

Surviving in Manchester: Narratives on movement from the Men's Room, Manchester

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Executive Summary

Context and methodology

The Men's Room is an arts and social care agency that works creatively with young men, offering them opportunities to get involved in arts projects whilst accessing support for challenges they may be facing in their lives. The project engages different constituencies of young men experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage, including those involved with sex work or with experience of sexual exploitation, and those with experience of homelessness and/or the criminal justice system. Working with artists to create a diverse range of projects throughout the year, the Men's Room also offers a weekly drop in, outreach services and personalised support.

'Surviving in Manchester' was commissioned by the Lankelly Chase Foundation (LCF) and aimed to explore young men's routes into the Men's Room as well as how they defined successful service provision. The research adopted a psychosocial approach and included ethnographic fieldwork, walking tours led by young men to sites that they connected with their survival in the city, and a Visual Matrix conducted with staff and volunteers.

Key findings

The report argues that the relational approach of the Men's Room is a key organisational strength. This approach combines informal and formal support, unconditional acceptance, clear ground rules, and gauging of supportive interventions in ways that are sensitive to the young men's readiness and ability to 'move on'. It also includes valuable opportunities for social gathering, creative expression and public storytelling and image-making that extend the artistic and imaginative capacities of the young men and celebrate their abilities and experiences.

The organisation's relational approach provides one of the few spaces in which the fragile self-perception of the young men is conjoined with those of staff and volunteers. This process of recognition can be understood as a *moment of meeting*, where one's self-gestalt meets and matches the way one is known. However, staff and volunteers who work at the Men's Room also express awareness of a set of tensions between a desire to intervene in order to help young men identify positive routes out of trouble and a recognition that things that they do may not influence the trajectories of these young men's lives; and between a wish to offer unconditional support and funding agendas that ask for measurable evidence of progression and outcomes. This means that staff are often operating between competing pressures of 'measurement' and 'engagement', 'hope' and 'futility', and 'control' and 'care'.

The motif of '**Moving on**' was a recurring theme emerging from different elements of the research. The demand to 'move on' shapes the daily experience and life histories of many young men engaging with the Men's Room (who move in and out of care, in and out of custody, in and out of domestic environments, away from the police and in and out of scenes of crime and threat). 'Moving on' can be a tactic of survival in a risky environment, a means of eluding control, an affirmation of lack of self worth, and an assertion of personal agency, as much as a positive step. The process of supporting young men to move on is fraught with difficulty therefore, and there is a need to ask who is being moved, why, from where, where to and in the service of whose ends? The research highlights the need to better understand the movement trajectories of those experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage, as well as the need for a broader discussion about tensions between these experiences of movement, working methodologies that balance challenge and support, and

a funding environment characterised by the demand to provide measurable evidence of progression.

The walking tours and the Visual Matrix – narratives of ‘moving on’

The walking tours provide a view of different pathways of ‘moving on’ mapped by the men, and contain contrasting, competing and overlapping narratives of moving on, getting stuck, going backwards, going round in circles as well as articulating a psychosocial need to keep moving. The seven pathways highlight the young men’s value for a service approach that combines:

- non-interventionist styles of contact, which may provide a valuable stepping stone to more interventionist forms of support;
- opportunities to take part in social and creative activities that offer respite from and pause for meaning-making during weekly routines that can be characterised by powerlessness and a lack of control (during the fieldwork, one young man commented ‘this is the only place I go all week where it feels ok to just be myself’);
- the provision of a space in which everyday and childhood experiences can be recognised without seeming exceptional or marginal;
- access to a network that enhances security when living and working on the streets;
- meaningful recognition of the significance of young men’s self-made life maps, which even when destructive or risky can provide a sense of identity and agency;
- relationships of care and unconditional acceptance;
- routes and access points between informal and formal networks of support.

The theme ‘moving on’ emerged strongly in the Visual Matrix conducted with staff and volunteers, and also highlighted the challenges involved in providing the kinds of support valued by the young men. The images expressed as part of the matrix captured a series of tensions around **the young men’s experiences of recognition, lack of recognition and misrecognition**. A theme that also emerged strongly was a sense of **undesired states of invisibility, including lost or invisible childhoods**. There were also images of memorial evoking a sense that **young men like these have no monuments that recognise their histories**, leave nothing behind and might not be remembered, and images that asked questions about **how to accompany someone’s journey without interfering in ways that may be unwelcome or damaging**. The matrix also contained images that expressed fears about the possible futility of the support offered by the Men’s Room – whilst there are attempts to generate a positive and supportive atmosphere, **there are also fears that staff might fail to acknowledge the realities behind the scenes**. Other images expressed tensions around working methodologies, especially a tension about a **competing imperative to express care, and maintain control and a level of acceptable behaviour**.

The Men’s Room’s methodological approach demonstrates that adaptive and transgressive practices that work alongside the young men are necessary to achieve the engagement of some individuals in projects related to personal change. In comparison to many other service domains, **the Men’s Room offer a paradoxical and transgressive space, one in which ‘acting out’ is literally and metaphorically part of the work**. This is a complex approach that is, importantly, underpinned by clear organisational policies relating to acceptable behaviour and risk management, and it also means that **staff must hold and work with a high degree of uncertainty as part of their day-to-day practice**.

Conclusion

This report was written at a time of sustained cuts to public funding that have increased the pressure on organisations in receipt of funding to demonstrate their social value, utility and effectiveness. In the 12 months in which this research was conducted, the Men's Room had a series of problems related to ensuring the financial means of its survival and has been revisiting its model of provision as part of attracting new forms of funding.

The research offers a number of ways of visualising 'moving on' as a means of articulating the strengths of the organisation, as well as exploring the challenges of working with young men experiencing severe and multiple disadvantages relevant to other contexts. It is clear that attending to and acknowledging 'what happens along the way' is of great consequence for these young men and recognizing this is vital for social welfare agencies to provide appropriate support. Hence, we argue that successfully engaging and supporting these men may well be in tension with the current preferences for performance measures and definable outcomes.

We suggest that the reason these young men do slip through the gaps in the services society provides is in part due to an over-identification with the 'active voice' of rational human agency and an attendant denial of the 'passive voice' of human suffering (Hoggett 2000). The young men accessing the service are distinguished by their sense of 'otherness' and there is a need to acknowledge this experience without further stigmatization and the Men's Room provides a space for this to happen by offering arts projects that explore as well as celebrate their experiences. The organisation's relational approach and arts-based methodologies provides one of the few spaces in which the fragile self-perception of these young men is conjoined with those of staff and volunteers. This combines to create a sense for participants that the 'door is always open'. The project provides a sense of belonging and familiarity from being with other young men, points of contact and information, creative activity that elicits moments of pause for thought and reflection, as well as access to kinds of support that hold out the possibility of imagining a different future.

Introduction

The Men's Room

The Men's Room is an arts and social care agency that works creatively with young men, offering them opportunities to be involved in high quality artistic projects whilst providing support for challenges they may be facing in their lives. The project engages different constituencies of young men, including those involved with sex work or with experience of sexual exploitation, and those with experience of homelessness and/or the criminal justice system. Throughout the year, the Men's Room work in collaboration with artists to create a diverse range of projects, delivering these via two creative sessions each week, WMD and The Blue Room. Every session involves some kind of creative activity, which could include drama, photography, creative writing or film-making. At the end of the session, staff, volunteers and the young men sit down to share a meal together.



Image 1: A WMD Session

From its inception in 2004, the Men's Room has aimed to engage young men who were not accessing other support services in the city and were unlikely to do so. Young men attending creative sessions commonly share experiences of being looked after by the state, alcohol and drug use, mental health problems, educational failure and involvement in crime. Generally speaking, the men live outside of normative social and familial frameworks, often not in secure accommodation. The Men's Room provides a safe space to come along to and meet with other young men with similar experiences. It also offers support in several other ways, for example through a weekly drop in and outreach services and the provision of one to one support. At the time of writing, approximately 45 young men attend the project regularly.

The research project

Lankelly Chase Foundation (LCF) is an independent charitable trust working to transform the quality of life of people who face severe and multiple disadvantage (SMD). Its work focuses

particularly on the clustering of serious social harms, such as homelessness, substance misuse, mental illness, violence and abuse, and chronic poverty. A literature review completed by LCF on severe and multiple disadvantage provided the stimulus for this research. The review 'tracks an emerging appreciation of the distinct challenges experienced by people who face SMD' (Duncan and Corner 2012: 3). It defines the nature, scope and scale of SMD, and summarises relevant literature on service delivery and policy. An accompanying report calls for a renewed national debate about SMD, and makes a case for policy-makers to work more closely with social partners to marry creativity and innovation in service delivery with a social justice agenda that places empowerment rather than obligation at its heart (McNeill 2012). From the literature review, as well as through discussion with staff and young men from the Men's Room, a series of questions developed as areas of interest for the research, as follows:

- Routes - what life experiences and prior engagement with services have led to their engagement with the Men's Room? Are there any common patterns or factors?
- What are the specific routes into the Men's Room for young men?
- How might the young men define a successful service and how might that differ from a professional viewpoint?
- How have the young men's experiences of severe and multiple disadvantage shaped who they are and what they want for the future?
- How do young men in contact with the Men's Room engage with the term "severe and multiple disadvantage?"

Structure of the report

The research involved a number of different elements of data collection, including: the researchers' attendance at a residential with Men's Room staff, volunteers and young men to co-produce a methodology for the work; ethnographic fieldwork at Men's Room sessions between January and December 2013; a series of walking tours conducted with young men from the Men's Room (n=7); and a Visual Matrix conducted with staff and volunteers. In the report we draw most heavily on two elements of the data collection, the walking tours and the Visual Matrix. However, in the discussion we also draw upon and make reference to understandings gleaned from other elements of the research.

We employ the motif of '**Moving**' as a structuring device for the presentation and discussion of findings. The seven walking tours provide different pathways - of sorts - mapped out by the men, which contain contrasting, competing and overlapping narratives of moving on, getting stuck, going backwards, going round in circles as well as articulating a psychosocial need to keep moving. This theme also emerges strongly in the Visual Matrix, captured, for example, in the image of ghostly figures moving around the city (see below).

In the discussion, we use the motif of 'moving' and 'movement' as an overarching impetus whilst structuring the findings under the following three themes:

- 1) Power, powerlessness and magic/magical agency.
- 2) Commemoration, loss and unexalted lives.
- 3) Connection and disconnection: care, control and companionship.

Within these sections we offer a number of ways of visualising 'moving' as a means of articulating the ways in which the strengths of an organisation like the Men's Room is in tension with approaches to evidence based practice that require measuring outcomes. We also connect this discussion to the imperatives of self-regulation and self-development

emerging from what might be understood as the 'neoliberalisation' of social welfare. Here, an economisation agenda creates pressure on services to evidence value for money by delivering targeted outcomes and measureable change. This environment, at worst, obliges those experiencing SMD to take individual responsibility for overcoming disadvantages that arise from a complex web of social, economic and political causes.

As we discovered whilst undertaking this research, the demand to 'move on' shapes the daily experience and life histories of many young men engaging with the Men's Room (who move in and out of care, in and out of custody, in and out of domestic environments, away from the police and in and out of scenes of crime and threat). Here, 'moving on' is a tactic of survival in a risky environment, a means of eluding control, an affirmation of lack of self worth, and an assertion of personal agency, as much as a step towards a positive future. The process of supporting young men to move on is fraught with difficulty therefore, and there is a need to ask who is being moved, why, from where, where to and in the service of whose ends? The research has highlighted a need to better understand the trajectories of movement experienced by young men facing SMD, and we hope that this report makes a contribution to the development of that understanding.

Further planned dissemination

We will be writing a series of papers which build on elements of the methodology employed in this study and in particular the walking tours and the Visual Matrix.

We are also exploring funding options to develop a series of animations on the basis of the material from the walking tours.

Finally, the Men's Room plans to use the remainder of the money from LCH to commission four or five young men to write 'spits' (rap poetry) which will offer a talk back opportunity to the young men in relation to this research. Once completed, these will be uploaded onto the Men's Room's website, but will also be transcribed and included as an addendum to the final version of this report.

