The London School of Economics and Political Science

The state of homelessness
Fragmentation and the will to care in metropolitan England

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Declaration

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Abstract

'Ending homelessness' is an often-expressed public good in the UK. Cycles of homelessness crises endure despite a committed combination of governmental and charitable agencies whose charter is precisely to end these. Government austerity policies have amplified the atomisation of an industry of competing homeless organisations whose survival depends on funding from an increasingly unpredictable state. Further still, this influx of insecure funding into the homeless industry is accompanied by the ongoing state-initiated depletion and residualisation of sustainable accommodation. This thesis explores the interface of frontline workers and their beneficiaries in this 'homeless industry': the assemblage of churches, night shelters, advice drop-ins, day centres, council officials and outreach workers who rely largely on government funding to 'tackle homelessness'. It conjoins the perspectives of its workers who are charged with 'firefighting' on behalf of those beneficiaries who make personalised claims on them to alleviate homelessness. By highlighting these perspectives, it reveals how the industry's seeming pursuit of the same public good is in fact experienced as fragmented, contested and contradictory by workers and beneficiaries alike. It explores the hierarchical division of labour within this industry, the efforts of charity managers and frontline workers alike to maintain the unique brand personalities of their respective organisations, how frontline workers make difficult moral judgments about who is deserving of assistance, the mutual dependencies between charity workers and beneficiaries and the ethical labour of successful aid-seekers who endeavour to make new homes in circumstances that threaten to create renewed homelessness. Based on eighteen months of ethnographic research that concluded at the cusp of the COVID-19 pandemic, it argues that the work demanded of, and embraced by, the homeless industry represents an endeavour to 'fix' the wider capitalist crises of housing in England and governmental crises of legitimacy. It suggests that the post-austerity resurgence in the fight to end homelessness struggles with – and often perversely reinforces – the British state's renewed claims to legitimacy through caring for its citizenry. Situated on the 'shop floor' of an aid industry at home, this thesis recasts the business of ending homelessness as a fraught labour of care which the British state both sponsors and ultimately renders impossible.

Acknowledgements

journeys and the meals. My equally forgiving parents always welcomed me home – with a patiently full plate – no matter the time of day or night. Even though she really doesn't know what anthropology is, my mother Nivien insists I especially mention her here. I do so with a wide smile.

The last word goes simply to Meg and her parents, Mary and Alan. Thank you for sustaining me, patiently.

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A note on research sites and terminology

Castlebury refers to my principal research locality. It is a pseudonym. This similarly applies to the names of all of my interlocutors, host organisations and neighbouring regions where I conducted research (with a few exceptions specified in the Introduction). This is to minimise the heightened risk of identification due to the way that the homeless industry in Castlebury is configured, as will become clear in the following pages.

Situated in the English greater metropolitan region of Axlow, Castlebury is what one of my former colleagues calls a 'classic suburb'. It is neighboured by Holmsey, another suburban district.

The business of ending homelessness, as it played out in Castlebury during my research, requires its own terminological clarification. These homeless charities, and the services they provided, were in fact pitched exclusively to 'single homeless people' – a classification that the following pages unpack. For this class of person, I use the term 'beneficiary' to analytically specify the object of these institutions' interventions, a decision explained in more depth in the Introduction. This is an approach borrowed from the field of international development studies which is less frequently seen in the 'home' context, particularly the field of homelessness. As for the terms deployed on the shop floor, these vary widely, hinting to the contested character of the enterprise. These include

clients (by CCHP advice workers),

tenants (by Pathway workers),

guests (by Sanctuary and Noah staff)

service users (by UIH staff) and

referrals [from the public] (by SHIH outreach workers).

The British devolution settlement designates housing and homelessness as the domain of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish governments in these respective nations. All references to the Housing Act in this thesis are specifically to Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. Part 7 is the latest successor to the original statutory provision – the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 – which represented the first modern legal framework in Britain to address homelessness. However, since devolution, 'Part 7' only applies to England. The policy divergence between these nations and England as it relates to this thesis makes *The State of Homelessness* a particularly English tale. Although references to Britain are occasionally made in this thesis – especially in relation to the 'British state' – it may be more accurate to refer to it here as the English state.

