

# THE HOMELESS PEOPLE'S COMMISSION

**A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE**

# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS THE HOMELESS PEOPLE'S COMMISSION?

The Homeless People's Commission is a committee of people with experience of sleeping rough. It aims to:

- empower homeless people to play a role in the development and evaluation of policies and services
- consider the effectiveness of policies and services
- identify potential policy and service improvements
- ensure policy makers and practitioners consider our conclusions
- explore the best means for homeless people to continue this role
- develop and disseminate a model of People's Commissions in England that can be adapted for other socially excluded groups and in other UK countries.

## WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE?

This is a guide to running a People's Commission, based on our own experience and interviews with Members of the Homeless Peoples Commission (Commissioners) and witnesses. All quotes included in the report are from Commissioners unless otherwise stated.

It is an experiment and we are still learning from it, but, after a year, we believe it has proved a great success and this guide aims to share the lessons we have learned with other excluded groups of people and the agencies which work with them. We believe the model of a People's Commission could be successfully developed both locally and nationally. This guide contains suggestions from our experience and is not a blueprint that should be followed in every detail.

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# AN OVERVIEW

The Homeless People's Commission was developed from the model of the Citizens' Jury. Citizens' juries consider evidence from policy makers, practitioners and other experts, question them and reach conclusions.

The Homeless People's Commission's key innovation is that it supports an excluded group of citizens to analyse policies and services of which they have direct experience. It has involved key homelessness agencies, as well as representatives from central and local government as witnesses and advisers.

The members of the Commission are a diverse and inclusive group of homeless people. The Commissioners were recruited through a range of agencies, covering different client groups from all nine English regions.

The Commission was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and had specialist support staff from three organisations:

- **Groundswell**, the leading self-help organisation for homeless people, who recruited, trained and supported the Commissioners and organised and facilitated the meetings of the Commission.
- **Research and Information Services**, homelessness research specialists, who carried out research for the Commission, briefed witnesses and carried out feedback interviews with them, drafted briefing papers, notes of the meetings and reports. They carried out evaluation interviews with Commissioners and witnesses at the end of the project. **SPEAKS** a collective of individuals who have a wide range of professional

expertise and experience in the area of public engagement., who provided advice on best practice in developing the Citizen's Jury model.

We set up an advisory group to ensure that the process was managed in a balanced and impartial manner. It included the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Homeless Link (the umbrella body for homeless sector agencies), local authority representatives, service providers, researchers and homeless people. They advised on topics to be covered, the draft recommendations and report and on future work of such Commissions.

Definitions of homelessness cover a very wide range of circumstances and policy responses. It was decided to focus on people who have slept rough. This group of homeless people are among the most excluded and likely to experience multiple needs, with high levels of physical and mental health problems and substance misuse.

The Commission heard evidence from policy makers and analysts, service providers, researchers and campaigning groups. Topics covered were:

- prevention of homelessness
- street work with people sleeping rough
- temporary accommodation
- resettlement work
- settled housing
- self help
- welfare benefits.

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- o welfare benefits.

The expert witnesses gave presentations and were then questioned by Commissioners. After considering their evidence, along with other research and our own experiences, we drew up recommendations for policy and practice. The Advisory Group commented on drafts of these and they were discussed in a number of meetings with DCLG.

The Homeless People's Commission report can be downloaded from [www.groundswell.org.uk](http://www.groundswell.org.uk)

You can watch a video about the Homeless Peoples Commission at [bit.ly/HPCfilm](http://bit.ly/HPCfilm)



Final 'Check out' at the House of Lords

# SETTING UP THE COMMISSION

## INITIAL PLANNING

The project had to be planned in some detail before setting up the Commission as a part of applying for funding to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. However, flexibility was built into the proposal, to ensure the Commissioners themselves would be involved in deciding key details about its operation.

Groundswell researchers who had themselves experienced homelessness held four service user consultations in different English regions to consider this model. Participants concluded:

- the involvement of national policy makers was necessary to ensure that recommendations would be considered
- Commissioners would benefit from communication and assertiveness skills training
- each English region should be represented on the Commission.

All three points were included in the project.

## RECRUITING THE COMMISSIONERS

Groundswell recruited 18 Commissioners through a range of agencies, covering different client groups, with two members from each of the nine English regions. It could not be representative of all homeless people, or cover all minority ethnic communities, but did aim to reflect the diversity of homeless people, by age, gender and ethnicity, bearing in mind the overall profile

of the rough sleeping population. All had past experience of rough sleeping, with many having done so for extended periods. They also had some experience of participating in meetings, for example through service user groups.

Potential recruits were visited and interviewed by workers who themselves had experience of sleeping rough. They explained the commitments which Commissioners would need to make to the project. More details of the Member recruitment process, the Commission member person specification, the Homeless People's Commission overview and the initial Phone interview questions can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Most Commissioners acknowledged that the project was experimental and that this had been made clear when they were recruited. Broadly, they had an idea of what to expect, although some said they approached it with an open mind. Several made suggestions about what in hindsight, they would have liked to have known at the outset – for example, brief details about other Commissioners, more information about how it was set up and the process they would follow. One Commissioner summed up a mixture of thoughts:

**"I didn't know what I was getting into. I knew it was going to be demanding and you had to be committed. I wanted to learn. I knew if I had any questions I could always ask. I thought it was a great opportunity to have your voice heard and I had a good feeling about it."**

# SETTING UP THE COMMISSION

We drew up a Partnership Agreement which set out the commitments of the Commissioners and Groundswell which was signed by both. A copy can be found in **Appendix 3**.

Commissioners were unanimous in finding the partnership agreement helpful, several mentioning that it was clear about respective roles and responsibilities. Two Commissioners pointed out that it had enabled swift action to be taken when a breach occurred. One Commissioner would have liked in addition a clear policy about expressing private opinions that could be discriminatory.

## PREPARATION

A group of Groundswell volunteers with personal experience of homelessness attended a two day Facilitator Training course, conducted by Groundswell, SPEAKS and Seeds for Change. This included modules on the Citizen's Jury technique, group dynamics and group facilitation skills.

Commissioners were then trained in the techniques we would use at the first Commission Meeting in Birmingham. We tried out a host of potential exercises to enable commissioners to: receive information, deliberate on information, establish questions, draw on experience, develop recommendations and priorities recommendations. Through observation and discussion with commissioners and the team we were able to select the most successful methods, tweaking others. Throughout the commission we continued to introduce new ways of working and refining existing ways of working in response to feedback.

In the first session commissioners were consulted on **'what it was that helped them get heard and help them feel heard'**. This exercise gave Commissioners an opportunity to reflect on specific situations when they had felt heard and what the 'ingredients' of that situation were both what they had done and how others had behaved, what had occurred before, during and after the incident. The record of commissioner's feedback served as a touchstone for facilitators in planning and facilitating sessions.

Also in the first session we established a group agreement. The agreement was developed around **'what we would need to work well together and achieve the aims of the commission.'** We began with a suggested set of guidelines including:

- Time Keeping
- Respect
- Use Appropriate Language
- Confidentiality
- Have a good time

In small groups all commissioners had an opportunity to consider:

- what do these guidelines mean to us?
- who, of all the people involved in the commission, should these guidelines apply to (including witnesses and facilitators)
- what will these guidelines look like in practice?

The final group agreement was shared with witnesses and is in **Appendix 4**.

# SETTING UP THE COMMISSION

Finally the group clarified what they thought **'success'** would look like in regards to the commission. Once again these were devised in groups, brought back to the whole group, refined and agreed. These 'elements' became our **'success criteria'** on which every session was measured.

Most Commissioners were happy with the preparation they received. Several mentioned the fact that participating as Commissioners had formed part of their training:

**"We acquired training as we went along. You had an enthusiastic bunch of people with a lot of good ideas, so you picked up a lot."**

**"It was all new, it was great. I'd never before worked in a team who worked together so quickly, in an open way. We quickly jelled. Working with a lot of intelligent people with a lot of experience gave me an opportunity to share. Very stimulating."**

Two Commissioners thought more training could have been offered before the sessions started. Examples given were: more detail on how the days would work so people could prepare in advance; more training on working in small groups and keeping focused. Another two had found the training useful; for example, one was already implementing some of the techniques in his own project, another had benefited from interviewing and note-taking training.