Methodology

Introduction

This report emerges from nearly 12 months of fieldwork conducted by Jenny Hughes and Alastair Roy as well as a specific contribution to the Visual Matrix component from Julian Manley. The research began when Jenny and Alastair attended a residential in Derbyshire with staff, volunteers and young men from the Men's Room in January 2013. The residential helped to establishing a trusting research relationship with the young men. Prior to it Jenny and Alastair had discussed how they might present some of the research ideas to the young men in a way that might engage their collective interest. The residential proved to be a crucially important starting point to developing the relationships that sustained the work. Essentially we were enabled to initiate these relationships by responding to the framework already established by the Men's Room staff and volunteers. During one discussion about the research one of the men asked the following question:

“How the fuck could something like this be useful to someone like me?”

In working with this question together we came up with the idea of creating a 'Survival Guide to Manchester'. This led to the development of a methodology that sought to generate research findings that effectively represented the lives of the young men as well as the life of the organisation.

The research aimed to generate a detailed and contextualised understanding of the lives of the young men accessing the Men's Room, the processes whereby they became involved, and the life and approach of the organisation. It also sought to understand how this involvement induced personal, social and cultural change. Change processes are particular to individuals and communities whilst occurring within a shared cultural context. However, individuals can rarely summon up for an interviewer a simple account of how such interaction changes and affects them. Recognising this, we developed a psychosocial approach in order to grasp the irreducible particularity of individual experience, whilst also locating that experience within wider networks, groups, communities and institutions (Froggett et al. 2011).

As such, the research took as its focal point of enquiry the interfaces between the young men who use the Men's Room, the staff and volunteers who work within it, the organisational structure and the wider social and policy context. A psychosocial approach has enabled a focus on the relationships generated in imagination as well as in the course of – personal and practice based - action (Clarke & Hoggett 2009). This has clearly been essential in trying to understand the lives of the young men as well as the life of the organisation. In the discussion, these relationships are understood both in terms of intra- and inter-subjective processes and relationships as well as in terms of societal processes and expectations such as personalisation, globalisation, evidenced based practice and self-regulation (Froggett et.al. 2011).

Data collection methods

Participant observation at regular sessions run by the Men's Room

We were keen to understand the general life of the organisation in as naturalistic manner as possible. It was important to develop an observational technique appropriate to its practices and life. We conducted ethnographic participant observation (Spradley, 1980), which allowed us to be involved in the life of the sessions whilst clearly adopting the role of researcher. Minimal notes were taken during the sessions, but detailed self-reflexive ethnographic diaries (Sanjek, 1990) were written up after the sessions and maintained throughout this work. Through these we were able to develop a detailed understanding of the day-to-day operational process of the organisation as a cultural milieu, the project work commissioned and produced, and the relational components of these practices.

Walking tours

After an initial period of participant observation, conducted 'walking tours' with the young men. Here, we invited individual young men to lead a researcher and a Men's Room staff member on a walking tour of city centre sites that they associated with their survival. There were two points of impetus here. First, previous research had suggested that the Men's Room's peripatetic approach was key to its successful engagement of the young men (see Hughes 2013). For example, the project exhibits a mobile and improvised use of city centre spaces, with the creative workshops, drop-in and support sessions taking place in a range of different sites, none of which 'belong' to the Men's Room. In addition, Men's Room staff engage in regular outreach activity, including 'walking the beat' - a twice-weekly tour of city centre sites frequented by young men and here, the practice of walking invites accidental encounters that lead to valuable moments of practical, social and emotional support. The walking tours were also inspired by a comment made by a participant who said that if we wanted to find out how people survive in the city, we should go and talk to young men hanging around the city centre. All of the walks were undertaken with Jenny Hughes and Kate McCoy from the Men's Room team, other than the final walk, which was undertaken with Jenny Hughes and Alastair Roy. On arrival at each stop of the tour, we asked our tour guide to take a photograph and, if they were happy to, describe the site. Within a time limit of approximately 30 minutes, the young men were free to visit as few or as many sites as they wanted and take up to 10 photographs.

The use of walking as an artistic practice and a research method is recognised across a number of disciplines as an innovative way to produce and disseminate knowledge. Walking has been adopted as a research method in anthropology and ethnography (Pinks 2008; Ingold and Vergunst 2008), cultural geography (Anderson 2004; Butler 2006) and qualitative social science (Hall 2009). It has also become a mode of artistic practice in its own right, with artists from a variety of backgrounds drawing on walking as a means of experimenting with more attentive, playful and responsive relationships to space and place than allowed by more sedentary artistic practices (see Myers 2010 & 2011; Heddon and Turner 2012 for examples; and Solnit 2000 for background). This body of work is based on the oft-cited notion of the 'co-ingredience of people and place' (Casey, cited in Anderson 2004: 257) – the idea that identities, experiences and behaviours are embedded in the places a person inhabits. If 'space is that through and with which lives take shape' as Hall notes, then walking and talking invites spaces and places to become 'much more of an active, present participant in the conversation, able to prompt and interject' (Hall 2009: 581 & 583).

'Walking and talking' also sets up a 'side by side' rather than 'face to face' encounter (Heddon 2012: 70), supporting companionable encounters that encourage attentiveness to sensual and embodied meaning, enhance empathy and collaborative knowledge making (also see Myers 2011; 2010). This reflects something of our experience when undertaking the walking tours described below – the young men were the tour guides in each case, reversing the traditional hierarchy between researcher and researched. As such, the walks also extended the supportive street pedagogy of the Men's Room by offering opportunities for compassionate witnessing.

A Visual Matrix with workers and other para-professionals

We wanted to work with staff in a manner that embodied certain important elements of the Men's Room's practice, namely creativity and a concern with process. The Visual Matrix (VM) is a development of the Social Dreaming Matrix, which was created by Gordon Lawrence at the Tavistock Institute in the early 1980s as a way of allowing groups to share dreams. The VM encourages participants to share images that they have in their minds. The images that people share can be childhood memories, scenes from films, dreams or any other images that come to mind in the course of the Matrix. No judgments or interpretations are offered. Instead, the images are allowed to exist as they are offered to the others in the group. The sharing of images is an alternative to more familiar forms of discussion and debate in research such as focus groups. The idea is that there may be things that people find difficult to express in interviews and focus groups, and that these can be shared through images. The VM works to frame the shared contributions, making them relevant to the object of study. In this case, the 12 participants were staff and volunteers from the Men's Room and the researchers.

Participants were invited to sit on chairs previously arranged as a Matrix. The seating arrangement resembles a snowflake pattern in which people face towards others but do not face them directly. This encourages participation without the direct interaction that occurs in more familiar group settings, (for example sitting in a circle). The two facilitators were Julian Manley and Alastair Roy from the University of Central Lancashire, whose job was (1) to present the task of the VM, (2) to facilitate the process, and (3) to take notes. Each participant was invited to contribute an image, an association or express a feeling to the group as and when s/he felt it appropriate. As the Matrix continued, the images appeared to create a pattern of meanings for individuals and the group.

After the VM, which was an hour long, there were two sessions for facilitating participants' reflections and understandings of the possible meanings of the shared images of the Matrix. In the first of these sessions, participants were asked to spend some time on their own (10 minutes approximately) with a piece of paper and pens to draw the images from the Matrix that had remained with them and were felt to be somehow important or significant. Then, in the next session (30 minutes), we re-grouped in a circle and placed the drawings in the middle. During this session, we discussed the images and re-arranged them so that links and connections could be made between the different drawings. In this discussion, we attempted to draw out meanings from the VM. Finally, a few days later, the notes were transcribed and sent to the participants for their own use.

We used the following data sources for the analysis:

- 1) The transcript of the Visual Matrix (VM) session. This had been noted by hand during the event in real time and then typed up and sent to participants afterwards who had the opportunity to correct and amend it.

- 2) The drawings created by the participants themselves after the VM. This included photos of individual drawings and also a photo of their configuration when placed on the floor and moved around by the participants according to perceived links and connections between the images.
- 3) The transcript of the notes taken of the discussions after the VM and during the viewing of the drawings.



Image 2: the 13 drawings as organised within the discussion

In order to analyse the material the data was read out loud by the two researchers, who then expressed their opinions and understandings of the data, firstly individually, (giving each researcher a chance to follow a train of thought, associations, and make links and connections from image to theme without interruption), and secondly together, contrasting and comparing interpretations of the data. Below, we present a series of the mes and results emerging from the analysis. In the discussion, the following summary will be compared and ‘triangulated’ against data collected in different ways as part of the project.

Presentation of findings: narratives on movement

The research findings are presented in two parts: the first section gives a descriptive account of the walking tours and as such, reflects on the research questions from the perspective of the young men; the second section reports on the visual matrix session with the Men's Room staff and volunteers.

Walking tours

The walking tours provide a kaleidoscopic view of the challenges of survival in the pasts and presents of the young men taking part. These are presented as seven 'movement narratives', with the title of each taken from the conversation that accompanied each tour (in most cases). The critical themes identifiable in these accounts are taken up in the discussion section of the report. The seven 'movement narratives' are:

- Immovable object, irresistible force
- The wheels are turning
- Bridges
- Shifting gear
- Escalation, escalation
- Pass the parcel
- Moving on

The tours are presented in the order in which they occurred, and details that would potentially identify the young men to readers have been changed (although the tour guides themselves, and Men's Room staff, are likely to be able to identify the person in each case, as was made clear in the processes of gaining consent to take part in the research).

Walk one: Immovable object, irresistible force

On the first walk, we were taken to two spaces in the city, both made of concrete and metal – the statue of Alan Turing in Sackville Gardens (a small public park in the Gay Village)¹ and a corner of the third floor of a multi-storey car park, which once provided our tour guide with a sheltered spot to sleep as well as a good vantage point to survey the street below.² Our tour guide explained that both sites were spaces where he had been able to express intense and overwhelming feelings in ways that did not solicit unwelcome responses or

¹ Alan Turing was a mathematician and computer scientist. He worked at Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire during World War II, developing code-breaking methods, and from 1949 for the University of Manchester, where he helped develop the first computer. In 1952, Turing admitted to a sexual relationship with another man (illegal in the UK at the time) and was convicted of gross indecency. His conviction ruined his reputation and on 8 June 1954 he killed himself by eating an apple poisoned with cyanide. Alan Turing received a posthumous Royal Pardon in 2013.

² This was the same car park that Albert Kennedy fell to his death from in 1989. He had been in care and suffered from depression, and may have been engaging in sex work. The Albert Kennedy Trust was set up in 1989 to support LGBT young people who are homeless or living in a hostile environment.

interventions. These sites, and the isolation they represented, provided respite from the pressure of life on the streets. As part of this tour, we learnt that being homeless can feel like getting a break to sort your head out and that isolation was sometimes a welcome relief as it meant staying out of trouble.



Image 3. Alan Turing statue, Sackville Gardens: ‘This is where I sometimes come, when I just want someone to chat and listen’.

The first site – the Alan Turing statue in Sackville gardens – was described as peaceful, but also connected to crime, violence and sex work, especially at night. In the day time, this was a place that our tour guide could express feelings in the company of another who, helpfully, did not answer back:

It’s where I come. Some people think I’m mad because I sit talking to him. But he gets my head straight ... He don’t pass judgment, that’s the one thing.

I used to sleep in the car park over there and then in the day time I’d come and sit here and then just talk to Alan. Sometimes it was like, he was the only one that listened, at one point. Because I went through a bad patch in my life, but I didn’t see any point, any way round it. And then like when I started getting into a bit more trouble with different people, it was like sometimes I’d just come sit here for a day or so. And then even just sitting here, watching things go past you’re not on your own because you got someone sat next to you. And yeah, looks a bit creepy but it’s, sometimes it’s all you need, someone that’s just there. You know what I mean?

The solidity, immovability and isolation of the statue’s presence feels more secure and comforting than an unpredictable, moving and movable person here. This feeling of solidity and immovability contrasted to the discomfort our tour guide experienced when referred to a counsellor:

... they put me through for counselling and then they went, it was (the counsellor) went off sick and then by the time she’d actually come back I’d found myself more at ease (at the Men’s Room) than I did talking to her. Because it was like meet up in

a café to discuss like personal problems. So it was like you're talking in cafés about your feelings and it didn't feel right at the time ...