Castlebury Homeless Circuit: September 2018 to March 2020
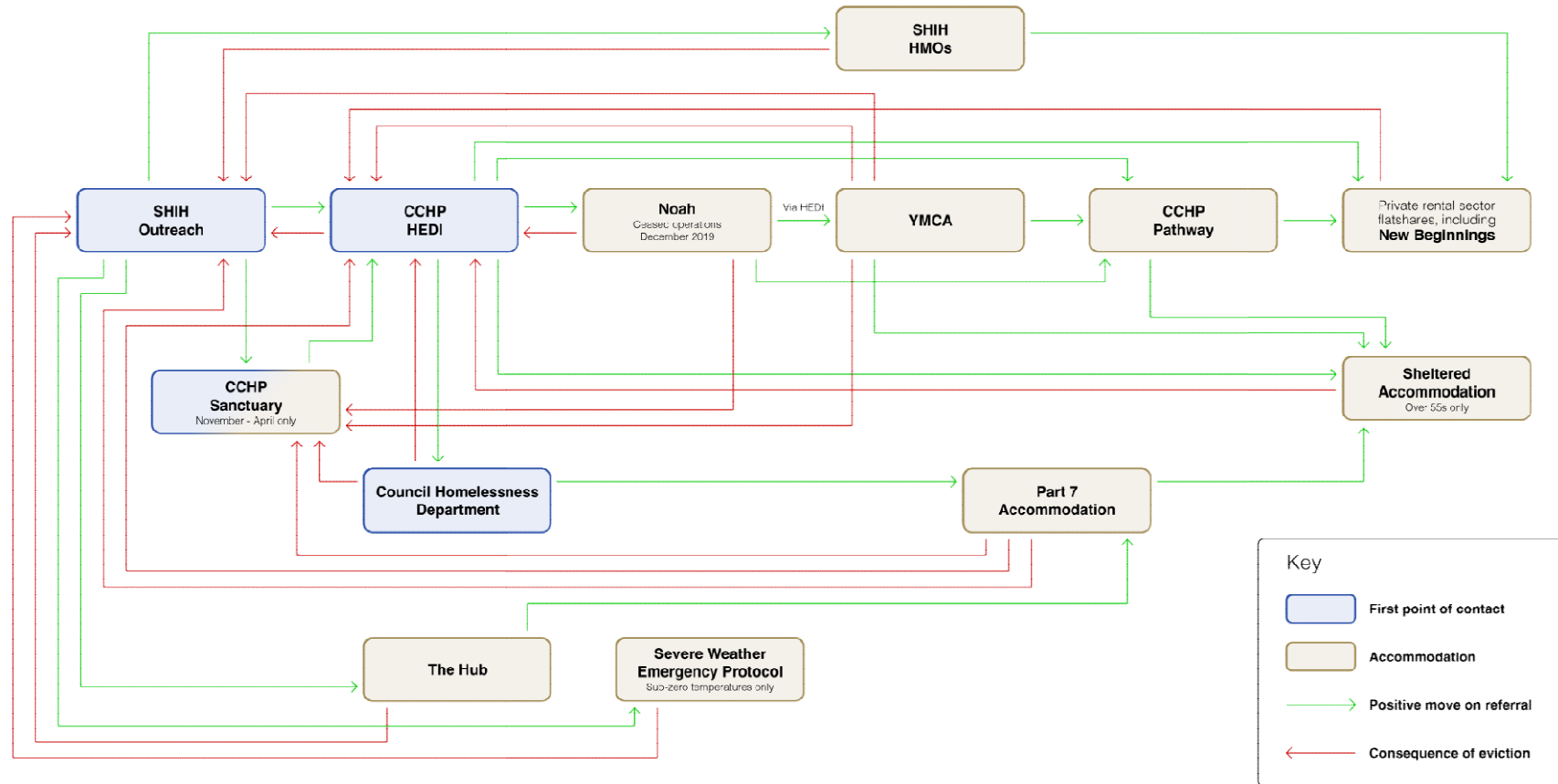
Pathway out of homelessness