## SUPPORT

'Family Groups' were set up whereby the same small groups of Commissioners met with the same facilitator at the end of each of the day's meetings to reflect on both the content and the process. Views were fed back through facilitators to enable continual adjustments to better meet the needs of the Commissioners in subsequent sessions. The groups gave themselves names, each developing their own identity and style of feedback, based on three central questions relating to each day: 'What worked well?' 'What did not go so well?' 'What can we do differently?'

The Family Groups were an important element to make the process responsive, with Facilitators meetings being held each evening to run through the feedback from family groups, allowing the opportunity to make adjustments to the following day's timetable. Family Groups also gave the Commissioners continuity throughout the process and a safe space at the end of each (often intense) day.

All Commissioners were positive about the Family Groups. For some it was an opportunity to unwind:

**"Brilliant. You really need something like that – your own little group where you can off-load, whether good or bad, mostly good. Sometimes I wanted to get things off my chest without making a big scene and that was the place to do it."**

# SETTING UP THE COMMISSION

Others valued the particular bond that developed between family members:

**"It was lovely. I liked my group, we got to know each other, gave us more confidence. In the activities, when one of our family members was involved, it was a natural instinct to listen to what they were saying."**

As is common among people with a history of sleeping rough, several Commissioners were still in recovery from drug and alcohol problems. Some had previous mental health problems. The Commission involved intensive days of concentrated work and discussion of difficult personal issues, with the potential to cause distress. As part of the recruitment process Commissioners filled in forms detailing their support needs, the organisations they used for support and emergency contact details. Where appropriate and with permission, we liaised with people's host agencies to address arising support needs.

We drew up a policy to ensure that any drug or alcohol problems did not adversely affect the work of the Commission and that support was available if problems did occur. A copy of the policy can be found in **Appendix 5**.

All were agreed it was important to have a clear policy that people could understand and was enforceable:

**"Essential. The odd incidents were nipped in the bud. If you'd had people under the influence we would never have got the work done that we achieved."**



Commissioners in Cambridge

# DECIDING ON TOPICS AND WITNESSES

## TOPICS

Homelessness covers a very wide range of issues and the first task was to identify a shortlist of possible topics as part of our funding proposal and before the recruitment of the Commission. This was discussed by a focus group of six people with experience of sleeping rough, convened and facilitated by Groundswell. They identified the key priorities. The DCLG and the Advisory group were also consulted on issues which would be of most interest to the government and other policy makers, resulting in a list of nine provisional topics.

The list of topics was sent to Commissioners with details of how to run a local discussion group of homeless people to choose the top three topics they would like the Commission to consider. All had found it a useful exercise.

**"For me, it was a brilliant way of doing it, talking to the people [the Commission] will affect. I'm no longer actually living it now, so I was getting up-to-date views of people still in that situation."**

**"We talked to 50-60 people from different projects, so feedback from that was on a par. Really good exercise."**

One Commissioner would have liked some extra support in carrying out the consultation but had held a meeting at a drop in centre **"and took away some good points."**

Another had been unsure how and when her experience of homelessness would fit into the programme of topics that emerged and felt she had not been able to contribute much to early sessions.

From the returns for the consultation exercise, the top six topics were identified. In the time available it was not possible to cover all issues and there were some notable gaps, for example the growing problem of rough sleepers from Eastern European countries who have no right to public funded services. We believe it would have been a mistake to try to cover all possible topics and indeed some Commissioners would have liked more time to cover the priorities we did identify.

# DECIDING ON TOPICS AND WITNESSES

## WITNESSES

Once the topics had been agreed. Research and Information Services and Groundswell identified potential expert witnesses for each topic. The aim was to involve a range of views and experiences from senior experts across central and local government, voluntary organisations, service providers, and policy analysts and researchers. We also aimed for people who would be able to communicate effectively with the Commissioners.

**"I was also seriously challenged like I never have been before. I wandered down Oxford St going over my previously held convictions and questioning them for the first time. I'm not making this up it's real. I will stop slamming bad homeless projects that offer accommodation in crypts with poor light and no admission procedures - because on any given night they could save someone's life. And although I find them unacceptable for THAT person it was important and they deserve respect. So I'm softening my tone more. Nothing else made me address that before"**

Witness quote



Developing questions for witnesses in London

# POLICY BRIEFINGS

In the beginning of the Commission the research team produced briefing papers for the Commissioners, giving an overview of the needs of people sleeping rough and services to help them. There was also a presentation at the training session on how the system of homelessness policy and services works, including the role of central and local government and voluntary organisations.

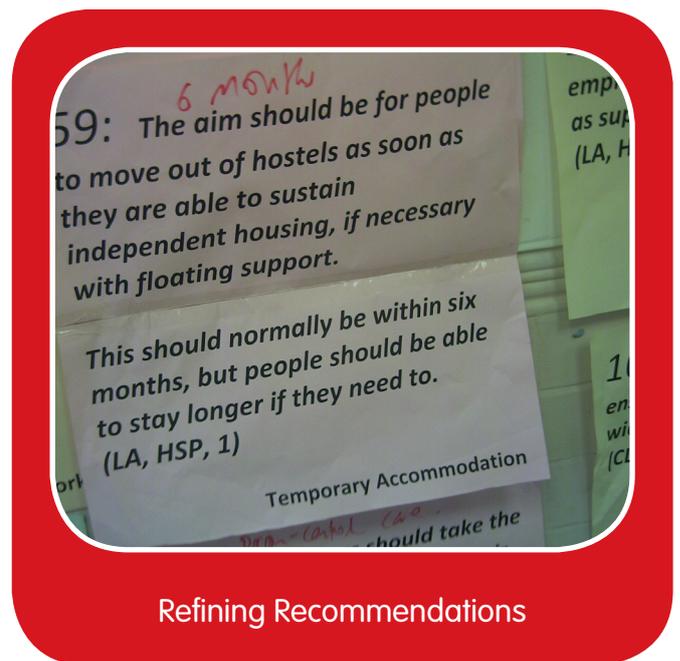
Before each meeting, briefing papers were sent to Commissioners on the topics to be covered and questions we might want to ask the witnesses. The aim was to produce clear, concise material for Commissioners to compare with their own experiences. The overview paper was eight pages long and the briefings on individual topics an average of four pages each.

All Commissioners had read the briefing papers and most had found them helpful, clear and about the right length:

**"Not too much, covered an immense amount of ground, well written, plain English. Didn't bamboozle, very understandable."**

Two people however, would have preferred them written in simpler language. One Commissioner pointed out they needed more time to read them:

**"...a lot of information to take in. We brought it up and they were sent out earlier [after that]. A lot of work went into them."**



Refining Recommendations

# HOW THE SESSIONS WERE RUN

## RESIDENTIALS

Five two-day residential meetings were held in Birmingham, London (twice), Cambridge and Nottingham. They included ice breaking activities at the start of each day and social events in the evening, including meals together, bowling and a boat trip. These contributed towards a group that worked together exceptionally well. Most people found the 'fun' activities during the sessions useful as ice-breakers:

**"Excellent – they were necessary. Set the day off on the right tone – ice-cutting, relaxing. Better to start with a smile on your face."**

and to help with bonding:

**"You need them to help develop a rapport if people don't know each other. It was a good group of people, even from the first day people decided to go along with it."**

## THE PROCESS (OVERVIEW)

After the initial training, separate days were devoted to each topic with short briefing papers provided in advance. in **Appendix 7**.