The phrase 'didn't feel right' may reflect something of the importance of companionship rather than a therapeutic intervention at this point in our tour guide's life. In addition, the Gay Village and the Men's Room provided an accepting environment for this young man, in which his experiences of sex work were recognised as familiar rather than exceptional, and the connection between Alan Turing and the suffering caused by homophobia, which our tour guide was aware of, was no doubt important for a young man who identified as gay. The referral into the Men's Room had provided a regular point of contact and support for our tour guide – a specialist service operating in the area of the Village that did not expose him to other interventions. There is also a good sense here of voluntary sector agencies working in partnership - our tour guide had been referred to the Men's Room by the counselling agency.

A feature of the tour, prominent in the second site but also present in the first, was that these sites provided a place of retreat from the social world as well as a vantage point from which to watch movements in the street. Our tour guide connected these vantage points with a capacity to protect others as well as feel protected. On the third floor of the multi-storey car park, he commented: 'so this bit, yeah, you can watch down the street, and up the street, and keep your eye on like things that is going on about'; 'it's like, you're kind of like the eyes and the ears'. He reported that he had phoned the police when he saw people at risk in Sackville Gardens, and intervened from his vantage point in the car park to stop inebriated men being taken down the canal path and attacked late at night. There's a sense in which this overarching protection may be imagined, or desired, as much as a reality, but it also, perhaps, is indicative of the ground-level, informal kinds of support that the Men's Room might nurture (see walk seven, below).

The third floor of the multi-storey car park, like the Alan Turing statue, provided a safe place to express intense emotions. Here, our tour guide described how he placed himself above and away from the street, and it is almost as if this is necessary in order to express himself safely (both for himself and others). The intensity of his feelings had led him into confrontations with others, including with the police; a concrete place up above the streets provides an environment infused with the resistant material, distance and anonymity necessary for containing destructive feelings:

The best thing is, you can stand here and just scream, like, all your emotions out and nobody hears it. It's like a release ...

When I started getting like really wound up and stuff, because it used to like, I'd get tugged every night. As soon as you get accused of one thing, that's it, you're tarnished with the brush by the police. The police are all over you like there's no tomorrow. But then I found like I could come here like if I felt like things were getting on top. I could just sit down, scream, let it all out and then go back down when I feel better.

These two sites represent a search for secure immovable objects in the face of overwhelming feelings. The concrete and metal facades of the city provide moments of relief and respite - they do not answer back, move or intervene. This solidity creates a feeling of release, but also perhaps reproduces a sense of 'I am not worth listening to' or, 'it is not safe for me to talk to another person'. Perhaps the permanent presence of the Men's

Room in these sites, with its consistent offer of a protective, compassionate, non-interventionist, 'not answering back' style of contact, might provide a valuable stepping stone from Alan Turing's comforting presence to more responsive forms of support.

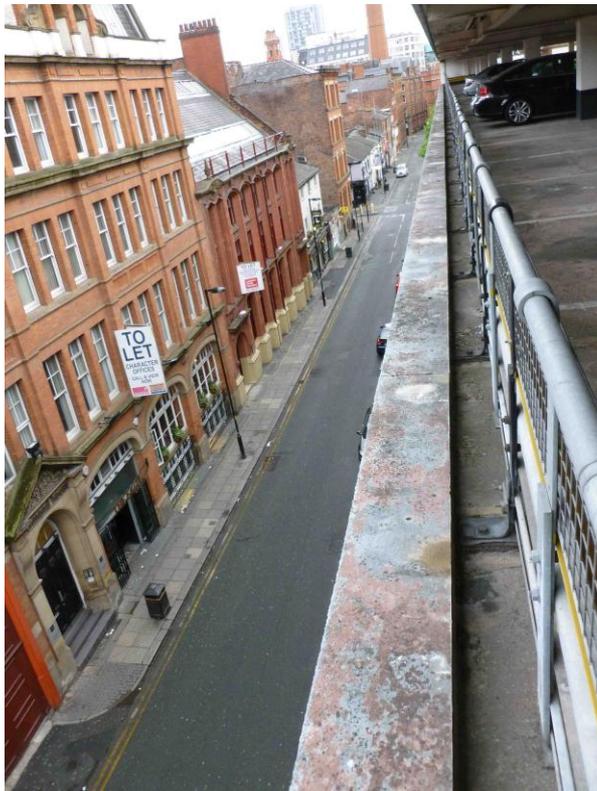


Image 4. Chorlton Street car park, facing Bloom Street: 'You feel like you're on top of the world here'.

Walk two: 'The wheels are turning'

Our second tour guide took us to two places in the city centre that provide food, toiletries, clothes, advice, companionship and cultural activities – Barnabus (a Christian homeless charity) and the Booth Centre (a day centre for homeless people). Over the course of the tour, he sketched out a weekly routine that showed how homeless people survive in the city. It is worth noting that this routine shows that the experience of homelessness, for some at least, does not accord with the stereotype that homeless people live chaotic lives. Our tour guide named a range of agencies offering support in addition to the two visited (City Centre Project, Cornerstones, the Mustard Tree, Narrowgate), and it became clear from this that (in the words of our seventh tour guide – see below) 'Manchester was always a city that you could never starve in':

I brought you here (the Booth Centre) because this is probably the most pivotal part of the morning. For instance, through the week it's like, I think it's between like eight and nine o'clock these open in the mornings. And they give people like hot drinks and stuff like that. And sandwiches and toast and stuff in the morning. Just to basically wake them up and just help them in case they've had like a rough night's sleep ... I think it's a good system they've got and it's a good way they like interact with people and they help them get birth certificates and everything. So, yeah. And I

think they got people like, you know, if they're foreign and that then the y've got interpreters as well ... They've got internet access in there ...

... normally I just used to wait for Cornerstone Day Centre to open. And then, and that's like half ten in the morning. But the City Centre Project is open at ten. So I used to come here (the Booth Centre) at eight, eight to nine. And then when this closed, waited an hour and that and then the City Centre Project was open and then I'd get a breakfast there and stuff after like I've had, I think we used to get like, you know, hot drinks out here in the garden and go inside and then have sandwiches and that and then go to CCP, get a hot breakfast and then go to Cornerstone and spend 50p on a dinner ... Although you've got nothing then you're still living, you're still surviving, you've still got food, you know what I mean?

Our tour guide distinguished between agencies that run 'good systems', and those that have 'ill-mannered' systems – with the latter timed to open and shut without thought as to where homeless people could go next (that is, where there is no service open for them to go on to). He paints a picture of a life sustained by and grounded in the rhythm of services that provide the basics for survival – food, warmth, clothes, companionship and familiarity, and where what makes these spaces comfortable is 'everyone being in the same situation as you'.



Image 5. Weekly timetable on the door of the Booth Centre, Manchester: 'I think it's a good system they've got'.

However, he also reported a feeling of being 'stuck in a rut'. Life experiences (eviction and family break up at a vulnerable age) left him isolated and stigmatised, and things going wrong and feeling out of control. With no infrastructure of support coming from family life, he constructed one from what was available when he first found himself homeless as a teenager. For the last ten years:

I've had places and I haven't had places. I've stayed here, I've stayed there. It's just been erratic. Really and truly I should have sorted myself out. I'm not, you know what I mean? I'm not mistaking that, you know what I mean? But it's just pressure. And then things happen around you and you don't know how to control it and then it's just like the building blocks you're trying to build up and just getting knocked down. Like other people just kick them over, ha-ha-ha, laugh at you. Do you know

what I mean? And then they just perceived you, perceived to be like to be some dickhead or something because like, you know, you're not on it or you're not doing what the rest of the people are doing. So, it's just hard. Really is.

As we moved across the city centre, our tour guide vividly described his sense that he did not have the same foundations as others, and that this marks him out as different and creates a fear of others' perception. The issue of foundations is important here:

I think if I had everything that I needed put in front of me and said, 'Right. If you can maintain this, you know, you've got it now.' Do you know what I mean? Everything that is there. Do you know what I mean? Fair enough not everyone can have it for them. You've got to work for it, do you know what I mean? But if I was possibly put into the whole situation to just go, 'Right. Duh-duh-duh-duh. Everything you need to survive.' Do you know what I mean? 'There you go.' I didn't really have that opportunity, do you know what I mean, growing up ... I didn't have any chance to think, any chance to do, you know what I mean. Make my own foundations, or anything.

As a young man not involved in criminal activity and with no diagnosed mental health issues – it may be difficult for him to access the kind of 'foundational' support that he wishes for here, and in the style of a 'good citizen' he comments 'fair enough ... you've got to work for it'. As we return, he offers a remark that reflects this belief in the need to work for rewards, here as part of a worldview inflected with a generalised lack of control over weekly routines as well as overarching life maps:

To be honest this town's just crazy. It's just full of random people that just do their random thing and just reiterate their lives every day ... No matter what, you're always going to have like, I don't know, an elite following and schedule to stick by, isn't it? That everybody has to stick by. It's like, really and truly, before you even start to live your money is already spoken for, isn't it? Say your house, your council tax, your everything. And then your food, your car and then it all builds up and then your holidays and everything. Because it's all expected for so it's all there. All the wheels are turning. And then that's what you must live by. Do you know what I mean? So it's, I don't know, that, we're all just slaves chipping away at the pyramids, aren't we?

Just before this, we passed the Royal Exchange Theatre (where he has performed as part of the Men's Room's partnership with the theatre) and the inference here was that the Men's Room provides a stop on the weekly routine that counters the 'craziness' of the city, providing spaces to collaborate with others and get involved in making art and theatre. Here, the Men's Room provides some kind of pause for meaning in an overall routine characterised by powerlessness. However, it is also clear that a lack of foundations, consciousness of being different and generalised beliefs about the world may make it difficult to break with a weekly routine that reliably supported his survival during an important stage of life, regardless of the deadening effects it might also yield.

Walk three: Bridges

Our third tour guide took us to two sites: Barnabus (described above), which provides an address, use of a telephone, food parcels, an advice worker, help with housing issues and referrals on to other services; and a bridge along the canal – a site for selling sex. He described how long he stays on the bridge, a little bit about what happens, and how those living in flats in the regenerated mills around the site take photographs of what is going on.



Image 6. The bridge: 'Up there is, you know, where you sell sex and you get paid for things'.

The overview of survival related here is associated with access to food and advice on housing, and making a living from sex work in a way that he can stay in control of: 'I stay till about half, I stay till about 10 o'clock then I'm off. I'm done.' The Men's Room provides a space in which these experiences can be discussed, and a social network that enhances his security (he describes being on the bridge with other young men from the project). He was a little reticent when relating his experiences, and we did not probe further.

Walk four: Shifting gear

Our fourth tour guide took us to two sites – Piccadilly Gardens and a multi-storey car park close to Piccadilly Gardens on Tib Street – sites associated with the 'mucky, dirty, grimy side' of selling and using drugs in the city. He tells us that he used to sell drugs in these sites but now tries 'to stay away from them as much as possible'. We pass drug dealers in Piccadilly Gardens, nearby alleyways where drugs are stored in coke cans and empty bottles, and arrive at the car park, where our tour guide announces 'most of the car parks in the city centre are used to take drugs in'. Multi-storey car parks provide safe, undisturbed spaces for drug users with the added value of easy access to opportunities for theft. We proceed to the seventh floor and look over onto the asphalt covered rooftop of the floor below which is covered in used syringes – many more than we were able to capture in a photograph.



Image 7. Tib Street multi-storey car park: 'You can see it, cracked needles and that. Nasty place'.

Our tour guide tells us that 'there's always a dark side to everywhere. Manchester's dark side is probably deeper than anywhere else's. It really is'. He emphasises that the city is full of similar places that are beyond the surveillance and interest of authorities and services:

No-one's like 'where are all these crack heads going, where are all the smack heads, where are all the homeless going to drink the beer?' Going down canals? Because you don't really find them down canals no more. You find them in dingy, dark places, you find them in places where people keep valuables, you find them in all sorts of places. You find them up in your face and you don't even realise ... You get these people and they, they only see things the way you're told to see them. And you're told to see certain things. Whereas me, what I'm told to see, I've got my own eyes, I can do what I want. Do you get what I mean?