Figure 1 – A map of Castlebury's homeless industry

Timeline of Services offered by Castlebury Homeless Industry

CCHP Sanctuary

SHIH Outreach

Noah Community

Churches Winter Night Shelter

CCHP Pathway

CCHP Housing Emergency Drop-In

YMCA

Rainbow Project

Salvation Army

Nov | Jan | Sept | Sept | Dec | April

1968 | 1975 | 1993 | 1999 | 2008 | 2009 | 2014 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020
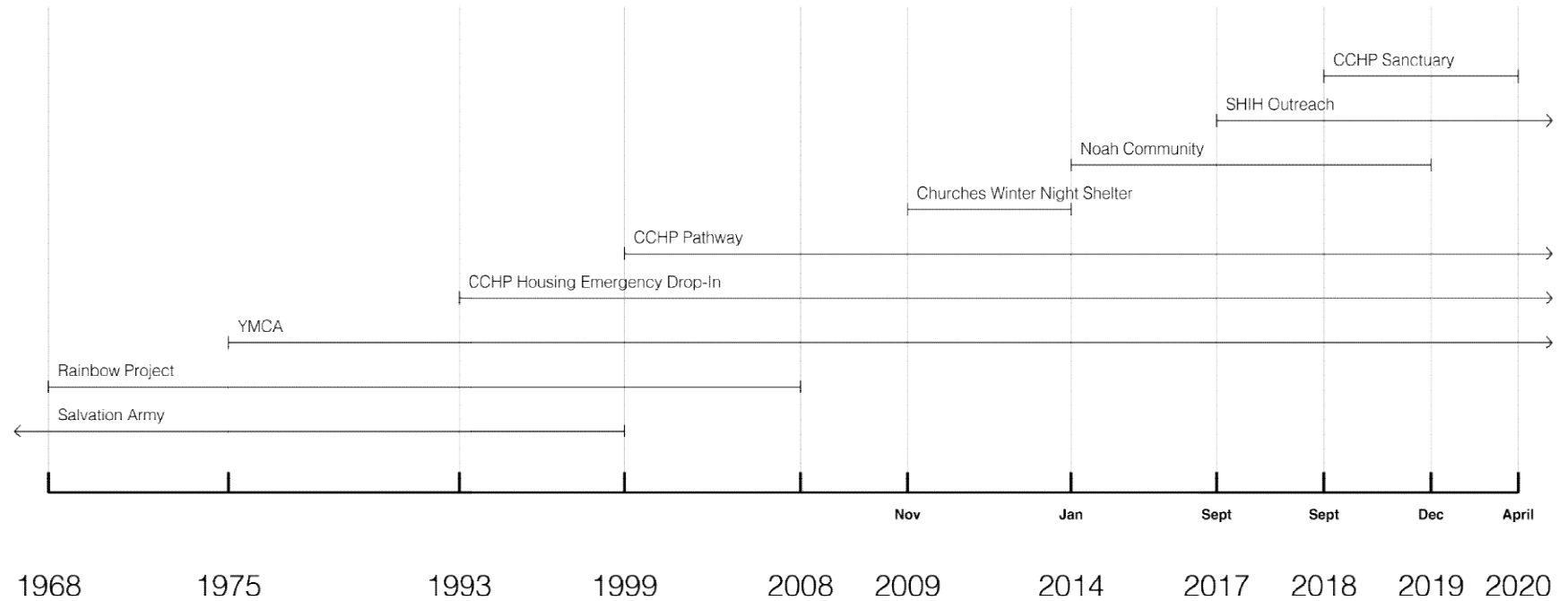
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Churches of Castlebury Homelessness Project