Witnesses were briefed by our researcher in advance on the topics we wanted to cover and possible questions we might want to raise, They were also offered some advice on making their presentations clear and accessible to the Commission, although many had experience of communicating effectively with service user groups. A copy of their briefing material can be found in **Appendix 8**. Interviewed after their session, all the witnesses thought they

had received information about the scope of their evidence, but half would have liked more detail... **"about who the Commissioners were, how recruited, where from, their backgrounds... it would have been helpful to know why they had become Commissioners, what they were likely to be interested in."**

The witnesses each gave a fifteen minute presentation. Commissioners then split into small groups to discuss the evidence with which they had been presented and to formulate questions for the witness. Each group was facilitated by a Groundswell staff member or trained peer facilitator. There followed a half hour facilitated question and answer session by the full Commission. The groups then reconvened to formulate recommendations based on the evidence they had heard and their own knowledge and experiences.

## THE PROCESS (DETAIL)

### Witness presents Information

Witnesses speak for 15 minutes on the theme/issues being addressed. Most used power point and gave Commissioners hand-outs.



### Developing Questions

We opted for questions being prepared in groups rather than individuals putting hands up after testing different models of questioning witnesses and building on good practice from Citizen's Juries. This enabled deliberation to make the most of the witness and also protected



# HOW THE SESSIONS WERE RUN

individuals. Each session was recorded either with audio recorder or a note taker.

Groups of 4-6 would discuss the presentation they have just heard. The aims were to: reflect on the learning from the witness, consider how it related to the Commissioners own experience of the issue or theme being discussed to pick out information that was new to Commission members and to develop questions that were owned and agreed by the group, that would maximise our learning from the witnesses.

We used a process that evolved through the commission: 'Go Round' one by one around the circle everyone had a chance to say what their first impressions were. 'As and When' people had a chance to talk more in depth to compare what they heard with their own experience. 'Developing Questions', throughout the discussion Commissioners could take a piece of A4 and begin developing individual questions. Questions would be placed face up and all Commissioners had a chance to collectively rephrase questions and place them in order of importance. Commissioners then selected the questions they wanted to ask.

It was almost always the case that we didn't have the chance to ask all questions, Commissioners were aware of this, additional questions were emailed to witnesses and their responses included in the reporting from the meeting.

## Asking questions to Witnesses

Commissioners asked their questions in order, keeping their ears out if another group posed a question similar or the same as theirs. This session was very fast paced, with witnesses



responding to questions with as much depth as possible and as quickly as possible. We didn't accept follow up questions as it would allow for individuals to dominate and undermine the selection and ordering process in the previous session. Unanswered questions were noted down and followed up either at the end of the session or via email.

## Developing Recommendations

Commissioners return to the group where they developed the questions.

The aims of this session were to: consider our previous experience of the issue PLUS the new information learned and consider what could be done to improve the situation. As with questions Commissioners write their recommendation and develop them as a group.



## Refining Recommendations

Commissioners return as a large group to refine recommendations.

Throughout the HPC we used a number of techniques to 'clarify recommendations'. Typically we would stand in a circle and state each recommendation aloud, as commissioners recognised which recommendation were similar to the one they held they would 'cluster' forming small groups of 'themed' recommendations. This small group would develop a title for their cluster and attempt to encapsulate all the related recommendations into one.



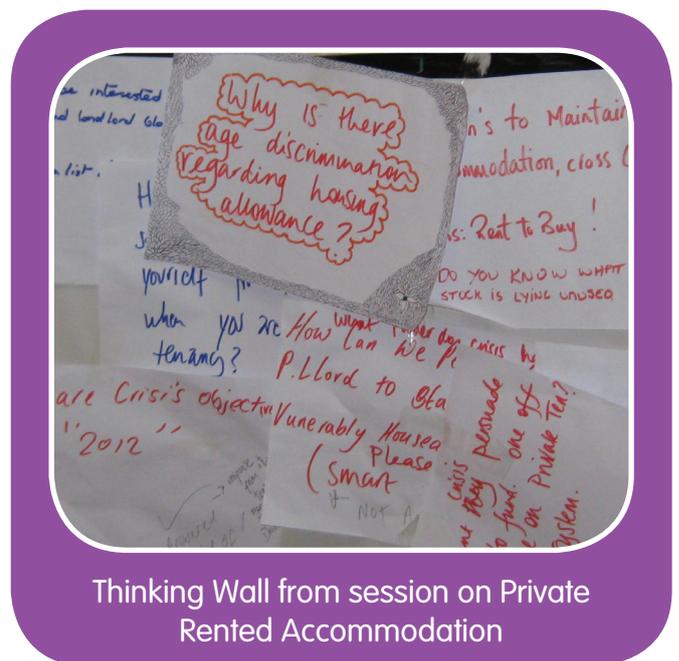
We utilised 'satellite' sometimes called 'target' to analyse recommendation that seemed contentious. Commissioners would be asked to stand in a circle with a chair placed in the

# HOW THE SESSIONS WERE RUN

middle. A recommendation would be read out and commissioners were asked to stand very close to the chair if they agreed 100% with the recommendation or as far away as possible if they 100% disagreed. The facilitator would then seek to understand why people stood where they were and tweak the recommendation to attempt to reach consensus.

We utilised 'law of two feet' taken from Open Space Technology. The law of two feet is a technique where by participants are to ask themselves if they are a) learning something or b) contributing something- if they are doing neither they must use their feet and go somewhere else. In the instance when we would either seek to pull out more detail from a recommendation or to get feedback on reports from previous sessions; we saw it as most important that commissioners were able to contribute in the areas they felt most strongly about and have the option of contributing to more than one area. The recommendations or sections of the report to be discussed would be placed around the room with a facilitator designated to each. Commissioners move freely between groups.

In order to prioritise recommendations commissioners were given a set amount of sticky dots and asked to vote for the ones they thought would be 'most impactful'. In some sessions we gave commissioners either different coloured dots for the recommendations they thought were most achievable and on one occasion commissioners were given a 'super dot' to put on the one recommendation they personally felt strongest about.



## The Thinking Wall

The 'Thinking Wall' is a Citizens Jury innovation. Questions and recommendations over the 2 days of each of the HPC sessions were all displayed on a 'thinking wall' so that commissioners could keep track of the 'thinking' and 'learning' process of the group.

## Thoughts on the Process

On balance, people thought most expert witnesses had been interesting and stimulating:

**"Great, really inspiring, broke down a heck of a lot of barriers. Everybody had a real passion about what they did. I might not have agreed with everything. Very intelligent and professional people and it was OK if I didn't understand, I could say."**

# HOW THE SESSIONS WERE RUN

However, all were critical of at least one of the witnesses. It was felt they could have been better prepared and had more understanding of the Commissioners' experiences.

Most Commissioners thought the formula of having the witness presentation followed by small groups to develop questions, followed by a question and answer session in the larger group, worked well. However, one would have preferred to have had an open question and answer session immediately after the presentation followed by smaller groups, to explore and evaluate the witnesses' responses.

Asked about the balance of time allocated to each activity, people were generally happy with the time given to presentations but three had wanted more time for asking and developing questions:

**"Not all the questions were asked in the large session and although we didn't lose them (they were followed up) it would have been better to get a response while the witnesses were there."**

Other Commissioners commented on the time constraints generally and, as one pointed out, there was a need for discipline:

**"Time is always an issue. You've got to push things through. It's important to rigidly stick to time. If you can make it clear at the beginning, time is limited and Commissioners need to be punctual coming back from breaks."**

Another found the time pressure helped cohesion in the group:

**"We were pressured to get on with it. I was surprised we got it so quickly. We all used each other, we were all learning."**

Several said they found the process quite tiring and energy levels in the sessions towards the end of the day tended to flag.

Almost all were happy with the way the sessions were facilitated and felt they were given enough opportunities to express their views – although one noticed that this took longer for some than others:

**"As we got to know each other we all had a voice. Some who didn't have such a loud voice at the beginning became more open and more vocal as we went along."**

One Commissioner said occasionally he thought some of the facilitators were insufficiently prepared and sometimes out of their depth, but also acknowledged that everyone was learning from the process.

