



Housing – A Critical Perspective.

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Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:

- 1. Paper / Proposal Title:** The experiences of homeless families
- 2. Format:** Written paper
- 3. Author(s) Name:** Geraldine Regan
- 4. University or Company Affiliation:** University of Huddersfield
- 5. Abstract (300 words):**

The aims of this research study are to gain an understanding of the experiences of Families who are homeless. It is hoped to identify how government and local government policy and legislation impacts on homeless families The research project is a two sided study in Ireland and England, that could provide useful insights into families experiences of homelessness, and into the policy and legislative responses in both jurisdictions. Using a qualitative participatory research methodology the author has interviewed a range of homeless families living in Ireland and England. Legislation in both countries is similar and both countries have similar structures for public administration as well as shared political histories.

The definition by the UK government of homelessness as outlined by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2015) reflects this view: The term 'homelessness' is considered to apply only to people 'sleeping rough'. Most statistics on homelessness relate to those who are considered statutorily homeless i.e. households which meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation, and to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted by a local authority. Such households are rarely homeless in the literal sense of being without a roof over their heads, but are more likely to be

threatened with the loss of their current accommodation. The legislation governing homelessness in England including the Housing Act (1977), the Housing Act (1996), and the Homelessness Act (2002), places a legislative duty on local housing authorities to ensure that they provide free advice and assistance to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Legislation governing homelessness in Ireland includes the Health Act, 1953, the Childcare Act, 1991, the Housing Act 1988, and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 which established statutory structures for homelessness, including a consultative forum and a statutory committee. The 1988 Act does not oblige housing authorities to provide housing to people who are homeless, however it does give responsibility to the local authorities to consider their needs; it also enables the local authorities to expand their powers to respond to the needs of people who are homeless.

This study will provide valuable insights into the structural factors impacting on homeless families in Ireland and England including problems with the definition of homelessness, housing market shortages, the operation of the housing system, and lack of integration across various government services as well as the unintended consequences of wider policy.

7. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

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Geraldine Regan is a Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies in the University of Huddersfield. She is currently studying for an Education Doctorate in the University of Huddersfield and she holds a BA in Public Management and an MA in Healthcare Management. Geraldine worked for many years as Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Nursing in a Children's Hospital and worked for over twenty years with homeless people in a voluntary capacity in the charitable sector.