Frontline worker organisational chart

Snapshot of employees during November 2019 unless otherwise stated
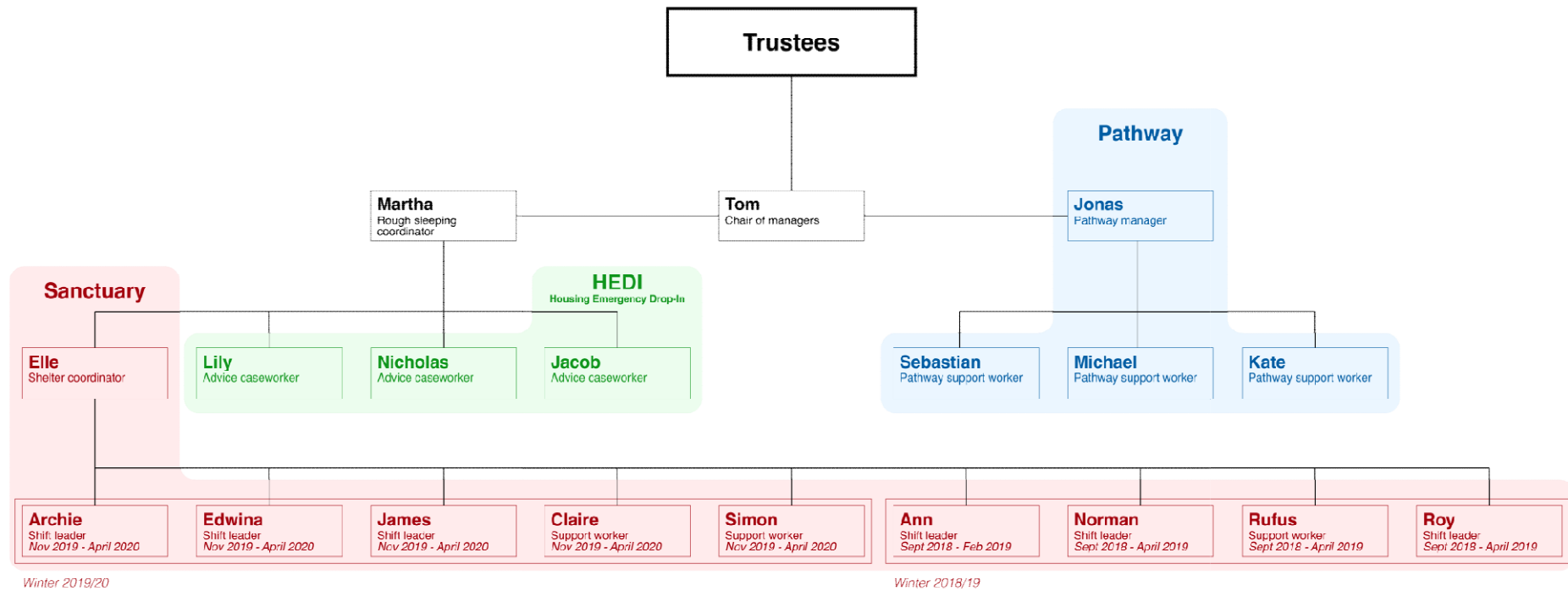
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CCHP funding from central and local government for service delivery (2000-2021)
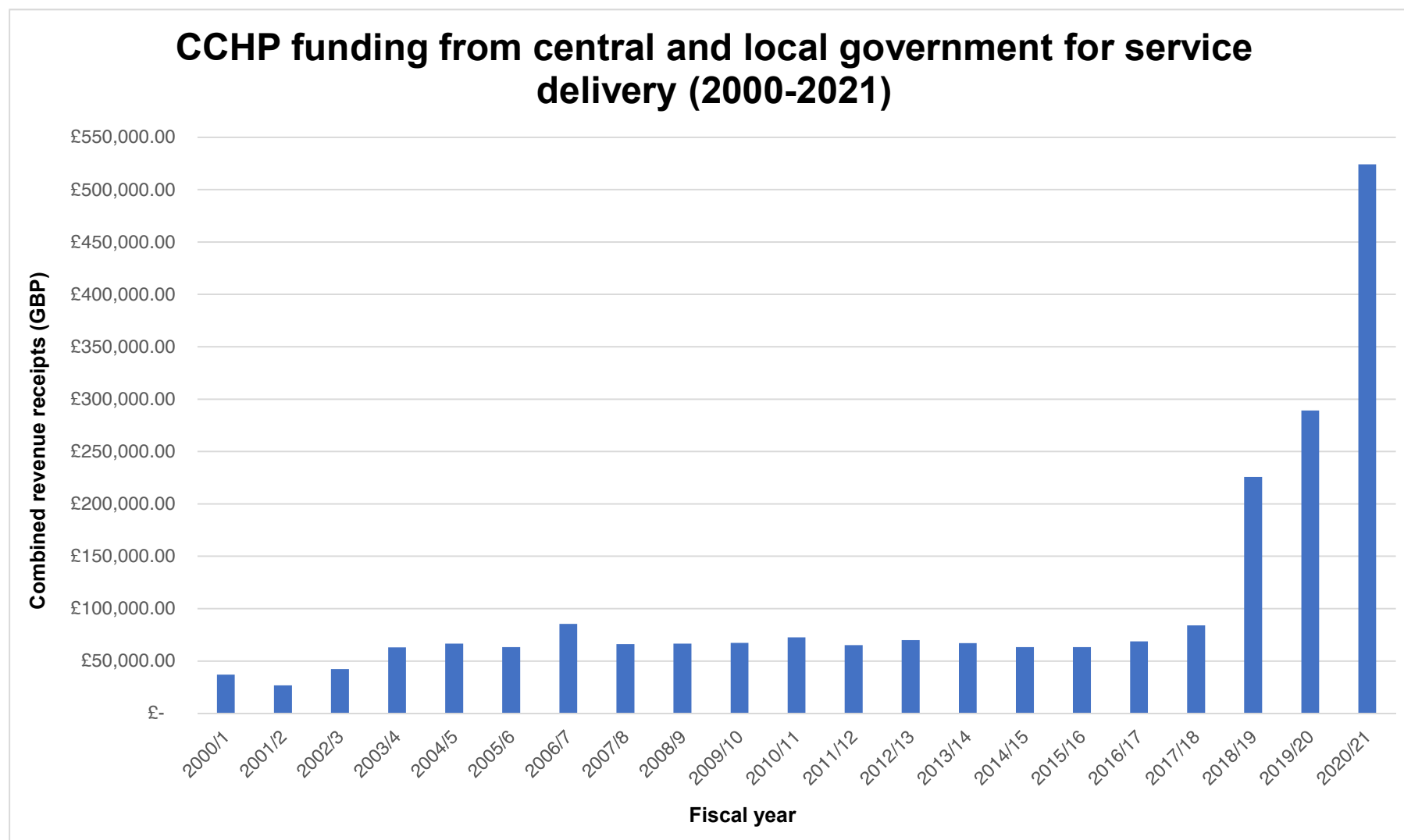
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Noah Community Night Shelter