**At the first session, only half agreed that they felt heard, whereas in a later session all those who completed evaluation forms agreed.**

Some found the small groups worked better for ensuring they were heard; others mentioned skilled facilitation:

**"Good at picking out aspects of what you're trying to say and listening."**

The reasons people gave for not being heard, or having mixed views included lack of time:

**"I think at times there is a lot to say and not**

# HOW THE SESSIONS WERE RUN

**the time to facilitate that."**

and people talking over others, particularly in the earlier sessions:

**"At the beginning there was some over-talking but it got managed."**

One Commissioner felt in a minority when trying to put a point across and that although some were supportive, others were not interested in her viewpoint. By contrast, others spoke of respect in the group for other people's views and how quickly they had learned to work together.

Commissioners found that they were increasingly satisfied that the group was staying focussed on the topic as the sessions progressed. People often mentioned the importance of facilitation to keep them focused:

**"Mixed views – in the big group, yes, in small groups, no. People started going off the point. Facilitators need to keep people grounded."**

**"So-so. Every topic is involved with another so people get diverted. We tried, facilitators helped."**

## REPORTS

Notes and / or recordings were made of all sessions. These were drafted by our researchers into detailed minutes for agreement at the following meeting.

Everyone said they had read the notes of the

sessions. All found them clear and an accurate reflection of their discussions. Two people thought they could have been shorter. One Commissioner summarised the views of most:

**"Understandable, clear, just about right level of detail. It was all there if you wanted to read it all or you could just scan over it and pick bits out."**

A major success of the Commission was the large amount of material it generated, including 128 separate recommendations, which were later condensed into the 93 which appear in the report, by combining those which overlapped. It was agreed to include in the report all of the recommendations made by Commissioners, even if there was not unanimous agreement. There was however, broad agreement among Commissioners on the approach taken. If there had been wider disagreement it might have been necessary to devise a means of voting on individual recommendations.

This material was drawn together into a draft report by our researchers which was then approved by the Commission. On the suggestion of our Advisory Group and DCLG, priority recommendations were voted on by the Commission and outlined in two brief papers, one on overall recommendations and another recommendations for government departments. Copies of these can be downloaded from [www.groundswell.org.uk](http://www.groundswell.org.uk)

The Commissioners were generally happy with the way recommendations were developed and voted on. Several specifically mentioned

# HOW THE SESSIONS WERE RUN

the satellite groups as a useful way of exploring views in depth and giving an opportunity for people to change their minds.

The main policy meetings took place between June and September 2010, most before major changes had been announced by the new government, although the broad direction of policies was known. More information was available for the final session in late November. We also had recommendations from our Advisory Group and from DCLG that we should identify our top ten priority recommendations. This meant that the final session had not only to consider and approve the draft report but also to meet with DCLG and identify priority recommendations. This involved a very busy two days.

Three people thought there was too much pressure in the final sessions to consider recommendations in the light of government policy changes and also to identify priorities:

**"Narrowing it down so much (in the last session) lost the flavour. Yes, it's important to get people to read [the report] but I would have liked a wider spread. Critical issues get sidelined and you're just left with 4 or 5 points."**

One Commissioner suggested building more flexibility into the process to allow for changing priorities:

**"There might be an argument for reviewing topics in future to take into account things can change half way through and have a chance to re-prioritise. We had to push through all those extra factors in the last few hours. Not a good way to do it, not enough time for people to say what they wanted to say. It goes against the principles of being 'heard'."**

Another commented:

**"We needed more time – the last day, the most important day, was very rushed. Another day would have been ideal. It was the most important part of the Commission and we took the least time on it."**

By contrast one Commissioner thought that they had become so familiar with the process they were able to work quickly together when it mattered:

**"By the last two sessions everyone knew exactly what we were doing, it was routine, we could fall straight into it."**

Most thought the voting system was fair, although one found it difficult to choose:

**"I can't think of a better way, but found the voting system very hard. I was passionate about all of them and I'm rubbish at prioritising but it was the only fair way to do it."**

Another Commissioner accepted the process was democratic, but was concerned that people in a minority might 'lose' a recommendation that was important to them:

**"If a recommendation is very important to you and others don't vote for it, you lose it. We should have had more large group discussions so you can put your point to more people, rather than in a small group, so maybe there's more chance of getting people to agree with you. If the majority still don't agree, then you'd have to go back and think about it."**

# HOW THE SESSIONS WERE RUN

All the Commissioners approved of the general style and content of the report although three thought it was too long.

**"The way it was written was good – it read well, broken up with anecdotes from people. It's an interesting read, not academic."**

**"Excellent, clear, read it a couple of times. Also took it to our managers and they thought it was good... they were impressed by how much time and effort had been put in to make it work."**

Two people would have liked more input into the drafting but recognised there was no time. The rest were happy for it to be drafted on their behalf. Most felt that it represented the views of the group as a whole and also of particular individuals:

**"When I read it I can see the people who made the suggestions. Everybody's view was acknowledged. A lot of recommendations were at root level – the difficulties people had encountered. Everyone had an input into the report. I couldn't have wished for more."**

**"It is planned to produce further mini-reports focussing on recommendations for different groups such as local authorities or hostel providers."**

## EVALUATING AND IMPROVING THE SESSIONS

We continuously evaluated the progress of the Commission to identify any improvements we could make.

Staff recorded interviews with two Commissioners after each two day session and all Commissioners were re-interviewed by telephone at the end of the project. All Commissioners completed evaluation forms following each 2 day session. The evaluation forms were based around the 'success criteria' the group established at the beginning of the process see **Appendix 8**.

As a result of all these a number of improvements were made, for example the process of formulating recommendations which originally consisted of two separate small group sessions, the first to frame the recommendations and the second to consider them in more detail were combined into one session. Very quickly we realised we hadn't allocated enough time for questioning witnesses, this was increased on the second day of the first commission session.

Most people felt in control of the Commission process and findings. Confidence increased with each session and there was unanimous agreement about this in a later session.

**"Things people haven't been happy with have been noted and things changed. It makes you realise you're being listened to."**

Most of the Commissioners felt confident about overcoming any obstacles that might arise.

# HOW THE SESSIONS WERE RUN

**"We discussed things at the end of the day and Groundswell try to make sure things change next time. I feel I can talk to Groundswell about anything."**

It was a combination of facilitator feedback, family group feedback, evaluation forms, and interviews with commissioners after sessions. We worked hard to respond to each and every issue or concern and positive reported by commissioners, This had the dual impact of improving the process and creating goodwill in the commission as people were being heard and could see the changes made as a result of their feedback, Whilst we have solidified some elements that we think would work with any group working on any issue, any new Commission would need to undertake this vigorous and broad evaluation and be committed make changes as a result of what was heard.

## MEMBERSHIP

Of the 18 original Commissioners, 14 were involved throughout. For a year long project, this was a very good rate of attendance and compares well with other committees. We originally thought that we might replace any people who dropped out, but it became apparent it would have been difficult for new members to participate without having been involved from the beginning.

Some regretted the fact that some Commissioners had dropped out. Two felt that having to represent their regions without a partner had been quite a responsibility. As one explained:

**"I felt isolated, missed having a partner to talk things over and give each other feedback, so it was quite arduous. I realised that Groundswell wanted to leave door open for the other Commissioner to return, but as a result, felt I was being denied something. Maybe recruit three people from each region?"**

Another Commissioner was based in a different city from his partner:

**"[he is] one and a half hours away. We met up once or twice and had 'phone contacts but it would have been more helpful to be in the same city to give each other support."**



Rodger Wilshaw DCLG's Deputy Director for Homelessness and Support) and John Hyncica (HPC Commissioner)

# IMPACT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

## IMPACT ON COMMISSIONERS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

All the Commissioners felt they had gained new knowledge from their experience of the Commission, and most assessed this as 'a great deal'. Usually, they gave examples of how their understanding of homelessness had broadened:

**"I was surprised how many things are linked to homelessness – drug and alcohol problems, peer pressure, domestic violence. I was taken aback by how many things are connected."**

Some had learned about homelessness agencies' working practices in different areas, others how services had changed over time.