The comment that 'I've got my own eyes' is important – we were being shown a world that our tour guide presented as beyond the eyes and ears of services; survival in this context required a guarded and aware practice of looking and attending. In this environment, dealing drugs is an option for survival as long as you are 'strong minded'; dealing 'hard' drugs is especially stressful and risky. However, drawing on a cultural motif of movement and freedom (and echoing a Romantic association of walking with emancipated thinking and action) our tour guide affirms that if you are able to use your eyes well, free and open engagement with the city is possible. Because nobody is looking, there is freedom in the nooks and crannies of grimy Manchester, and access to a world of possibility:

You can go anywhere in the city and just you own it, you own the city. There's police, there's the general public, there's all them, but at the end of the day though no one's actually there.

It is important to note the energetic vision of freedom and resilience relayed here, at the same time as acknowledging the challenges of managing everyday life. Our discussion whilst returning to the starting point of the tour focused on how it is difficult and yet necessary to plan carefully when you have little money: 'you've got to accommodate, you've got to structure yourself, you've got to rethink, you've got to think, right, I've got to pay my gas bill, my electric bill, my Sky bill, I've got so much left over. I need food but, I really want to go out tonight, one night out, can I do that?' Overall, the tour guide conveyed a contradictory sense of power and powerlessness: power gained from 'owning' the dark side of the city and from controlling its most pressing risks and stresses – powerlessness and a fatalistic attitude coming from lack of money and resulting limited choice. Our tour guide articulated a finely differentiated internal and external landscape of risk in the city. The question arising here is:

how can services work with young men's self-made maps so as to facilitate their movement from here to there, making the best use of what they know – and thus affirming a sense of power and agency - whilst also providing practical and realistic moments of reflection and support?

Walk five: 'Escalation, escalation'

Our fifth tour guide took us to one site only – the ground floor level of another car park – and described finding a means of survival in robbing from cars, sometimes by identifying cars with unlocked doors and sometimes by breaking in.

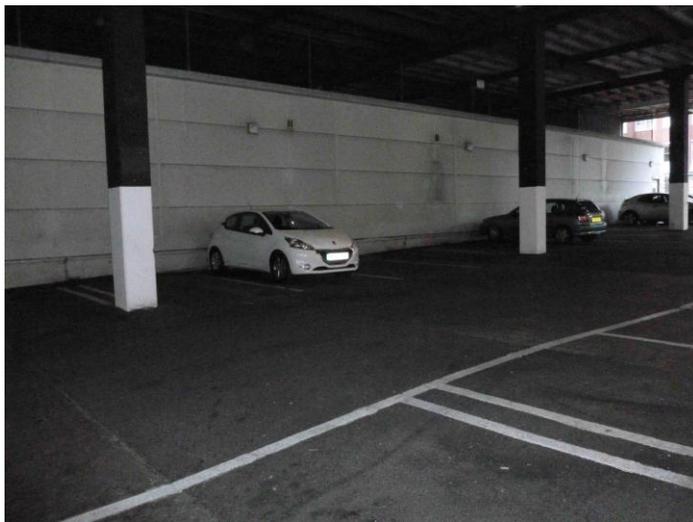


Image 8. City centre car parks: 'If you find an open car, check it, if there's nowt in it, sleep in it, if there is stuff, take stuff, sell it, get yourself a B&B for the night'.

Like our fourth tour guide, he had developed a finely tuned sense of risk that attached to different activities: we heard about how to rob from cars, what you have to weigh up when approaching a car park, what to do if there are police nearby, the importance of selling on quickly, shops that will and won't buy stolen goods. Our tour guide was honest about the fear and occasional panic that he remembers from some of these experiences, and tells us that his motivation was to survive whilst homeless – to raise money for food and weed, a ticket for the gym to get a shower, a night in a hotel. He was resourceful and pragmatic, only robbing enough to get by and never 'smashed out of my head' because you take more risks when drunk. He developed a trust of gut instincts – 'sometimes I'd go out and, and I'd wake up in the morning and think I don't want to steal today, today's a bad day'. He also described a process of becoming attuned to the level of risk he was prepared to take. One experience of a commercial burglary led to a near-death experience and capture by the police – this was presented as a turning point, after which he scaled down his criminal activity: 'I thought what the fuck am I playing at? Like, I've gone from being like a mummy's, like a mummy's boy and all that doing all my studies thinking that I was going to university and next thing you know I'm some low level gangster with all these crazy people from around Manchester. I was thinking how do I even know these people?'

Family breakdown, exclusion from college, drug use and increasing level of criminal activity had led to a period of homelessness. The moment when he was asked to leave college led to an escalating spiral of trouble:

I was like right where do I go? What do I do? And then that was where we had to try and sort of make a life plan from nowhere and before that I was a naïve kid who thought the world was going like, my, everything was going fall into place. I was like, take the next step, take the next step and it was all going happen, like I went to college from school and I was expecting uni from college, I was expecting a career from uni like that and it just never happened from the first ... from there I started smoking weed just to waste the eight months or nine months it was till next September and then by then I'd sort of become hooked on weed and then low level crime and stuff was already been glorified. Before that I wouldn't have even put 11 penny toffees into a 10p mix and stuff, like I was literally like that, that shy, not shy, what's the word? Like proper, do you know what I mean? ... So then low level petty stealing and then that turned into maybe nicking a couple of CD's from HMV or summat and then the more I done the more I felt confident I could a bigger one and a bigger one and then selling little bits of weed and ecstasy tablets and things like that and it was just escalation, escalation. No one really gave me a rain check as well, like to say look this is where you've come, from to here, like it was all left to me like, he'll sort his own head out and it was like well yeah I'm a bright kid but I've not got all the answers you know. Everyone just expected me to be able to stop when the time is right ...

When asked, he mentioned a few moments when a positive intervention may have helped stall this escalation, however, he also acknowledged that 'there's no particular time I could pinpoint and say if someone told me something then or if someone done something then I wouldn't be here now because I have ruined chances and opportunities and stuff like through me own fault'; 'pretty much story of my life like no one's ever beat me I've beat myself before they get the chance'.

Two phrases in the long extract above stand out – the pressure to 'make a life plan from nowhere' as a young man, and having no one who could help him take a 'rain check', and say, 'look, this is where you've come, from here to here'. Whilst he has put the breaks on the escalation of criminal activity, he is less able to imagine a life plan that restores his early sense of potential. At the time, our tour guide had successfully held down a tenancy for two years, was accessing a range of services and taking part in a range of youth and community projects. He was also looking for work - 'at the minute I want a job, like any job. Like, screw a career right now, I need work'. Here, there may be a need to be realistic but also imaginative about mapping progression. The ability to own the dark side of the city that resonates across the two walking tours recounted above, creates obstacles to being able to imagine a life plan that combines a sense of realism with a restored sense of imagination and potential.

Walk six: 'Pass the parcel'

The sixth tour guide took us to one site only – a neglected, grassy place underneath some railway arches down a track off Deansgate, close to Beetham tower. This is where he slept when first homeless in Manchester as a 15 year old. Our tour guide had been in care from a young age, and moved from care home to care home many times - leaving him with a powerful sense that 'no-one knows what it is like and so no-one has the right to make the rules'. He comments that his experiences of the care system left him with an enduring sense of unsettlement as well as have repeatedly led him into confrontation with others: 'care system's made me the way I am now because it's all rules and rules telling me what to do, what not to do'; 'people said I had an attitude problem, a behaviour problem ... I just speak my mind, I don't take shit. Good with running my gum, without thinking'. Since leaving care,

he has been affected by violence on and off the streets and has been involved in sex work. This tour featured a repeated sense of being overwhelmed by intense feelings of isolation, anger and frustration – ‘I’m still kind of fucked now, it’s because of my gob that I get into trouble, I just don’t like the answer no and I kick off, I do kick off though I don’t mean to do but it just happens’.

Our tour guide noted that early experiences of homelessness featured some positive memories arising from informal networks of support – here, he was part of a small group of young people who looked after each other:

We were all young, there was four us we all looked after each other, I was the eldest then there were three other younger ones so I had to show them the ropes of what to do, how you keep yourself to yourself, we had to shoplift when we were living on the streets, how to beg ...

We’re all young, we’re all homeless, so we all started chatting, we went ‘we all need to stick together’, it’s safer in the group than it is by yourself, when I was by myself I got attacked ... and then with a group you feel so, more, someone to talk to someone, to be there for each other, someone to chat to, to listen to your problems

There is a tinge of romanticism here perhaps, but informal support networks available to those living on the streets, including local security guards, also featured as part of the final tour (see below) and are worth noting here:

We had people come checking on us, security, bringing us brews ... just making sure I was alright, we were young kids, asking us what we were doing there, said we’re homeless we’re just keeping ourselves this is just to get our head down, keep it nice and tidy, we had a fire every night. Yeah. Just to keep warm ... I copied other homeless people. When I was younger there was a homeless guy collecting cardboard and I asked him what he was do that doing it for and he said it’s for, to get the ground soft, it’s a bit softer than the ground, so a group of us we’d go cardboard hunting and put the cardboard down and got all our sleeping bags out, had a laugh and a giggle, fell asleep ...



Image 9. On our approach to the railway arch, we disturb a homeless camp: ‘This is where we used to sleep, under this bridge ... “I used to be homeless and I used to sleep here, do you mind me taking a couple of pictures?”’

Our tour guide reports that he had contact with young people’s services when living on the streets, and that engagement with the Men’s Room had been particularly important. Men’s Room staff offered a relationship of care, conveyed understanding of his situation, and helped to combat isolation:

I was begging on the street and a guy came and approached me and, actually I was sex working on the bridge and he approached me and said we’ve got an organisation that will get help lads like you, sex working, I went what? And he came to me and said come along and find out, then he helped me with my housing, he got me a hostel, he got me into connections of meeting people ...

They came with a different, that, I was somebody, that I was a human being that I was appreciated, that I was a human being and there’s stuff out there what can actually be there, go out, be there, and actually care about you. Because when you’re homeless you think no one gives a damn.

He reflected for some time on his experiences in care, which for him were a source of his ongoing problems –including his inability to contain his feelings and anger, and struggle to settle into a tenancy:

When you’re in care, you get moved around like a toy, you get pass the parcel and they look at you, speak to you, down to you like you’re a bad child, and you’re not really you’ve just got problems and you’re homeless, you got no family ... it’s not right you getting passed around everyday, everyday I had a new home and a new house, every week I had a different place to stop, it started to do me head in, it was proper getting to me because I didn’t know where I was going be one minute, I didn’t know where I was going to be the next ...

His life experiences reproduced the itinerant character of his childhood, and both his unsettlement and self-reported confrontational manner have no doubt been an important strategy of survival. The enforced mobility and foundational lack of care here creates an emotional landscape punctured by the fact that he was not ‘passed on’ to the Men’s Room, rather, staff from the project came looking for him. At the time of the tour, he was the most settled he had ever been, although still not able to hold down a tenancy. He also reported feeling anxious about life after leaving the Men’s Room –he was approaching the age limit for the project and would soon no longer be able to access the significant levels of support he had experienced over a period of more than ten years.

Walk seven: Moving on

On the final tour, we were taken to three sites – a patch of grass in Piccadilly Gardens, a lamppost on Canal Street, and the fourth floor of a multi-storey car park, positioned above a casino close to Deansgate. Our tour guide was supported by the Men’s Room for a number of years and has now ‘moved on’ - settled, with a partner and working in a low paid job. The walk featured a diverse array of tactics and strategies of survival –finding good places to sleep, selling sex, creating a social network underpinned by informal exchanges and

obligations, making good use of formal sources of support available, taking up free offers from city centre bars. This was the longest of our tours and the most difficult to summarise. Our tour guide was articulate and expansive, and it is worth noting that much has been left out of the account given here.

The means of survival presented during the tour can be characterised as using personal skills and capacities to build an infrastructure of 'formal' and 'informal' support. In terms of formal support networks, our tour guide described how he accessed the agencies already named in several of the tours above for food, clothing, an address, advice on housing and legal matters, companionship and social and cultural activity. As noted above, we discovered that 'Manchester was always a city that you could never starve in. You couldn't go hungry because there was food every night'. However, lack of coordination between services made it difficult to secure either temporary or long-term housing: 'you'd go to housing and say I'm homeless I'm sleeping on the street, you actually, you had to be found sleeping on the street for the housing to accept you'; 'the Men's Room would regularly advocate on your behalf but the council wouldn't accept it ... until you've been referred by an agency and the council tax said that you're homeless the hostels won't touch you'. The formal infrastructure of support, therefore, managed to meet the needs of basic survival effectively but could not facilitate 'moving on', in part, perhaps, because it lacks the flexibility of informal networks of support (described below). In the case of our tour guide, these informal networks were arguably more helpful than formal agencies in terms of his eventual moving on from homelessness and into secure accommodation and a job.