Frontline worker organisational chart

Snapshot of employees during June 2019

Trustees

Andrew
Chair

Kev
Shelter manager

Sammy
Operations support
worker

Sara
Deputy manager

Simon
On placement
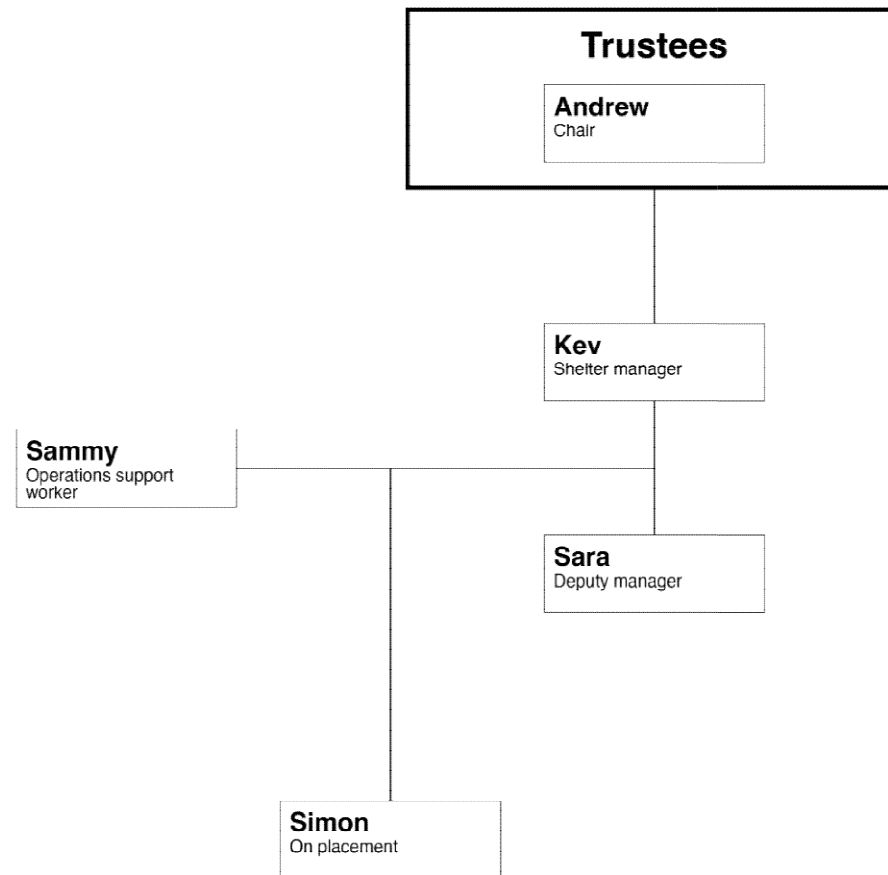
Figure 5 – Noah Community Night Shelter organisational chart

Single Homeless in Holmsey (Outreach Department in Castlebury and Holmsey)