Two people described how the whole process had changed them:

**"I'm a different person than I was. I was overwhelmed. It was coming out of my comfort zone in a massive way. A massive education. My whole jargon has changed. Given a massive insight into every area of homelessness."**

All but two Commissioners thought they had gained new skills. The most commonly mentioned were improved listening skills and tolerance:

**"I learnt to listen better, not judge people, not to criticise so much or take things for granted."**

One thought having to give feedback to their local project had helped concentrate the mind and observed how seriously people had taken the responsibility of being a Commission member.

Another had improved their learning skills and had recently completed a training course and signed up for another:

**"At one time I'd have been daunted by going into a classroom and learning. But I've just sailed through it because of the work I've done with the Commission – it's made learning much easier."**

Another Commissioner had learnt to speak in front of people he didn't know and yet another had developed skills in group work.

All but two thought their confidence had improved as a result of participating. Usually people talked about developing an ability to speak in a large group:

**"Normally I don't do that, I'm a bit shy when there's 20 of you. When I came to speak up, I felt really good about that. It doesn't bother me anymore."**

One described improved ability to communicate generally:

**"More confident in approaching people, breaking ice, confidence to communicate better."**

Another found:

**"I'm more confident in challenging local and national policies. More positive outlook. Motivated me to get more involved. Really good experience."**

While another found confidence from the spirit of community among Commission members:

# IMPACT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

**"I came back feeling I'd been respected, been part of a community if only for a short period of time. It didn't take long to kick in each time we met."**

Commissioners described various other ways the experience had affected them, with one exception, all positive. Two people saw it as part of the process of resettlement and recovery. As one of them said:

**"I've travelled nationwide, when at the height of my problems it was rare I'd ever leave the city. At long last I've got some control over my own life, over my destiny. I've recently moved into resettlement. One of the things I've learnt is I would need a lot of structure to survive resettlement. I've managed to put that structure in."**

For another, it was the realisation of five years' promoting the idea of a national forum for homeless people:

**"Now there's a possibility of HPCs in different areas. That's brilliant."**

Others had been proud to take part and found it a great experience, as one summed up:

**"A brilliant experience I really enjoyed it and hope most of it goes through. I'll never forget it. I was honoured to be there and really loved every bit of it. I met some nice people, I learnt a lot, been to places I've never been before."**

One Commissioner had felt depressed after one session when they felt they had not been able to get their point across:

**"I thought I wouldn't go to any more sessions but we talked about it afterwards and it was sorted out."**

By contrast, another expressed a sense of elation which was echoed by most Commissioners at some point in their interview:

**"I learnt how completely different people with different experiences of the same thing can come together and be civilised. A wonderful experience being part of an immense effort of human beings to work together."**

## POLICY IMPACT

The Policy Report of the Homeless People's Commission was launched at the House of Lords on 12 May 2011, at an event hosted by Lord Richard Best, the Chair of the Advisory Group, and presented to the Government Department with responsibility for homelessness the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) who were represented by Deputy Director of Homelessness – Roger Wilshaw.

The Commission had a day with a DCLG policy lead to discuss the formation of the report by Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness "Vision to end Rough Sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide." Available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1939099.pdf>

The Commission's input into the document can be found at [www.groundswell.org.uk](http://www.groundswell.org.uk) and Members of the Commission are quoted twice in the document.

# IMPACT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

We have a vision of future developments which would include the continuation of a national Homeless People's Commission which would contribute to continuing policy debates and consultations and the development of local Commissions. We are hoping to create pilots of local Commissions in the near future. We also believe it is a model that could be adapted to allow other groups of service users to contribute to the improvement of services, for example in health and social services.

We hope to continue to promote the policy report and the People's Commission model.



First meeting in Birmingham

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I – HOMELESS PERSONS COMMISSION MEMBER RECRUITMENT PROCESS

### Step 1 – Identify Groups

- Two homeless-led self-help groups or client involvement groups were identified in each of the nine English regions (a first choice and one back-up.) These were found through information from Groundswell team members, contacts and database. Also contacted Homeless Link regional managers for suggestions of groups.

### Step 2 – Initial Contact

- Called contacts in each group. Described project briefly. Asked if they thought any group members might be interested/ appropriate.
- If they said yes, emailed them person spec and one page project overview. Asked them to get back to us with two potential Commission members and contact details. Made clear that this was the next stage and would not necessarily result in automatic selection for the Commission.
- Where a group had more than two people interested, we asked the group themselves to select their own candidates.
- If group did not have anyone appropriate, contacted other groups in region.

### Step 3 – Phone Interviews

- Groundswell volunteer rang potential members to go through essential information and do first stage phone interview.
- Ask them to think for a few days about whether it is something they definitely want to do/feel able to commit to.
- Tell them we will ring back within a week.
- If they are a probable yes, ring them back and arrange to visit.
- If unsure, arrange a second phone call back with Groundswell staff and have a bit more of a chat through the issues.
- If yes then arrange interview visit, if no, let them know explaining clearly the reasons and ask group if they have anyone else. If not contact another group.

### Step 4 – Interview Visits

Before visit, send them pack with:

- Project overview
- Background information about Groundswell, RIS and SPEAKS
- List of potential Commission topics, and Prioritisation Activity to run with their groups
- Background information about topics.
- Dates and locations (as far as known) of Commission sessions

# APPENDICES

- Explanation of policies on incentives, expenses, drugs and alcohol etc.
- 2 copies of partnership agreement (one for them to keep, one for us)
- Information about citizen's juries
- Contact/support needs form

## DURING INTERVIEW VISIT

- More in depth explanation of Commission
- Answer any questions
- Discuss what topics their groups have prioritised.
- Sign partnership agreement

## INFORMATION FOR PHONE INTERVIEWS

### Overview

- The Homeless Person's Commission is one year project to enable homeless people to influence policy on a national level.
- The Commission will be made up of 18 Members - people who have had experience of homelessness.
- The Members will meet up for a series of two day residential events through the Spring and Summer of 2010.
- Members will look at six issues related to homelessness - for example housing, mental health, drugs and alcohol.

- After all the topics have been discussed, we will produce a policy report with clear recommendations.
- Commission members will be given training and support they need to carry out their role.
- Commission members will be paid for their time and expenses, while ensuring that benefits are not affected.
- There will be 12 days of meetings. Commission members will be expected to attend all the sessions.

## QUALITIES AND EXPERIENCE NEEDED

- Experience of rough sleeping, or being at serious risk of rough sleeping, whilst 'single homeless' (i.e. not having day to day responsibility for dependent children).
- Active membership of a group of homeless people.
- Good communication skills.
- Ability to work well in a group.
- Passion for and interest in homelessness issues in general.
- Willingness to talk about your own experience of homelessness.

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## PLAN FOR VISITS WITH HPC POTENTIAL COMMISSIONERS

1. Find out what questions they have and answer the ones you can
2. If they have done exercise about topics - find out how they got on with it and what the main topics that came out of it were.
3. If they haven't done exercise - do they get it/ need help with it.
4. Note anything they are worried/concerned about.
5. Note things they are looking forward to.
6. Take photo for ID cards.
7. Get them to sign partnership agreement (2 copies) and bring back both copies to office.
8. Get contact/support needs form off them (if haven't filled it in, get them to fill it in)
9. Get benefits form off them (if haven't filled it in, get them to fill it in)

Say "This is the last stage in the recruitment process. From here we need to take a couple of things into consideration before final commitment and they are:

- Whether we can support you enough for you to get the most out of the process and project.
- We need a good balance of different genders, ethnic backgrounds, ages and experiences.
- That we're able to address any concerns or worries or needs that you've told us about (e.g. we had a woman with a young baby who wanted to be on the Commission and bring her baby with her to the initial meetings. We were able to accommodate this. But we might not be able to accommodate all needs).

We'll chat this through with a couple of people from Groundswell and get back to you by..." (Tuesday visits - will get back to them before the end of week. Thursday visit - will get back to them on Monday).