The informal network of support described by our tour guide formed an extraordinary, uncanny shadow of the formal crisis support agencies in the city. This shadow infrastructure ranged from establishing radical and risky forms of sociality with other homeless people, engaging in sex work, becoming part of the homeless labouring force organised by the travelling community (£20 and hot food for a day's physical labour), deliberately engaging in petty offending so as to receive a prison sentence (for the company, for a break, for warmth, three meals a day and a 'roof over my head'), developing positive relationships with security guards at corporate car parks, making use of 24 hour opening of casinos for free coffee and somewhere warm to rest up, and opening multiple email accounts to apply for free food offers from city centre bars.



Image 10. Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester: 'If it wasn't for this spot and being here at the right time and those lads walking by I don't know how life would have gone'.

The importance of informal social networks was indicated by the first stop on our tour – a patch of grass in Piccadilly gardens:

Two other young lads who were also homeless came across and started speaking to me, obviously they'd recognised from my attire or whatever that I wasn't doing too well for myself at the time and for the next week they sort of massively defended me and they took me to all the places where I could get food, at the time I wasn't old enough to go into a night shelter so they showed me a spot where they slept ... it was one of those young lads who ultimately led me on to the major part of my survival in Manchester was they introduced me to selling sex in the Village and that's pretty much what got me through seven years of needing to survive Manchester ...

He commented that 'when you're homeless there is a massive camaraderie, it's not everyone's left to themselves' and that this creates an informal network of exchanges and obligations that provide insurance against the worst deprivations of homelessness. These were not lifelong friendships, but they may well have been life-saving; this informal network of exchange and obligation provides a kind of resource and security:

It's a weird way of putting it but when you develop your little group on the streets it's kind of like if you lived in a shared house together, I'd get paid on a Monday, person A would get paid on a Wednesday someone else would get paid the following Tuesday they get paid on the Friday but so long as a group we had money we would look after each other ...

These were also risky relationships - there was sometimes a sense of threat and intimidation that accompanied obligation, and also a sense that this cycle of obligations makes it more difficult to move on:

It can also be seen as sort of a bullying entity as well in respect of when you've been paid today, I need some heroin, I bought you beer last week you have to give me money for heroin today and it's, it's one of the reasons why it is a never ending circle, that without housing options out there people won't easily get themselves away from it ... because the never ending circle of people on the streets needing their money for themselves and each other it's also, it's one of the other reasons why those two lads at the very beginning could have come and spoke to me, is because it made me reliant on them ... and I then I went on to do the same thing ...

It's a weird analogy but a drug dealer will generally give you your first fix for free because then you'll come back, if you see someone who's in need and you provide them with a sandwich and, 'here I've got some cans, here have one of my cans', then they're sort of reliant on you so, then they're sort of reliant on you so when they've got money you go there ...



Image 11. Canal Street: 'This lamppost was my couch'

Our second stop was a lamppost on Canal Street – a spot from which our tour guide would seek opportunities to sell sex. This was an opportunity that arose from his informal network of support, and, like committing petty crime to receive prison sentences, was often motivated by the desire for a roof over his head, warmth and food:

He said look it's raining it'll be nice to get indoors tonight, I know someone that will take us home but we'll have to have sex with him and the very first time I did it, it literally was that, it was no money involved, no cash changed hands, we just literally picked him up on Canal Street, we went back to his, we had sex, we stayed overnight he made us breakfast the next day and that was it, through that I then saw him two nights later when I was by myself and we did the same thing again but he bought me a couple of drinks and from moving on from that I developed a knack of spotting people who were out on Canal Street looking for people who were selling ...

Our final stop was the multi-storey car park where our tour guide slept on his first night of being homeless (and also, over a period of four or five years of homelessness). The car park was a good spot as it had a toilet with a sink open 24 hours a day, and the stairwell itself was on one of the top floors and part of the fire exit close to a functioning lift – car park users tended to use the lift rather than the stairs so the group were generally undisturbed. This meant that security guards allowed them to stay:

The security guards were quite knowledgeable about the fact that people were sleeping there, they used to say that if we were tucked away on the top deck then we weren't disturbing anyone so long as we were gone by six in the morning they weren't bothered ...

There was one guy, when he was on shift, he'd come and wake you up in the morning with a flask of coffee ... he'd come with like three coffee cups and a flask, here you are lads, I've made you a flask, drop it back in the office when you're done make sure you clean your mess up ...



Image 12. Stairwell, multi-story car park close to Beetham tower: 'I skipped here for about four, five years but each time that you'd come out of jail and come back to it you have to realise that you're coming back to someone else's territory' ('to skip' means to 'kip out' – to sleep outdoors).

The character of the security guard in this narrative is surprising – in this case, his caring attitude led to a further avenue of support, and although he does not mention it here, our tour guide later worked in a casino – a job that led to him taking up a tenancy:

It was through here that one of the security guards said to us, you know, in the casino downstairs you don't need to be a member because a lot of the casinos require passport photo ID, that sort of stuff, at the casino downstairs you don't need to be a member, he said, so if you're looking quite presentable and you get somewhere to put your bags, put your stuff in there, and get yourself a coffee ... I spent four months sleeping in a casino, the casinos are twenty-fours a day, I had a casino membership card, I'd go in a casino late at night I'd get myself a free cup of coffee, I'd sit in front of the big sports screen and fall asleep in the chair, I now go in the casino as a customer, like as a player and see people doing exactly same thing that I did it's not it's not something you'd notice again if you hadn't been there and done it ...

There is a final means of survival provided by the shadow infrastructure of support that is worth noting here - this involved noticing the prevalence of a consumer driven culture in urban city space and turning this to his advantage:

One of the biggest elements of survival is to go to the library, they have the free Internet access and when you're on the Internet in the library it's surprising even now, I still go off and do it now I've got a job, the amount of places that give away free food, pubs, restaurants, Pitcher and Piano, if you if you sign up for emails from Pitcher and Piano then they send you a voucher for a free burger and a pint, if you sign up for emails with Yates they send you a voucher for a free burger and chips.

Now it's very simple to go onto hotmail and create fifty email addresses and sign up for emails, so you get fifty vouchers, costs you ten pence to print in the library you've got burger and chips for 10p ...

This tour provided insight into a shadow infrastructure of support that features buying, selling, exchanging and gambling. Interestingly, our tour guide's reflections on the Men's Room seem to suggest that its provision blurs the boundaries between informal and formal networks of support. Here, the shadow economy of selling, buying and exchanging and relations of obligations is traversed by unconditional support and advocacy, where young men met to share up to date information about dodgy punters and changing landscapes of risk on the streets, and where formal and informal relationships of support are unconditional and non-judgmental:

I met another lad who on a Wednesday night told me that they had a support group for people who were selling sex, you can go along you can get some dinner and you can have a couple of hours where you can talk to people and for me one of the reasons why I was selling was for the roof over my head and for the dinner so the element of being able to go somewhere to get dinner, that meant I didn't have to work that night was what made me interact with them, what made me stay was the fact that it was just a, a really friendly group where no one judged anyone else and you all got along, and it made me develop more contacts back out on the streets where I was working, and it comes back to like I said about the homeless you all look after each other and you all have each others backs and it's, it's quite a large community but it's also a really tight knit one and everyone knows everyone else and everyone knows what everyone's up to and everyone will help everyone else.

The Visual Matrix with Men's Room Staff and Volunteers

This section describes the themes and issues that arose in the VM. These are illustrated with example images (either expressed verbally in the VM or in drawings in the session afterwards) that were used for the interpretation of the data. Although an attempt is made to structure the themes and issues for the purposes of analysis, it will be noted that many of these are interrelated, overlapping and difficult to separate from each other. Here the collage like style of associations that emerge in the VM is in tension with the structure of a written report.

Visibility/invisibility: recognition, lack of recognition and misrecognition

The VM brought out the associations of staff and volunteers around how the men struggle with belonging, as well as identifying a series of tensions around recognition, lack of recognition and misrecognition. This was contemplated in terms of the men wanting to be seen and yet not seen. The participants evoked images of invisibility, (being unseen in the city and lost in a map; compared to ghosts; avoiding surveillance cameras; 'feeling of not being seen, invisible'). These images were interconnected with other images of wanting to be visible, needing care, attention, and recognition (images of beds, being cradled by clean linen, washing on the line, being on someone's radar). Taken together, the images described a complex reality that seems to embrace a desire to be visible in conditions in which it is functionally necessary to be invisible, and in which the men suffer both from a lack of recognition (from housing and social services, for example, and within society more generally) and acts of misrecognition (from many people). By being invisible, the men are able to slip unnoticed through the city, they are able to avoid surveillance and enjoy a form

of power, agency, identity and recognition from peers ('...ghosts, slipping through, anywhere around town, the way they move, the lads avoiding CCTV, they reach places in town like magic'). These ideas speak to a sense of the (in some ways magical) agency of these young men in the city of Manchester. One of the images produced in the session after the VM captured a sense of ghostly figures moving around the city (see below).

There were other things about being invisible that were not so desired. One of these undesired states of invisibility was that of a lost or invisible childhood. Some images evoked the simple joys of childhood, such as popping bubble wrap and blowing bubbles in the garden. These idyllic images were juxtaposed with other more sinister images ('image of a man wrapped up in bubble wrap running through the city'), which seemed to describe the reality of the situation for these men, in which the bubble wrap is used to wrap them in a kind of trap.

Another element of different conditions of visibility and recognition was expressed through images of memorial. There were two different sorts of images: first, those of tombstones, war memorials, memorial plaques on park benches, which could be 'touched', 'visited' and which had elements of permanence; and second, images of wilting flowers and hand written messages placed in public where people had died ('Sometimes the rain has washed away the words'), images of memorial which seemed more temporary and vulnerable. The images of different notions of memorial evoked a sense that, in comparison to the subjects of permanent memorial, men like these have no histories and monuments, leave nothing behind, suggesting they might not be remembered.

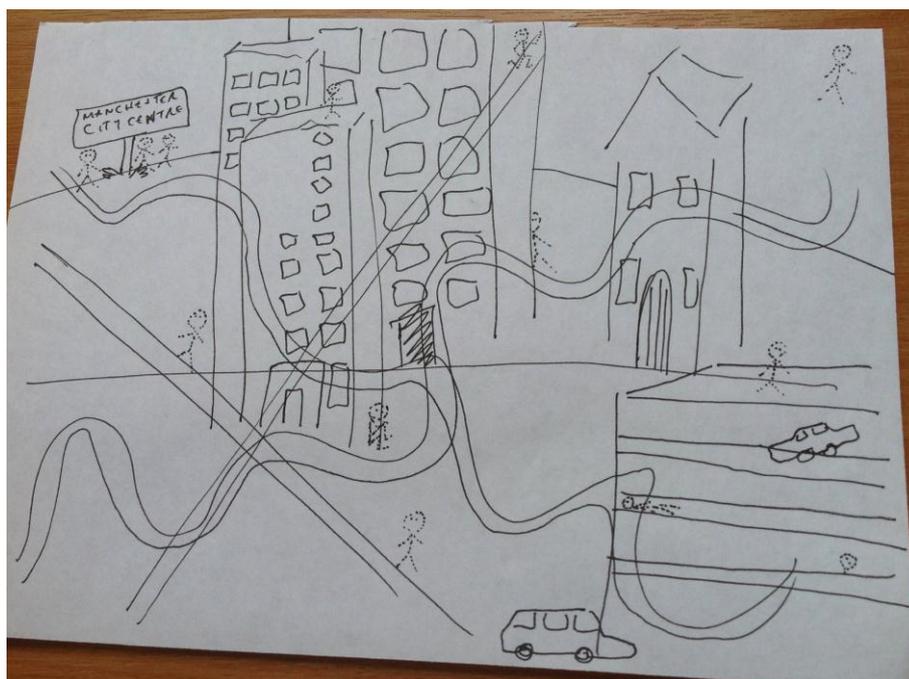


Image 13: Buildings, ghostly figures and routes through the city

The material from the VM points towards a sense amongst the staff and volunteers of the Men's Room that the young men they work with suffer from a general invisibility as well as a lack of recognition. As Ralph Ellison's protagonist in the *Invisible Man* states "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me." It seems possible that in many of the spaces in which these young men live, as well as in the places in which they might receive services, that people simply fail, or refuse, to see them (Sander, 1975 cited in Orange 2010). At the same time, there is an element of visibility – and recognition - that comes with joining

in the activities organised in the Men's Room. This brings out the whole dilemma of belonging and recognition, of what kind of organisation and community can recognise these men and best support them: their peers and their (magical and invisible) world, or outside agents and recognised (visible) structures of society. It is to these issues that we turn in the next section.