Frontline worker organisational chart

Snapshot of employees during November 2019 unless otherwise stated

Outreach Manager

Ryan	Craig	Mo	Harry
Outreach worker	Outreach worker	Outreach worker	Outreach worker
Nov 2017 - March 2019	April 2019 -	July 2019 -	July 2019 -
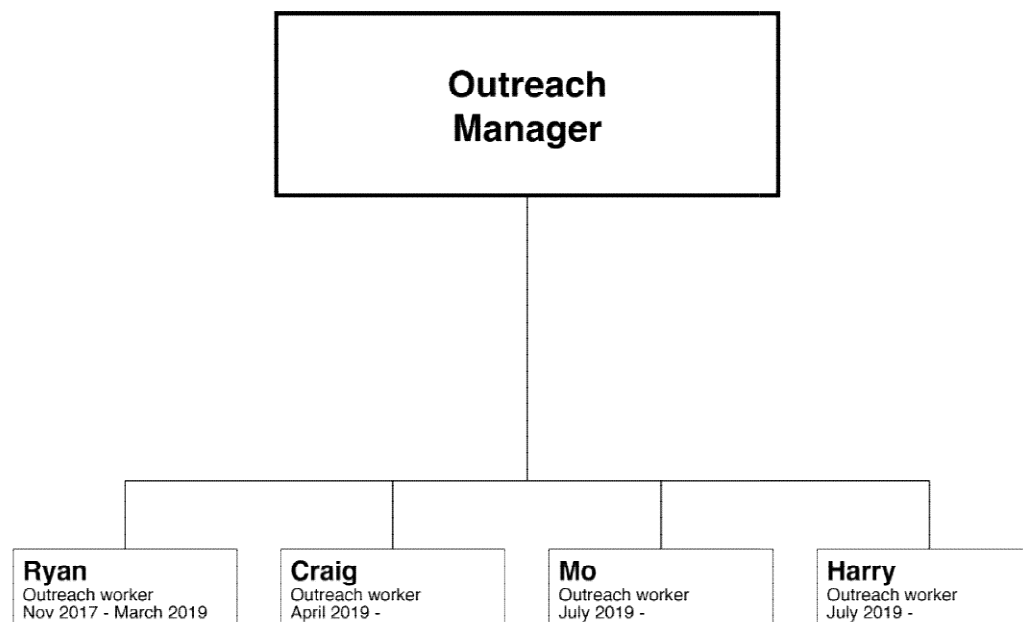
Figure 6 – Single Homeless in Holmsey outreach worker chart

Figure 7 – Simon's timeline in Castlebury's homeless industry

Description of primary organisations, services and initiatives

Churches of Castlebury Homelessness Project (**CCHP**) is Castlebury's longest standing local homeless charity, founded in 1993.[1] It receives the majority of its core funding from the local authority in the form of a contract to operate a first-point-of-access advice service with an average footfall of 400 new clients per year (**the Housing Emergency Drop-In [HEDI]**) and its scheme of flatshares for almost 50 'single homeless people' who approach their putative journey's end (**the Pathway Project**). This contract is known as '**the single homeless pathway**'. It is, in the words of its publicity material, 'an award-wining homeless charity'.

In the winters of 2018/19 and 2019/2020, CCHP also operated **the Sanctuary**, a winter night shelter which operated, unusually, on a relatively 'open-access' basis. The Sanctuary offered sleeping bags and mats for a maximum of 30 self-identifying 'rough sleepers' to spend the night on the floors of various churches in Castlebury town centre. Its nightly opening times varied, although its guests could expect to stay inside from between 9 p.m. – 7 a.m. It operated between November and March. A rudimentary evening meal was provided, and breakfast often consisted of pastries. Newcomers – and the so-called 'entrenched homeless population' – were not expected by staff to abstain from alcohol or other psychoactive substances during their stay; neither did they need to pre-enrol in advance of arrival. For a night shelter in the UK, these admission practices deviate from the norm. At the same time, workers expected guests to become HEDI clients if they were not already – or to continue to engage with the HEDI if they already were clients – otherwise they faced the possibility of being issued with an eviction letter and so being 'barred'. The Sanctuary was funded by central government (it was called the **Department for Communities and Local Government [DCLG]** at the shelter's inception) under its flagship **Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI)**.

The **Noah Community** was Castlebury's first permanent night shelter, when renovations to St Mark's Church Hall were completed in 2014 to repurpose it into a 12-bed shared dormitory style accommodation. It revolved around a centralised leadership structure and its ethos was eclectic. Its founding – and final – manager, Kev, was a highly charismatic and mercurial figure. With reformative discipline as its focus, it pursued a very different kind of charter from both CCHP and its Sanctuary.[2] Kev frequently described Noah as the best night shelter in the country, having also won various awards.

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[1] Chapter 1 offers a detailed historical context of the emergence of Castlebury's homeless industry and situates it within wider national political history.