Then people conducting visits ran through a feedback session with project team to make final selections.

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## APPENDIX 2 - COMMISSION MEMBER PERSON SPECIFICATION

The Homeless Person's Commission is a project that will train and support a group of people to make policy recommendations to improve the way our society's tackles homelessness. To be an effective Member of the Homeless Person's Commission there are a range of skills and experiences that will be helpful, these are listed below.

### EXPERIENCE YOU WILL HAVE

1. You will have experience of rough sleeping, or being at serious risk of rough sleeping, e.g. time living in a hostel or regularly using a day centre for homeless people.
2. This will be as 'single homeless' – that is being homeless while you did not have day to day responsibility for dependent children.
3. Current active membership of a group of homeless people. This group will be involved in improving the services you use, or the policy in your local area.

### SKILLS YOU WILL NEED

4. Ability to work well in a group.
5. Good communication skills, that is being able to express yourself and take part in discussions.

6. Good listening skills.
7. Confidence in talking to a range of different people, including other people with experience of homelessness, staff in projects, policy makers etc.

### OTHER RELEVANT CRITERIA

8. Passion for tackling homelessness issues.
9. Good knowledge of homelessness issues.
10. Willingness to speak honestly about your own experience of homelessness.
11. Ability to differentiate between your personal experience and the wider issues around homelessness and be willing to balance speaking about your own experience with discussing topics in a general way.
12. Interest in learning new skills.
13. Availability for all (or most) of the meeting dates
14. Willingness to travel across the country for meetings and stay overnight.

Please note that training and support will be offered to Members to help them participate in the Commission.

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## APPENDIX 3 - PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

### Name:

**Position:** Homeless Person's Commission  
Member

**Committed Time Scale:** 1 year: March 2010 –  
February 2011

### Job Duties:

- Contribute to development of Homeless Persons Commission recommendations on homelessness policies and services and potential improvements.
- Feedback on draft and final reports of Commission's findings.
- Contribute to evaluation of Commission process.

## TERMS OF AGREEMENT

The Homeless Person's Commission member is expected to:

1. Commit to attending and contributing to four 2-day residential sessions and two one day meetings : 27-29 April 2010; 8-10 June 2010; 20-22 July 2010; 7-9 September 2010; 27-28 October; 30 November – 2 December 2010; 27 January 2011
2. Manage your diary effectively, in order to be able to attend training and meetings as arranged, or to get in contact to let us know if you cannot do so as soon as possible in advance.

3. Review papers before session, and discuss any issues with your group.
4. Treat other Commission members and staff with respect.
5. Not speak publicly on behalf of the Commission without the Commission's agreement.
6. Provide receipts where necessary.
7. Agree to have your email address shared with other Commission members
8. Read and agree to the Groundswell drug and alcohol policy
9. Agree for Commission meetings to be audio recorded for the purposes of reporting on and evaluating the commission – not for the media or external organisations

### Groundswell will:

1. Provide support for you to be able to fulfil your role as an HPC member. This will include regular check in calls, signposting to other specialist services, and advice to ensure that incentive payments do not affect benefits.
2. Provide training for you to be able to fulfil your role as an HPC member.
3. Organise all training and commission meetings.
4. Pay travel expenses.
5. Provide accommodation when required.
6. Provide incentives.

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7. Provide information and materials which are necessary to participate in commission meetings.
8. Ensure health and safety requirements are met.
9. Treat all volunteers with respect.
10. Respect your right to confidentiality and not attribute any personal information disclosed in discussion to you without your consent
11. Respect the fact that participation in the HPC is voluntary and that you can withdraw at any time; and provide you with an exit interview and further support if you choose to withdraw.
12. Make sure recommendations are appropriately disseminated.
13. Give HPC members input into final Commission report.
14. Resolve any tensions between Commission members or between Commission members and organisers in an open and transparent manner.
15. Provide volunteers with an up to date reference.

This is not a legal contract.

I give my consent to this Partnership Agreement:

Signed (HPC Member):

Name:

Date:

Signed on behalf of Groundswell:

Name:

Date:

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## APPENDIX 4 - GROUP AGREEMENT

### Our Goal

The goal of the Homeless Person's Commission is to enable homeless people to influence policy on a national level.

The role of the Group Agreement is to give everyone involved clear guidelines on how we can each contribute to the project to best help us meet our goal.

These guidelines apply to all people participating in the HPC including:

- Commission Members,
- Groundswell facilitators,
- Witnesses' and guests.

This Agreement may be revised as we go along.

Our Agreement cover the key areas of:

1. Respect
2. Confidentiality
3. Time Keeping
4. Using Appropriate Language
5. Being 'Charged Up'
6. Having a Good Time

### 1. Respect

We agree to:

- Treat people the way we want to be treated.
- Acknowledge that people are at different places in their lives in terms of experience, skills and treatment.
- Listen without judgement, acknowledging that there are no right or wrong opinions.
- Ensure that people have the space to express themselves. If this is not always possible in the large group we will try and find other ways to have our say - this includes audio recording, writing things down, speaking one to one with a facilitator.
- Consider people's feelings.
- Respect ourselves as well as others involved in the commission.

### 2. Confidentiality

We agree to:

- Fulfil a Duty of Care - and this means that if you tell us something that indicates you will do harm to yourself or someone else we will need to act- and break confidentiality.
- When recording audio from HPC sessions - these recordings will be used to write reports and evaluate the work. Our names will not be used unless we want them to be.

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- Be kept informed and input into: who and how information from the Commission will be shared.
- Be aware of our own privacy as well as others – We should all have a think, before deciding what we share about ourselves. If you have had an experience that you think the commission needs to know about but you don't want to share it in the group you can speak with someone privately from Groundswell.
- Not to gossip – as we discussed “Gossip breeds stigma and prejudice.”

### 3. Time keeping

We agree to:

- Arrive on time and be ready - physically, emotionally and mentally - when each session starts.
- Be mindful of the time allocated. We have a significant job ahead of us and time is short and precious. It's essential that we use the time we have effectively.
- Let someone from Groundswell know as soon as we can if it looks like we might be late.
- We expect Groundswell to send information about timings we expect to be involved with as much notice as possible.

### 4. Use Appropriate Language

We agree to:

- Keep it simple and brief.
- Not talk down to people.
- Try to speak clearly and loudly enough for people to hear.
- Not interrupt when someone else is speaking.
- Try to keep to the point
- Avoid 'jargon' and acronyms e.g. Communities and Local Government (CLG) - if you need to use them **explain them**.
- Not be shy to **ask** if something needs more explanation.

### 5. If you get “charged up”

We acknowledge that the issues we are discussing are deeply important to all involved; as a result we might find that we get frustrated, upset, angry, emotional – ‘charged up’. If this happens then we understand that we are free to leave the space where the group is, and take time to cool down. Wherever possible one of the facilitators will follow you out and see if they can help.

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## 6. Have a Good Time

We agree to:

- Have a brief check-in and check-out before and after a day's session.
- One person speaking at a time.
- Use hands to keep order in the discussion and ensure people get heard
- We anticipate some heated debate and we probably will not always agree. We think we should do our best to leave disagreement and debate in the Commission sessions and not take it to dinner with us.
- Look around the places we are visiting
- Take turns in organising something fun each morning!

## OVERALL

As a group some of the things we have agreed on may at times seem contradictory - we will do our best to try and accommodate them. For example to balance ensuring everyone has the space to express ourselves, but also making sure we use the time we have as effectively as possible.

We all commit to make our contribution to the group to make sure we can meet our collective goal!

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## APPENDIX 5 - DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY

### Acknowledgement

Groundswell acknowledges that many people we work with have issues with drug and alcohol misuse. Over the years various Groundswell staff, volunteers and Trustees have been people who have tackled these issues or are still tackling them. We aim to offer a supportive environment which contributes to people's recovery.