Connection and dis-connection: things are not what they seem

The subtle difficulty of knowing how to accompany someone's journey without interfering was expressed in images related to bicycles. The bicycle is normally an individual form of transport, but in the VM there were struggles to see it as a tandem, ('I remember going two on a bike, fun and dangerous'; 'On my birthday we hired a tandem, it was just so difficult to ride, everybody had to jump out of the way'), with all the difficulties that entails. Another image attempted to turn the bicycle into a mass transport event where all were equal in nakedness and vulnerability, ('image of hundreds of cyclists riding naked in Mexico city protesting about the vulnerability of cyclists'). These images speak to one of the issues of care and support for vulnerable people, that is to say, to what extent is it either desirable or possible to join in to an individual's journey to recovery, re-insertion or re-invention? On the other hand, there is a fear that someone left alone might fall, ('I got knocked off my bike and lying in the grimy waters of Manchester Street'). Linked to these images were others evoking a single shoe, as if the men in need were somehow hobbled as people, ('In a park the other day I came across a shoe, single shoe, strange thing to find'; 'I saw a sandal in the middle of the road, why one in the middle of the road?'). Sometimes a *pair* of shoes was seen to be out of reach, ('People throw laced shoes up to get caught in places'), while in another case a single shoe could be used as a cry of protest at injustice, ('I have this image of people throwing shoes in the Arab world as a protest'). The shoe was also evoked as an item of clothing that was particularly owned by a specific person, ('I'm an avid shopper for clothes in charity shops but I don't like looking at second hand shoes, it disturbs me'). What this combination of images evokes is the difficulty of progressing in life without the most basic resources (symbolised by a single shoe), the sense of injustice, (with the single shoe being thrown as a protest), and the apparently distant possibility of ever reaching those basic resources, (the pair of shoes out of reach in a tree), and ever calling them your own, (with shoes symbolising an especially personal resource).

The images of shoes link to fears about the possible futility of supporting these young men. These were made more powerful in the expression of images that questioned what is perceived as being real. In the most sinister image of all, this futility was expressed as putting on a jolly façade in a place of emptiness, (expressed in the 'image of a clown in an empty swimming pool', where what should be full of water is empty and dry, but where the clown attempts to put on a brave face, with his or her exterior also hiding the reality of the person behind the mask). The images of the clown led to a series of other associations in which people either pretended that nothing was wrong, even in the face of a scene of obvious violence and chaos ('I went to Manchester Museum with a group of young men and it was chaos. There were two people fighting on the floor and the Museum lady was saying 'It's fine, it's fine...)'), or in which threats were either present but unseen, ('I have the image of a security guard at the main doors and someone bending down and this guard simulating sex behind her, and all the other guards could see this'), or uncertain but perceived as present ('Wakefield prison was really scary. It had a certain edge, like a million eyes staring out with ulterior motives'). These images are complex and maybe speak to the difficult task staff undertake in working with the realities of these young men's lives. Staff attempt to be positive and to create a supportive atmosphere, but there are fears that they might fail to

acknowledge the realities behind the scenes. In the next section we develop this theme around the relational components of practice and models of care.

Care, control and companionship: 'magic' versus the 'measurement of success'

The dilemmas about visibility and invisibility and fears about futility bring out questions around the appropriate role and approach of different agencies in the lives of people who live on the fringes of society. Evidence from other elements of this research demonstrates the ways the men deeply appreciate the care they receive from the Men's Room. However, in the VM, ambivalence was apparent around how the Men's Room ought to approach this work. A series of questions emerged through different sorts of images ('Image of the lads performing a human chain'; 'Image of a fishing net, hauling it in, a rope net'; 'Image of a huge prison gate'; and a series of images of hamsters trapped in cages trying to escape). Some of these images focused on the collective resilience of the young men ('Image of the lads performing a human chain') encouraging a sense that one strength of the Men's Room is an approach which responds to the men's own frame of reference and the material they bring into the space, and which helps them to develop personal resilience and to form informal communities of help, support and companionship. However, these images were juxtaposed with images of nets and prisons gates, which brought to mind a number of issues related to control as well as numerous images of hamsters which seemed to reflect some important characteristics of the young men. In the images the hamsters were often trying to escape, stuck half inside and half outside cages, were vulnerable to harm or death, but also capable of magical recovery. Taken together these images introduce a number of ideas around care and control: first, a sense that these young men are often trapped or imprisoned by circumstance, second, that they are often subject to regimes of control, third, that neoliberal policies involve a hatred of dependency and a derision of care, and fourth, that many funding regimes for services now expect organisations to deliver specified – measurable – outcomes.

In the VM the desire to support the men and somehow 'magic' this support, (symbolised by the opening references to Harry Potter at the beginning of the VM), is balanced against a dark and gloomy pessimism. This is expressed in the contrast of the 'magical' journey (towards a better life) suggested by the magical open air image, on the one hand, of 'old steam trains, like in Harry Potter, viaducts, open countryside' which is compared to the dark, underground 'image of a train in a tube station and it's the rush hour and everybody is wearing black except me. I want to scatter colours as far as I can'). Coupled to this was a feeling of futility (expressed in images of not reaching a bell in time for the bus to stop, and another image of the alarm going off in a bank robbery, but to no avail: whether you reach the bell or the alarm on time or not, the result is the same, a failure to effect the inevitable outcome). This seems to be an important expression of the fear that it's possible nothing the organisation does will make a difference to the trajectories of these young men.

In the session after the VM, the picture of a clock-like device was compared to Philip Pullman's alethiometer:

- Clock – there is a small window of opportunity
- Pullman's alethiometer in Northern Lights trilogy

The alethiometer ('truth-measurer') was supposed to be a device that could tell the absolute truth to anyone who asked it a question. The reference seems to indicate the struggles that staff may have in establishing what is true and valid in dealing with the men and may also be

related to the issues of what can and cannot be measured, as if a magical measuring device were the only appropriate method. This material points to an internal dialogue within the Men's Room about the organisation's structure, its funding and most critically its approach to working with these men and evidencing outcomes. Duncan and Corner (2012) suggest that workers may often experience a conflict between care and coercion in achieving desired outcomes. At the time of the research a series of important changes in staffing had taken place at the Men's Room and there were insecurities around the organisations long term funding. Our sense was that the material from the VM demonstrated the ways in which Men's Room staff were trying to maintain a sense of the values that informed the work in conditions of organisational insecurity. As Bauman (2000:8) states:

We all, to a greater or lesser degree, experience the world we inhabit as full of risks, uncertain and insecure. Our social standing, our jobs, the market value of our skills, our partnerships, our neighborhoods and the networks of friends we can rely on, are all unstable and vulnerable-unsafe harbours for anchoring our trust.

Some important questions emerging from this might include: does the Men's Room have the latitude to pursue the 'magic' ('Image of Harry Potter...The Sorting hat, sorting people into houses, Getting helped in working out symbols') of creatively supporting the men and helping them to reinvent their lives ('The lads reinventing themselves')? Might the work already embody unwanted elements of control and being controlled and/or might the organisation's insecurities lead it to remodel it's service structure into one which is more explicitly about control and measurement ('Success and how do we measure it?')?

One important thought is that the relational approach of the Men's Room also links back to questions about identity and the men's search for recognition. In the matrix this was linked through images of the slave trade and 'human cargo'; images of objectification, which erased individuality. Other images offered notions of painted faces or fantastic transformations ('Mr Ben, changing room, bowler hat'; 'A transvestite friend, standing there, an amazing master of transformation'; 'Blue eye shadow, bright blue'; 'Brings to mind image of David Bowie as Alladin Sane, and now he's come back'; 'Adam Ant, with his strip of white'). These pointed to a sense of a space in which people are working with identities in a fragile state of becoming. One thought is that the relational approach of the Men's Room provides one of the few spaces in which the fragile self-perception of these young men is conjoined with those of staff and volunteers. Louis Sander (1975 cited in Orange 2010) defines the process of recognition as a *moment of meeting*, where one's self-gestalt meets and matches the way one is known. It may be that in working with young men at the margins of society whose identities are in a fragile state of becoming, that 'measurement' and 'control' are in tension with 'engagement' and 'care'. As Rankin and Regan (2004: 11) point out, 'the more complex a person's needs, the more likely they are to fall through the gaps in the services society provides'. This suggests that the organisational dialogue about its approach to the work is important as well as complex, something we reflect on more fully in the discussion.

Discussion

'I'm persistent, but I can see the flames burning in the distance' (Men's Room member, 2013)

This line from the song created by the young men (see appendix) effectively conveys resilience and agency combined with a sense of impending and unpredictable threat. There is a tension between going forward and being held back – both by circumstance and their own actions - that we see repeated across the research data reported above. This tension between resilience, productive and destructive agency, and threat is explored in the discussion that follows, in which we use the understandings we have developed of the Men's Room to discuss the challenges for agencies working with young men experiencing SMD. We use the motif of 'moving' or 'movement' as an overarching frame whilst structuring the discussion under the following three themes:

- Power, powerlessness and magic/magical agency,
- Commemoration, loss and unexalted lives,
- Connection and disconnection: care, control and companionship.

As noted above, the demand to 'move on' shapes the daily experience and life histories of many young men engaging with the Men's Room. 'Moving on' can be a tactic of survival in a risky environment, enforced by others as a means of control, a strategy employed to elude surveillance, an affirmation of lack of self worth, an assertion of personal agency, as much as a step towards a positive future. The Men's Room and other agencies working with people experiencing SMD must operate inside this complex network of meanings. The Lankelly Chase literature review cautions against defining success in terms of moving on from services as this can be unrealistic, and critiques the overemphasis on quantitative targets as measures of success (Duncan and Corner, 2012: 13). It also makes a case that a more compelling vision is needed of what success might look like in working with people experiencing SMD and who might define it (ibid: 17-18). As Radley et al (2010: 40) point out, people who are homeless often experience enforced kinds of movement that support 'a way of life that circles around but never breaks free'. Our research emphasises that young men involved with the Men's Room demonstrate incredibly complex daily lives of movement in which they manage explicit visibility in some places and absolute invisibility in others. Taking up these points in the discussion below, we explore how the 'movement narratives' of our tour guides and images from the VM interact with the imperative to 'move on' that circulates in the discourses and practices of social welfare agencies, sometimes facilitating moments of profound support, and at other times risking an enforcement of damaging and unsettled conditions.

A turn to Ingold's distinction between 'wayfaring' and 'transport' may be useful to consider at the outset - Ingold denotes the wayfarer as someone who 'negotiates or improvises a passage as he goes along. In his movement as in life, his concern is to seek a way through: not to reach a specific destination or terminus but to keep on going'. This kind of movement is opposed to movement via 'transport' which, 'carries the passenger across a pre-prepared, planar surface ... The passenger's concern is literally to get from A to B, ideally in as short a time as possible. What happens along the way is of no consequence, and is banished from memory or conscious awareness' (Ingold 2010: 126-7). When considering this distinction in relation to the movement narratives offered by young men and staff at the Men's Room, it is clear that 'what happens along the way' is of great consequence and attending to and acknowledging the ways in which young men and social welfare agencies conceptualise

these journeys are both important. Some of our tour guides express a strong desire for 'transport' – a desire for fundamental and functional support to help them construct new foundations, sustainable life plans and the certificates required to enact them – rather than the uncertainties of wayfaring. Many social welfare agencies, working in conditions of neoliberalism, are also expected to 'transport' those they work with from A to B, and are increasingly paid on the basis of whether or not they manage to do so. Below, we explore this in relation to the tension between magical and realist constructions of agency and the paradoxes of care and control.