[2] The Interlude preceding Chapter 4 – a Noah welcome – reanimates my enrolment in Noah.

The **RSI** is a needs-based tender that the DCLG and its successors award on an annual basis to English local authorities that it considers to exhibit the highest recorded incidence of rough sleeping; local authorities then distribute these funds to NGOs on a contractual basis. It covers the staffing and premises hosting costs of delivering winter night shelters, outreach patrols and further frontline rough sleeping support work roles. It does not fund capital development, only the costs associated with service delivery of such reactive, crisis-driven services. It is a recurring flagship policy that has historically always been initiated by the Conservative Party, usually in turbulent political times. It first ran between 1990 and 1999. It was later revived in 2018.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCHP	Churches of Castlebury Homelessness Project
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID(-19)	Coronavirus disease 2019
CV	Curriculum vitae
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government (2006-2018)
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2021-)
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EU/EEA	European Union / European Economic Area
HEDI	Housing Emergency Drop-In (operated by CCHP)
HIV	Human immunodeficiency viruses
ICE	Immigration Compliance Enforcement, a division of the Home Office
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IQ	Intelligence quotient
MAT B1	Maternity Certificate, issued by NHS clinicians
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018-2021)
MHFA	Mental Health First Aid
MP	Member of Parliament (in the United Kingdom House of Commons)
MSF	*Médecins Sans Frontières*
NCP	National Car Parks, a private car park operator
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PM	Prime Minister
PS3	PlayStation 3
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
RSI	Rough Sleepers' Initiative (1990-1999)
	Rough Sleeping Initiative (2018-)
RTB	Right to Buy
SAS	Special Air Service, a special forces unit of the British Army
SHIH	Single Homeless in Holmsey
SSO	Single service offer
SWEP	Severe Weather Emergency Protocol
TB	Tuberculosis
(The) Treasury	The UK central government bank account
UC	Universal Credit, the primary working-age welfare benefit in the UK (2018-)
UIH	United in Hope
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
US	United States of America

Prologue

Successive Westminster governments have enacted contentious 'deficit reduction' or austerity measures in pursuit of economic recovery after the 2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis and the subsequent Great Recession, dramatically curtailing public expenditure on welfare and public services. The inequitable effects of the 2010-2019 austerity programme regularly reach the headlines. In 2019, the Local Government Association – the cross-party umbrella body for English local authorities – decried the reductions to its members' budgets wrought by central government funding cuts of up to 60p out of every £1 since 2010; it claimed that this widened a financial 'black hole' and posed 'damage [to] the ability of councils to provide dignified care'. A few years earlier, Homeless Link (2013:6) – the umbrella body for UK homelessness organisations – reported that its members' budgets were among the first to experience the ripple effect of cuts to central-to-local transfers, noting that 70% of homelessness services were funded by the local authority. A chorus of newspaper columnists and anti-poverty organisations opposed cuts to the level of rental subsidy for benefits claimants who occupy private rental accommodation; they pointed to research that demonstrated that less than 5% of English inner city tenancies were financially viable for single claimants in 2019 (Booth 2019; Chartered Institute of Housing 2019). Meanwhile, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism pursued a highly acclaimed project – Dying Homeless – to estimate the mounting death toll of these policies (McClenaghan 2020). The Special Rapporteur for extreme poverty and human rights to the United Nations Human Rights Council (2019:1) echoed the statement about this link between rising homelessness and austerity in the UK, characterising the policy programme as the replacement of the post-World War II welfare state with 'a harsh and uncaring ethos'.

Nevertheless, austerity has been paradoxically accompanied by both renewed and repeated claims to *care* about 'homelessness', not least from Westminster. Shortly after the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition came into power in May 2010, it revised the methodology deployed to count rough sleepers by mandating a *broader* definition of rough sleeping and *expanding* the geographical scope of the annual street walks undertaken to identify rough sleepers (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). This contributed to a fourfold increase in the figure – from 440 in autumn 2009 to 1,768 in autumn 2010 – that was welcomed by the Coalition in a pivotal 2011 white paper for painting a 'better picture' of the scale of the 'indignity and suffering of rough sleeping' (Department for