### What is the role of this policy?

1. Overall Aim. The overall aim of the Homeless People's Commission is to support homeless people to influence national policy issues. The role of this Policy is to help us ensure that drug and alcohol issues do not get in the way of us focusing on our aim.
2. Guidelines. To give clear guidelines as to what to expect if drug and alcohol issues are affecting your involvement in the Homeless People's Commission (HPC).
3. Supporting Recovery. At all times primary consideration should be given to people involved in the commission who are striving to tackle their drug and alcohol issues.

### What are the key points?

- A. Honesty. That if you have drug and alcohol issues you will still be given the opportunity to contribute to Groundswell's work. However you must be upfront with the organisation about these issues so that we can work with you to find the right way to support you.
- B. Alcohol. Alcohol is acceptable only in moderate use and only then at times with explicit permission. At no point should you be under the influence of alcohol at a time when you are expected to be involved in the meetings element of the HPC.
- C. Drugs. Illegal drugs are not acceptable in any circumstances during the HPC.
- D. Prescribed Medication. If you are on prescribed medication, then you need to discuss this with Groundswell staff, and take responsibility for your own medication.
- E. Support. That people who experience drug and alcohol issues deserve appropriate support to help them tackle these issues.
- F. Action. If you do not abide by the drug and alcohol policy then you will be asked to leave the HPC.

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## A. Honesty

1. You need to fill in a 'support form' in conversation with a Groundswell staff member in order to participate in the HPC. This covers drug and alcohol issues as well as other areas of support. This is find out the best way to support you so that you are able to be fully involved in the HPC.
2. If your situation regarding drugs, alcohol or prescribed medication changes during the HPC, then please get in touch to discuss your changes.

## B. Alcohol

1. It is not acceptable to use alcohol during the meeting elements of the HPC, unless in exceptional individual circumstances as agreed with Groundswell.
2. In your free time it is acceptable to use alcohol – in moderation.
3. We have set the precedent for public meals together – that on the first night we have an alcohol free meal and on the second night we can drink with our meal, in moderation.

## C. Illegal Drugs

1. It is not acceptable to in the possession of or under the influence of illegal drugs at any point during your involvement with the HPC.
2. If you are discovered to have brought illegal drugs with you, or to have to used illegal drugs during an HPC event you will asked to leave at the earliest opportunity.
3. If you think that you can not attend an HPC event because of drug issues please contact the Groundswell before the event begins and we can discuss this with you.

## D. Prescribed Medication

1. If you are on prescribed medication that may affect your work, then you must inform Groundswell of this prior to an event.
2. You need to take responsibility for bringing an adequate amount of medication with you to last for the length of the HPC event. If you do not have enough medication with you then it is not acceptable to obtain additional medication by any other means than being prescribed by a doctor.

# APPENDICES

## E. Support

1. Groundswell acknowledge that tackling drug and alcohol issues can be incredibly difficult, and most people require support to help them reach their goals.
2. Groundswell can help you find the right support if you are seeking to tackle your drug and alcohol issues. We are not a specialist support agency, however we have some expertise about what referral options may be open to you.
3. Some people within the team have a lot of personal experience at tackling drug and alcohol issues. Groundswell encourages people to use their experiences to support each other.

## F. Action

1. If you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol at a time when you are meant to be participating in the Homeless People's Commission, in the first instance we sincerely ask you to contact a Groundswell staff member and inform them that you are unable to participate.
2. If you turn up for an HPC event and it appears that you are under the influence of non-prescribed drugs or alcohol, you will be asked to leave.
3. If you are asked to leave, and dispute the fact that you should leave, then it is the most senior person with Groundswell present who has the final say.
4. If you have been sent home from an HPC event because of drug and alcohol issues and still wish to remain involved in the project. Then both yourself and your support worker both have to have conversations Groundswell staff. After these conversations a decision will taken about your future involvement.
5. If at any time you want to discuss any issues related to drugs and alcohol and your involvement in the Homeless People's Commission, then please contact Athol Hallé [athol@groundswell.org.uk](mailto:athol@groundswell.org.uk) or 020 7 976 0111.

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## APPENDIX 6 - GUIDE FOR WITNESSES

### Introduction and welcome to the Homeless People's Commission

The Homeless People's Commission is one year project to enable homeless people to influence policy on a national level.

The Commission is made up of 18 Members - people who have had experience of homelessness; either having slept rough or being at serious risk of sleeping rough. The Members will meet up for a series of two day residential events through the Spring and Summer of 2010. During these events Members will look at six issues related to homelessness. Members will look at a range of evidence, talking directly to policy makers and researchers, go on visits, discussing things from all angles.

After all the topics have been discussed, we will produce a report with clear policy recommendations. This will then be presented to Communities and Local Government (CLG), the government department with responsibility for homelessness and to other relevant policy makers.

If this pilot is successful, there is scope to establish a permanent commission on homelessness and share the model with other socially excluded groups.

### Project Aims

1. To empower homeless people to evaluate and develop policy.
2. To develop clear recommendations on policies and services and potential improvements.
3. To influence policy makers and practitioners and ensure that they consider the Commission's recommendations.

### The Partnership

This project is being organised by a partnership: Groundswell, who are a charity with expertise in enabling homeless people to be involved in solutions to homelessness; Geoffrey Randall, of Research & Information Service, one of the UK's leading researchers into homelessness; and Dr Tom Wakeford of Newcastle University, an expert on participatory action research. This project has been funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

## THE GUIDE

### The Role

The role of the witness is for an information exchange with the members of the Commission. You have vital, valuable information on homelessness policy and practice, which when conveyed to the Commissioners will enable them to add this to their own personal experience to make informed policy recommendations. In addition to sharing your knowledge, you should also be open to having your own opinions revised after hearing the experiences of the Commissioners.

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## The Format

You will be given the opportunity to make a 20 minute presentation on your expert topic. The Commission members will then break into small groups to process this information and devise questions. We will then reconvene as a whole group for a facilitated session, with representatives of the small groups asking you questions on behalf of their group.

## Before the Commission

- Please view the Group Agreement, which is attached.
- Check in with facilitator before the session.
- Where possible use visual guides to represent information.
- Feel free to prepare and bring handouts- but assume that people will only have the chance to read these after your session.

## At the Commission

- Keep in mind that all the people you will be talking with have “been there,” this means that anecdotal examples are often not as illuminating as they would be for a staff/ policy group.

- If you want to refer to studies or research to back up your point – do not assume that the commission members will ‘value’ this as reason enough to ‘believe’ the point you are making. It may be useful to explain how you have reached the position you are taking, how it has been ‘thought through’ – what are the reasons you have come to this decision.
- Please be open to answering the questions from the group, but you are of course free to refrain from answering any questions you deem inappropriate.

## After the Commission

- Geoffrey or Susan from RIS will contact you for an interview about your experience with the HPC.
- We may contact you to respond to additional questions Commission Members have.
- We hope you will stay in touch- we will endeavour to keep you informed with the progress.

Thank you in advance for your contribution to the UK’s First Homeless People’s Commission!

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 7 - HOMELESS PEOPLE'S COMMISSION SCHEDULE: CAMBRIDGE, JULY

TIME	ACTIVITY	
9.30 am	Session 1: Welcome & catch up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Timeline Reminder &amp; Intro to Session (15 mins)</li> <li>Check In - once round everyone (15 mins)</li> <li>Verification of previous meeting Recommendations (45 mins)</li> </ul>
10.45 – 11.00 am	Break	
11.00 – 12.15pm	Session 2: Witness 1 Part 1 - Michael Fothergill: Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation (20 mins)</li> <li>Develop Questions (20 mins) small groups</li> <li>Q&amp;A (35 mins)</li> </ul>
12.15 – 12.30 pm	Mini break	
12.30 – 1.00 pm	Session 2: Witness 1 Part 2 - Michael Fothergill: Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations Development : (20 mins) small groups</li> <li>Cluster Recommendations (10 mins) together</li> </ul>
1.00 – 2.00pm	Lunch	
2.00 – 3.15 pm	Session 3: Witness 2 Part 1 - John Dumelow DWP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation (20 mins)</li> <li>Develop Questions (20 mins) small groups</li> <li>Q&amp;A (35 mins)</li> </ul>
3.15 – 3.30 pm	Break	
3.30 – 4.15 pm	Session 3: Witness 2 Part 2 - John Dumelow DWP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations Development (20 mins) small groups</li> <li>Cluster Recommendations (10 mins)</li> </ul>
	Drill Down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review all clustered recommendations (15 mins)</li> </ul>
4.15 – 4.30 pm	Break	
4.30 – 5.00 pm	Session 4: 'Satellite'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chance to revise contentious recommendations (30 mins)</li> </ul>
5.00 – 5.40 pm	Closing Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Groups Reviewing Day (20 mins)</li> <li>Check Out - once round everyone (15 mins)</li> <li>Run through tomorrow schedule (5 mins)</li> </ul>
5.40 pm	Coach to accommodation & break	
6.00 pm	Facilitators Debrief	
6.30 pm	Coach to Bowling Alley for Dinner & Bowling!	