It is useful to connect this discussion to the work of Jacques Rancière, especially to his notion of police/politics. Here, the 'police' denotes the 'consensual symbolic order' (the city spaces that we all agree are there – the things that we all agree are visible and present). For Rancière, 'politics' emerges when the consensual symbolic order is disrupted (as it was repeatedly during the walking tours, where previously unseen nooks and crannies of the city became inflected with extraordinary significance). As Rancière explains, conflict arises from opposition between 'parties' – people, objects and places that have a proper use, function, identity and those that do not – the 'surplus' or 'void', or the 'part of those without part'. Here, the 'police' (the consensual symbolic order) works to exclude any sensibility of the surplus. As such, the slogan of the police is: 'Move along! There's nothing to see here!' and politics exists 'in re-figuring space ... [and] what is to be done, to be seen and to be named in it' (Rancière 2010: 33-7). The Men's Room crosses the border between the worlds of 'police' and 'politics' - in working with agencies to offer support, access to welfare and housing, and to monitor and report risks facing young men who are selling sex for example. However, the Men's Room also supports - through clear and unconditional acknowledgement of the 'other worlds' – the extraordinary difficulties experienced by the young men. As part of this, the creative and artistic impulse of the project consistently works to engage the young men within their own frame of reference – drawing on their experience, sense of humour and imagination to create artistic products. The project dances – in carefully choreographed ways – the line between police and politics. Informal modes of care and learning are uncannily present inside normative modes, accepting the men's difference and bringing into presence the unseen, irregular, unfixed and outcast experiences within the realms of the declared, normative and regulated. This has ripple effects across the networks of partners and participants of the Men's Room, helping to maintain a diverse social and cultural infrastructure of care in the city (see Batsleer and Hughes forthcoming).

Power, powerlessness and magic/magical agency

The walking tours highlight contradictions in the ways the young men construct their sense of 'agency', that is, their ability to survive and move on in their lives. On the one hand, the narratives evidence the resilience and creativity of young men in trouble - it is clear that they have mapped ways through the city that have secured their survival despite exposure to risk, often at a vulnerable age, and in the context of lack of access to secure kinds of support. Both the tours and the VM evidence tactics and strategies of survival; the tours in particular show how information about these tactics and strategies is shared at ground level across networks of support in ways that ensure survival whilst also imprisoning young men in difficult circumstances.

What is interesting here is how this context leaves some of our tour guides with a strong – almost magical - sense of their own power and agency, oddly combined with powerlessness and fatalistic attitudes when it came to conceptualising normative lifestyles. This sense of magical agency alongside vulnerability was also present in the VM in the image of the

hamsters who were often stuck, vulnerable to harm but also capable of magical recovery. On the second walking tour, the comment that we are 'all chipping away at pyramids, aren't we?', conveyed a diminished sense of possibility in life outside by characterising mundane routines of survival as an aspect of the lives of elite and excluded populations alike. This expression of powerlessness was made alongside testimony that gave clear evidence of being able to survive extraordinary circumstances. On the fourth tour, knowledge of and ability to successfully navigate such extraordinary experiences (the 'dark side' of the city) left our tour guide with a magical, omnipotent sense of his own agency ('you can go anywhere ... you own the city') that provided a counter to the fatalism in his comment that it was impossible to plan his life because of lack of access to money. The magical agency that comes from having experiences of the parts of the city that authorities do not acknowledge or control (in the VM staff also identified with this in the image of 'lying in the grimy waters of Manchester') feels in line with a sense of fatalism, rather than in contradiction to it. Another young man talked about weighing up risks in a way that led to him checking an escalating spiral of criminality – here, the narrative expresses a very realistic appraisal of life chances, both inside and outside of a criminal lifestyle - as well as a clear need for support to imagine ways forward.

At this point, it would be easy to recommend that support agencies work with young men to transform lives constructed within the frameworks of 'magical realism' into 'realist fictions' – however, our tour guides also highlight the failure of realism to capture the imagination, map onto experiences of invisible worlds in the city or acknowledge forms of magical agency that may have been important to survival. What is clear is that life on the streets is both all-encompassing and has something to offer – a magical form of resilience or sense of omnipotence, being part of a network that protects and supports as well as bringing risks, accessible ways of making money that you can be in control of (and that, to some extent, demonstrate your control), opportunities to take calculated risks that regularly pay off, a means of surveying (and staying in control of?) the risky and dangerous parts of the city. Life outside of these worlds is inflected with a sense of deadening, familiar routine and stigmatised identity. The Men's Room may be effective because it crosses between worlds – it provides a sense of belonging and familiarity from being with other young men like you, points of contact and information, creative activity that elicits moments of pause for thought and reflection, as well as points of support that hold out the possibility of imagining an alternative means of survival. In the course of the ethnographic fieldwork, one young man commented 'this is the only place I go all week where it feels ok to just be myself'.

Commemoration, loss and unexalted lives

Commemoration, loss and grief are themes that emerge strongly across the findings from the different methods used in this research. In the VM images of tombstones, war memorials and memorial plaques on park benches evoked notions of memorial sites which could be 'touched', 'visited' and which had elements of permanence, whereas images of wilting flowers and hand written messages placed in public where people had died ('sometimes the rain has washed away the words') evoked notions of memorial which seemed more temporary and vulnerable. In the walking tours, the sites visited related as often to the pasts as the presents of our tour guides, with many of the parts of the city revealed as having surprising (at least for the researchers) and haunting associations with experiences of vulnerability and loss. In some cases, as with the stop to visit Alan Turing on the first tour, there was a sense in which parts of the city had become invested with symbolic value – marking moments of temporary escape and seclusion, intimate confidence, transition to adulthood, or of crossing a border into a more difficult phase of life. There was

a double sadness at play here, the sadness arising from experiences of struggle, and also arising from a feeling that the physical city – with its solid and unchanging presence – had offered stronger, more reliable structures for support and reflection in some of the young men’s lives than families, human beings and services. The psychosocial characteristics of relations – with people, sites and spaces - represent a powerful invocation both to ‘keep moving’ (due to a deep mistrust of familial and other relations) and to keep coming back to certain sites because the sight, sound, smell, touch, taste and solidity is a powerful and reliable source of memory (Cresswell 2004). What emerges is a sense of the undesired states of invisibility, including lost or invisible childhoods, and lives with no histories and monuments to recall or remember them. However, the repeated presence of sites of memorial within the VM and the walking tours also demonstrate the ways in which the staff and young men of the Men’s Room are holding and working with this material together.

A further issue is that these traumatic and difficult childhoods (far from the idealistic picture of childhood that we inherit culturally) had taken a shape and form that would be unrecognisable to many people. This represents a double haunting, as the experiences in themselves represent loss and grief to the young men, and on top of this, there is little in the visible, normative world that indicates recognition or acknowledgement of such experiences. The emotional quality connecting to some of the sites created a strong sense that past and present are held in direct communion – that space is haunted by memory and even though these are memories that are self-defining, nobody knows about them – they are secreted away in these sites, unacknowledged and invisible. This came across very strongly in the VM, with the images of empty picture frames, empty park benches and ghostly figures moving across the city.

For some of the young men, the invisibility of their experience is associated with feelings of anger – as in the sixth walking tour, for example, where our tour guide described not being able to contain the anger and frustration that his experiences of care had left him with. This was also apparent in our participation in drama workshops convened by the Men’s Room, in particular when the group was developing a fictional scenario and one of the young men suggested that the character was living with someone who was using heroin. The Men’s Room facilitator questioned whether this was realistic – leading to exclamations of indignation from many of the young men – who insisted they lived in the presence of these kinds of risks on a day to day basis, and an overall feeling, as commented on in the debrief following the session, of ‘don’t fucking tell us about what is going on, we’ll fucking tell you’. The haunting quality of difficult memories was also present in the song lyrics – there is reference to ‘chasing the past’, and ‘hearts aching’ because ‘memories take you through the dark ages’. There’s also a reference to ‘the pain and the struggle’ meaning that ‘it’s time to tell’ where the attempt to tell fails and a sense of being trapped by reflections on the past: ‘I thought back how it got to this, having no dough, living in a struggle’ (‘dough’ here referring to money).

What emerges from this is a sense that the young men are distinguished by their sense of ‘otherness’, and staff and young men alike clearly struggle with a feeling that these young men are stigmatised and marked out. However, both staff and young men also often argue that these distinctive experiences mark them out as having forms of knowledge and understanding of value that are unseen by others (either because they are hidden, or because others refuse to see them). There is hence a need to acknowledge difficult experiences, and the Men’s Room provides a space for this to happen without further stigmatisation. More than this, however – there may be a need for modes of public storytelling that celebrate marginalised experience. Lost childhoods and experiences of otherness leave behind enduring and resistant feelings of isolation and alienation. The

creative processes and products – exhibitions, performances, films, photography – of the Men’s Room have done this effectively. The failure to see or engage with people facing SMD by mainstream institutions and normative publics affirms a damaging sense of alienation and difference. The question becomes, what forms of intervention might work in addressing these populations and we turn to these in the next section.

Connection and dis-connection: care, control and companionship

We are writing this report at a time of serious and sustained cuts to public funding. Recent cuts are in line with the general orientation of neoliberal policy objectives, which involve a hatred of dependency (on the state) and an objective of all clients achieving the holy grail of ‘self-sufficient consumerism independent of any need for welfare’ (Bishop, 2012: 12-13). In many sectors centralised ring fenced budgets have been replaced with less secure localised funding arrangements and increasingly Payment by Results (PbR) systems are being implemented, encouraging a shift in the balance of payments made to service providers from deliverables to outcomes (Roy and Prest, forthcoming). Recent changes have also increased the demands on non-public forms of funding for welfare work and have increased the pressure on all organisations in receipt of funding to demonstrate their social value, utility and effectiveness. In the 12 months in which this research was conducted, the Men’s Room had a series of problems related to ensuring the financial means of its survival and has been revisiting its model of provision as part of attracting new forms of funding. The narratives of the young men as well as the material from the VM introduce a series of concerns about the appropriate role and approach of different agencies in the lives of the men such as those who use the Men’s Room. One central argument in this section will be that successfully engaging and supporting these men may well be in tension with the current preference for performance measures and definable outcomes (Roy 2011).

Many services operate on the basis of clear relationships, providing tightly defined boundaries, expectations and systems of care or control. Here ‘acting out’ is seen as unacceptable and a threat to order. These services tend to operate on the basis of rationalist models of agency, which presuppose a unitary self that chooses, acts and judges in the service of its own interests. The problem with rationalist models of agency is that they

... simply cannot comprehend how the subject gets stuck, ... procrastinates, ... acts in ways which are destructive to its own interests ... and engages earnestly in projects for reasons which it entirely misunderstands (Hoggett 2000: 172)

As our tour guides explain, a wide variety of the men who use the Men’s Room do not – always - act rationally in their own self interest, even when they have been exposed to persuasive, well delivered and overwhelming advice and guidance about the potential harms of certain behaviours (‘I’m still kind of fucked now it’s because of my gob that I get into trouble, I just don’t like the answer no and I kick off, I do kick off though I don’t mean to but it just happens’) (Roy, 2012). Interestingly, some of the men identify strongly with the ‘active voice’ (‘you’ve got to work for it’), whilst others more reflexively identify their own powerlessness (the pressure to ‘make a life plan from nowhere’). The clash between many service structures and the lives of these young men appear to involve an over-identification with the ‘active voice’ of rational human agency (perhaps an element of performative masculinity and so apparent in recent neo-liberal ideas about subjecthood as individualised, rational and autonomous) and an attendant denial of the ‘passive voice’ of human suffering (Hoggett 2000).

In the VM, there was ambivalence expressed by staff and volunteers about how the Men's Room ought to approach its work. Ambivalence involves the coexistence of contradictory affects, ideas or impulses. Some of those expressed most frequently were between 'care and control', 'hope and futility' and 'magic and measurement'. One identifiable strength of the current approach was the way that staff respond to the men's own frame of reference and the material that they bring into 'the space' whilst operating very clear policies around the acceptability of certain forms of behavior and talk. Interestingly, one of the tour guide's reflections on the Men's Room also makes reference to the ways in which the organisation blurs the relational boundaries that exist in many service settings. This is important because many of these men find it easier to engage with companionship rather than a professional and/or therapeutic intervention.

