wit and Niek Klazinga

Amsterdam