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 8 - EVALUATION FORM

This Evaluation form is based around the 'hopes' Commission Members have for the HPC.

### 1. We hope to be heard

In this session my ideas have been heard

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Comments:

### 2. We hope to see change – including legislation

I feel positive about the work of the HPC will lead to positive change in my local area and nationally via legislative change

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Comments:

### 3. We hope to have the opportunity to talk to, the right, important people

The Witnesses participating in the Cambridge Commission were the right people to be giving us information on Benefits and Prevention

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Comments:

# APPENDICES

## 4. We hope that Commission Members have ownership of the process and the findings

I feel ownership (both control and responsibility) of the process and the findings of the HPC

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

Comments:

## 5. We hope that communication is clear and simple to understand and that we feel free to ask for clarification

All communication in the Cambridge Commission was clear and simple to understand and I felt free to ask for clarification

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Comments:

## 6. We hope that we can stay on topic and maintain focus

We stayed on topic and maintained focus in Cambridge

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Comments:

# APPENDICES

## 7. We hope that we can try different ways to formulate and prioritise recommendations?

I am happy with the way we worked out and prioritized recommendations in the Cambridge Commission

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Comments:

## 8. We hope that we try to establish consensus but that minority views are still represented

I believe that we worked towards consensus but that minority views were represented and heard

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Comments:

## 9. We hope that we can overcome obstacles that arise

We overcame all obstacle that we came across in Cambridge

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Comments:

## 10. Any other comments, questions, ideas?

Thank you!

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 9 - HOW WE DO THE CITIZEN'S JURY

- We will see two witnesses each day
- We will hear from each and then get into small groups to devise questions
- Any questions we do not have time to ask will be recorded and responded to later
- Then develop recommendations in small groups
- Then we will come together to further develop our recommendations
- We will develop 'how' we do the Jury as we go along – so use the evaluation tools (family groups, written evaluation, recorded one to one interviews) to feed back what you think is working and not working to help us achieve our aim

### WITNESS 1

1. **Presentation.** We will hear from our witness on their area of expertise
2. **Develop Questions.** We will break into small groups and work out questions which will help us get the most out of the witnesses to best inform our recommendations
3. **Ask Questions.** Back together with groups in turn each asking one question at a time
  - All questions go on to Thinking Wall

4. **Develop Recommendations.** In small groups again to work out recommendations.
  - All recommendations also go on to Thinking Wall
5. **Merge Recommendations.** All together to compare and combine our recommendations

### WITNESS 2

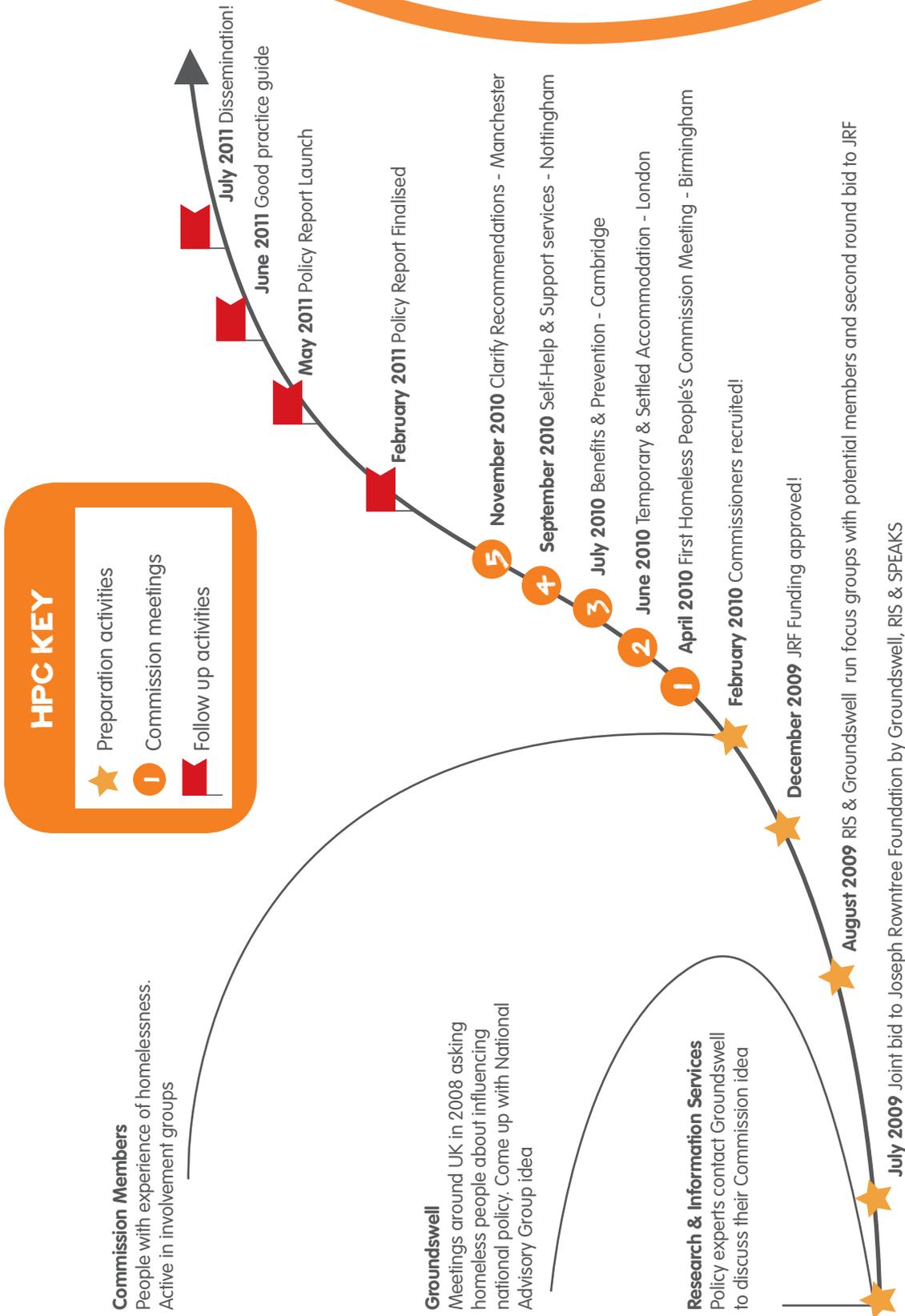
6. **Witness 2 Presentation**
7. **Develop Questions for Witness 2**
8. **Ask Questions to Witness 2**
9. **Develop Recommendations for Witness 2**
10. **Highlight and Merge Recommendations**

### FURTHER RECOMMENDATION DEVELOPMENT

11. **Drill Down.** Into small groups to merge like recommendation and get more specific on exactly what new action should be taken: how much, when, who. Decide which are the controversial recommendations? Use Law of 2 feet to select your group
12. **Satellite.** We call out the controversial recommendations from the 'drill down' exercise. Stand close to the middle if you agree. Work out which recommendations have most collective agreement, and why people disagree

# APPENDIX 10 - HOMELESS PEOPLE'S COMMISSION TIMELINE

# APPENDICES



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