Recent work in the field of mental health has identified a series of similar issues. Here, there are also problems engaging men in service provision, leading to greater isolation and a higher prevalence of suicide. A recent mental health programme called 'It's a Goal' (IAG), has sought to engage men through the use of a footballing analogy and the use of non professional workers (Spandler, Roy and McKeown, forthcoming). An evaluation of the programme (Spandler, McKeown and Roy, 2011) demonstrates the ways in which the project allowed men to transgress their existing perceptions about the modes of relating privileged in health and welfare interactions, and hence to engage in the 'therapeutic' field (which was the purpose of the project). In the IAG project, supporting one another through personal difficulties was a central way in which some of the disenfranchised men who accessed the programme were able to rediscover their own agency. It was concluded that the dynamic interaction between the project's design and location, and the actions of those who took part in it, co-created a 'paradoxical space' in which expected modes of relating could be transgressed (Spandler, Roy and McKeown forthcoming). What the practices in the Men's Room and IAG both demonstrate is that adaptive and transgressive practices can be necessary in achieving the engagement of some individuals in projects related to personal change.

We argue that the Men's Room, in comparison to many other service domains, is a paradoxical and transgressive space, one in which 'acting out' is literally and metaphorically part of the work. This, of course, leads to a series of uncertainties and anxieties amongst staff. Staff must decide if and when to let things go and when to intervene. As a result, staff sometimes worry about their own controlling behaviours ('I feel like a bouncer on the door') and about the extent to which 'the lads' are sometimes controlling them and each other. The challenge of these forms of practice is that staff must hold and work with this uncertainty. In the VM this was discussed in terms of a 'dance', in which staff must constantly attend to and respond to the men's – physical and psychic – movements. The benefit of this approach is that the Men's Room becomes a site of engagement, detoxification and containment. For example, in the walking tours we see a young man who identifies the statue of Alan Turing in Sackville Gardens and a multistory car park as two of the only places in which he is able to express intense and overwhelming feelings in ways that did not solicit unwelcome responses or interventions. This is a rather desolate articulation of how disconnected some of these young men are from familial and societal networks of support. The question becomes, what does the journey towards interdependence look like for these men? Steven Frosh (2001 p.62) poses the following question about the ways in which we relate to the communities in which we live:

How does one imagine oneself in connection with a community, a culture or a nation ... What is it that allows one to feel part of a social order, able to take up 'citizenship', neither excluded nor excluding oneself? ... To be a citizen, one not

only needs to formally belong somewhere; one has to feel that this belonging is real.

Despite the rhetoric of personalisation, neoliberal funding regimes increasingly conceive service users as ‘passengers’ by virtue of performance measures and systems of payment by results which pay services on the basis of – A to B - outcomes rather than deliverables. The men who use this project often have issues with housing, mental health, family relationships, substance misuse, unemployment, confidence and self-esteem. In many ways they are seen (and see themselves) as having ‘failed’ in relation to dominant rules of masculinity embodied in the prevailing gender culture. This may explain their explicit identification with ‘the active’ voice. In contrast, the Men’s Room treats these men as ‘wayfarers’ providing a space in which ‘what happens along the way’ can be brought into conscious memory and awareness. We argue that the Men’s Room offers these men a ‘*moment of meeting*’, one in which their self-gestalt can meet and match the way they are known (Louis Sander 1975 cited in Orange 2010). Perhaps the permanent presence of the Men’s Room in these sites, with its consistent offer of a protective, compassionate, non-interventionist, ‘not answering back’ style of contact, might provide a valuable stepping stone towards interdependence. More than this, however – there may be a need for modes of public storytelling that celebrate marginalised experience. Lost childhoods and experiences of otherness leave behind enduring and resistant feelings of isolation and alienation. The creative processes and products – exhibitions, performances, films, photography – of the Men’s Room have provided this public storytelling role effectively.

Concluding comment

This report reflects twelve months of research conducted with the Men’s Room by the authors. It captures the perspectives and experiences of the young men, staff and volunteers during a period of organisational change. At the time of the research, a series of important changes in staffing were taking place at the Men’s Room and there were concerns about the organisation’s long term funding. Staff were also thinking about the organisation’s structure and, most critically, its approach to working with the men as well as the theories and ideas which should inform this. The material from the VM has demonstrated the ways in which the staff were trying to maintain a sense of the values that informed the work in conditions of organisational insecurity.

We have argued that the relational approach of the Men’s Room - which combines informal and formal support, communicates unconditional acceptance, including of the young men’s readiness and ability to ‘move on’, and offers opportunities for social gathering, creative expression and public storytelling in ways that respect as well as extend the artistic preferences and capacities of participants - are key organisational strengths.

The research highlighted some important questions that are worth articulating here as they may inform discussions relating to ongoing organisational development. Some of the questions below relate to the complex challenges of working with young men with SMD, and some relate to the opportunities arising from this period of organisational transition:

- Does the Men’s Room have the latitude in the current economic climate to pursue the ‘magic’ (symbolised in the images of Harry Potter mentioned above), of creatively supporting the men and helping them to reinvent their lives?
- How might the organisation conceptualise modes of support arising from the inability to influence the trajectories of the young men’s lives, given the complex psycho-social

realities that limit opportunities to 'move on' in a way defined as positive by social welfare agencies (and their funders)?

- How might the organisation work to support staff to negotiate the sense that they embody unwanted elements of social control ('I feel like a doorman') and/or of being controlled by the men?
- How might the organisation navigate insecurities around funding in ways that map onto imperatives to remodel its service structure to evidence measurable outcomes ('success and how do we measure it?'), and at the same time maintain its commitment to offering unconditional and informal modes of support?

Rankin and Regan (2004: 11) point out that 'the more complex a person's needs, the more likely they are to fall through the gaps in the services society provides'. As discussed above, for many of the men who access the Men's Room, the demand to 'move on' shapes their daily experience as well as their life histories as they move in and out of care, in and out of custody, in and out of domestic environments, towards and away from the police and in and out of scenes of crime and threat. Here, 'moving on' is a tactic of survival in a risky environment, a means of eluding control, an affirmation of lack of self worth, and an assertion of personal agency, as much as a step towards a positive future. The seven walking tours provide different pathways mapped out by the men, which contain contrasting, competing and overlapping narratives of moving on, getting stuck, going backwards, going round in circles as well as articulating a psychosocial need to keep moving.

We have suggested that the reason these young men do slip through the gaps in the services society provides is in part due to an over-identification with the 'active voice' of rational human agency and an attendant denial of the 'passive voice' of human suffering (Hoggett 2000). The organisation's relational approach provides one of the few spaces in which the fragile self-perception of these young men is conjoined with those of staff and volunteers. Louis Sander (1975 cited in Orange 2010) defines the process of recognition as a *moment of meeting*, where one's self-gestalt meets and matches the way one is known. However, the staff and volunteers who work with marginalised young men at the Men's Room may well feel that they sometimes have to live in an almost unbearable condition of tension between 'measurement' and 'engagement'; between 'hope' and 'futility'; and between 'control' and 'care'. The men who come to the Men's Room may require all of these things at once, and the staff may find this as being especially difficult. The risk is that this difficulty may eventually be perceived as an impossibility. The process of supporting these young men to move on is fraught with difficulty therefore, and there is a need to ask who is being moved, why, from where, where to and in the service of whose ends? The research has highlighted a need to better understand the trajectories of movement experienced by young men facing SMD, and we hope that this report makes a contribution to the development of that understanding.

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Appendix – the Survival song

This song was written by five young men from The Men's Room at a writing and recording session in June 2013, led by Contact Theatre. The men were invited to write some lyrics on the theme of survival and the track was put together from their fragments of writing.

Down on my luck yeah
I was trying to stay up
Down on my luck yeah
I was trying to stay up
But I pick up on my mike yeah
I'm trying it still
So I pick up on my mike yeah
I'm trying it still
So I'm down on my life yeah
I'm trying it still
Cos I'm down on my life yeah
I'm trying it still
Cos I pick up on my life yeah
I'm trying it still
Cos I pick up on my life yeah
I'm trying it still

I'm faced with love
Faced with hate
Pray every day
My faith is late
I'm persistent
But I can see the flames burning in the distance

I'm faced with love
Faced with hate
Pray every day
My faith is late
I'm persistent
But I can see the flames burning in the distance

Listen, yo, listen
If I could only have one wish
I would wish to the stars
To take away this hate that's cased on my heart
Perhaps I'm racing too fast
Perhaps I'm chasing the past
I've got a favour to ask
Is it different flavours of ash?
Because that's all I seem to be tasting
My heart's aching
Collapsing by the force of nature
Torn pages
Because memories take you

Through the dark ages
I'm still stuck in this glass-stained painting
Bars in cages
My chances are fading
Like my boy Nathan
I see Satan
Everywhere I go
Eyes glazing
Staring at my soul
Whether I'm on road or the pavement
The hole was caved in
And there's no rope but there's faces
Looking in my mind
Trying to find grace
But there's no hope
So I throw down an eighth
And I start to smoke
Annihilating my fate in one go

I'm faced with love
Faced with hate
Pray every day
My faith is late
I'm persistent
But I can see the flames burning in the distance

I'm faced with love
Faced with hate
Pray every day
My faith is late
I'm persistent
But I can see the flames burning in the distance

Down on my luck yeah
I was trying to stay up
Down on my luck yeah
I was trying to stay up
But I pick up on my mike yeah
And I'm trying it still
So I pick up on my mike yeah
And I'm trying it still
So I'm down on my life yeah
I'm trying it still
Cos I'm down on my life yeah
I'm trying it still
Cos I pick up on my life yeah
I'm trying it still
Cos I pick up on my life yeah
I'm trying it still
So I look up in the sky yeah
It's high as hell

The pain and the struggle
It's time to tell
Do I want my teeth white
Like it's Simon Cowell
So I hit up on the block yeah
And try it still
The day and the struggle
And it's time to tell
So I hit up on the block yeah
Try and tell
Try and tell
So I hit up on the block yeah
And try and tell

I'm faced with love
Faced with hate
Pray every day
My faith is late
I'm persistent
But I can see the flames burning in the distance

I'm faced with love
Faced with hate
Pray every day
My faith is late
I'm persistent
But I can see the flames burning in the distance

I feel the pain and the pressure
Trying to better my life
Feeling for the paper so I bloody my knife
Flip my hoody up quick so it covers my eyes
But I aint doing it for fun, I just want to survive
Living on the mean streets, dabble in the naughty side
Man he's shotting rocks and busting off a 45
It's not a game though
We're not the same bro
Because this is real life hussling to make do'

I thought back how it got to this
Having no do' living in a struggle
Smoking weed
My head felt like a bubble
Not sorting things out
And got into bare trouble
Now I feel like a Fred Flinstone
To a Barney Rubble

I'm faced with love
Faced with hate
Pray every day

My faith is late
I'm persistent
But I can see the flames burning in the distance

I'm faced with love
Faced with hate
Pray every day
My faith is late
I'm persistent
But I can see the flames burning in the distance

Because we've been chasing death
Ever since the day our mother spread her legs and gave us breath
Because everybody gotta die
And eventually be in heaven
But nobody wants to rot inside a box
And wait for resurrection
But I'm just here surviving
Check the message that I'm stressing
I try to handle life
And the lessons that it's testing
Oh how could I see progression
With these pricks on my back
Man these rapists need arresting
Not these kids slanging bikes
Man it gets depressing
Then there's these haters
Won't leave me to my business
So I follow them
And lead me to his riches
Man they see me pushing nothing, belly rumbling
But I'm eating like it's vicious
It's money on my mind
Not the need to be a musician
Pussies half these guys
Like the oestrogen in bitches
Just puts on a disguise
And believes that he's the sickest
Till someone juts him in his side
And leaves him leaking out some liquid

Having seen it all before, I'm like a preacher speaking with his wisdom

Author biographies

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Dr Julian Manley works for the Psychosocial Research Unit based at the University of Central Lancashire. In 2010 he completed a PhD on the subject of Social Dreaming as a means of sharing unspoken ideas and emotions in groups. His current research interests include an ongoing reflection into the nature and meaning of the 'psychosocial attitude', psychosocial methods, contemporary philosophy and fields of enquiry, including the nature of the shared unconscious, the image-like value of the 'language' of dreams and unspoken ideas, the connections between emotion and the visual, and the understanding of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity.