Rowan Alba Limited is responding to this request based on 20+ years of working in the field of homelessness in Edinburgh and Perth and Kinross. In order to help us formulate a response to this, we have asked our services users some key questions from the initial brief.

**Housing options**

People continue to fall through the gaps. An earlier intervention would help this.

Our floating support in Perth, covering a very rural area of 2,500 square miles, offers support to sustain tenancies, and is delivered on an individual basis. There really is no “one size fits all”. However, as a preventive service, we fear that it will be cut. This will undoubtedly result in increased levels of homelessness.

**Temporary Accommodation**

There is a huge pressure on temporary accommodation (especially in Edinburgh). In our women’s hostel, which has ten spaces, the average length of stay on opening was three months. (2005) It is now over one year due to shortage of affordable move on accommodation. It is also noteworthy that on average, 20% of residents are now working, but still experience acute difficulty in accessing their own accommodation. More affordable housing would help.

Funding of temporary accommodation is problematic; leading to reduced support of individuals.

Changes to the benefits system have exacerbated this, especially for young people. Anecdotally, we are seeing people lose their tenancies due to landlords fearing the rent will not be paid.

**Permanent Accommodation**

Choice based letting works, but the main problem is in the lack of affordable housing options for individuals.

**Multiple and Complex Needs**

Multiple and complex needs often involve alcohol dependency; many temporary accommodation solutions will not accommodate those who continue to drink, thus excluding many people. One example of good practice is our Thorntree Street
service, which offers a home for life, with full secure tenancy rights, for 12 gentlemen aged 50+. Thorntree Street has been operational for 14 years, and in this time, there has been only one eviction.

Living at Thorntree Street means security for individuals, and there are massive savings passed on to the health and criminal justice sectors, which we are in the process of quantifying, and aim to report on at our Parliamentary event to be held on 14th November 2017, “More than just a roof”.

This service offers those who have lived a life of chaos a haven of companionship, care and respect. Ideally, every city in Scotland would have one, and the model could be rolled out to accommodate, e.g. younger people with drug dependencies, younger people with ARBD (alcohol related brain damage). Such a service, providing a home for life, decreases the anxiety of users, and actually leads to a reduction in their consumption. It is a sure way to reduce street homelessness, as the persons addictions are tolerated and worked with, not banned.

The Access Point in Edinburgh is an excellent service, and the presence of a clinical psychologist, delivering support and supervision to support workers in the field is a huge bonus. The dedicated support of Dr Adam Burley makes us more psychologically informed, and more effective and is worthy of special note.

In terms of access to health care, our users face many barriers, (with the exception of a couple of noteworthy GP practice exceptions), and here I would commend the work of GP’s at the deep end.

http://www.gla.ac.uk/researchinstitutes/healthwellbeing/research/generalpractice/deepend/

**Why do people become Homeless?**

We seldom accommodate those have are” just homeless.” For detailed information about the adverse impact in early years, please see The Scottish Public Health Network publication, Polishing the Diamonds, May 2016.

Around 90% of the people we help annually report a complex pattern of multiple deprivation including mental ill health, poverty, isolation, having experienced abuse etc. This explains why, on leaving temporary accommodation, around 40% will become homeless again, as temporary accommodation will not undo unhealthy life outcomes developed over years.

Many support systems are time limited, and do not allow time for the individual to develop the practical skills and emotional resilience to turn their lives around. Funding for these in the statutory sector are just not available, and many charities, such as ours, rely on charitable funding to offer these life changing opportunities, often in partnership with statutory providers, e.g. our Follow Me service in
partnership with the Willow, Edinburgh, offering support to homeless people having been in the criminal justice sector. Funding for services which tackle the root cause, not just the symptoms of multiple deprivation, would begin to address this, and would require to be offered for more than a few months; ideally, it would be as long as the recipient required.

Housing First is a good model; we would need to have more accommodation to realise this, and very well trained staff.

Finally, there is a lot of information available on the causes and nature of homelessness. Rowan Alba are delighted to see this issue being placed on the national agenda, as it will require dedication, coordination and an increasing awareness of the complex nature of many homeless people to achieve an improvement in their lot. Here we must mention that the less well educated you are, the more likely you are to become homeless, so to reiterate, a better start in life will reduced your chances of becoming homeless.

There is no “one size fits all” solution, but person centred services, which acknowledge and build on the capacity and resourcefulness of the individual would be a great step forward.

Helen C Carlin
CEO
Rowan Alba Limited