Communities and Local Government 2011:4-5). In that white paper, the Coalition pledged that it would ensure 'nobody has to spend a second night out on the streets', a 'commitment' it placed 'at the centre' of its wider promise to 'protect the most vulnerable and promote social justice' (ibid.:5, 12). But by autumn 2017, the Conservative-majority government estimated that the incidence of rough sleeping reached 4,751 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018). Its Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) responded in kind by announcing the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) in March 2018, a £1.2 billion flagship package that dovetailed with the Conservative Party's manifesto pledge to 'halve rough sleeping over the course of the parliament and eliminate it altogether by 2027' (Conservative Party 2017:58). Meanwhile, the Labour Mayor of London launched a publicity campaign throughout 2018 which promised that 'London will never turn its back on rough sleepers'.[3] The timing of these promises by the Labour Mayoralty – *after* the Conservatives' grandstand undertakings on a national level – speaks to an attempt to match its political opponents stride for stride. It also came in the wake of public outrage at the Mayoralty's apparent collusion with the Home Office to facilitate the deportation of EU/EEA rough sleepers, reportedly assisted by homeless charities that were commissioned by City Hall (see e.g., Townsend 2017; Chapter 2).

This thesis examines the pursuits of a seemingly timeless public good in the UK – ending homelessness – at such a moment of social transformation. Above all, the state of homelessness is conjured by a variety of actors as a diagnostic of the moral fabric of British society. It is an indicator of a collective will to care – a term elaborated further in the Introduction – and it centres on notions of the public good. Bear and Mathur's (2015) manifesto for an anthropology of the public good informs the framing of this thesis as precisely such a study. *The State of Homelessness* applies their insights in order to reveal how homelessness as a 'problem' requiring intervention is a profoundly 'contested terrain' where the state's claims to legitimacy – as a guardian of the public good – are both forged and held accountable (ibid.:19). It highlights the 'tense exchanges' between the multiplicity of actors who pursue 'divergent utopian desires and pragmatic concerns' (ibid.) in their attempts to address homelessness. It captures the 'intersections between [such] contradictory projects' (ibid.:20) to end homelessness that appear to inhibit or even render the realisation of the enterprise a 'frustratingly impossible goal'. It attends to the contested 'affective, moral,

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[3] Only the Facebook record of this campaign remains: https://www.facebook.com/MayorofLondon/videos/well-never-turn-our-backs-on-rough-sleepers/610182152661279/

political and economic meanings' of the home (Alexander et al. 2018:129) as a good which is unevenly distributed in an unequal political economy. It shows that policies such as the RSI – that disperse responsibility to end homelessness to a variety of actors on a short-term basis and create different classes of beneficiary – 'generate fragmented governance' (Bear and Mathur 2015:24); and it accounts for the resultant forms of unintended conflict within such a fragmented terrain where various NGOs and frontline workers contest each other's will to care for their beneficiaries.

Although the charter of ending homelessness clearly evokes the public good, it has rarely seen explicit anthropological attempts to 'problematise the problem' in those terms. Part of this disinclination may derive from categorical unease. The deployment of analogous markers of pitiable others in popular speech and scholarship – 'the illegal (im)migrant' (see Andersson 2012), 'the poor' (see Harriss 2007; Green 2006), 'refugees' (see Malkki 1996) and even 'Orientals' (see Said 1978) – has rightly been challenged by anthropologists and critical theorists on now familiar grounds. Historically, such terms have often categorised and assembled their referents as a problematic species whose existence demands paternalist intervention. In doing so, they gloss over the definitional tenuousness of the category, human diversity and the possibility of alternative forms of (self-)identification. Moreover, they construct superiority above – and ontological, temporal and spatial distance from – primitive others, tantamount to a 'god trick' (Haraway 1988) which legitimises various world-views, interventions and counter-political strategies.

This rehearsal of social science's savage (Trouillot 2003) and suffering (Robbins 2013) slots is necessary. Ethnographic accounts of 'homeless people' rarely detect these resonances in their analyses even though the category possesses similar historical legacies

and produces similarly exclusionary effects in the present.[4] Seldom inclined to 'cast an eye on the observers' (Andersson 2012:11) as a central analytic preoccupation, the failure to do so risks reproducing dominant images of 'the problem' and affirming some of the usual tropes.[5]

The research programmes of social policy researchers in the UK and highly influential anthropologists of homelessness (hailing almost entirely from the US) share a strikingly similar charter: 'preventing and eradicating homelessness' (Glasser and Bridgman 1999:x). Policy-oriented research in the UK continues to be preoccupied by, for example, the biographical aetiologies of homelessness (e.g., Fitzpatrick et al. 2011a), 'risk factors' (e.g., Bramley and Fitzpatrick 2018), the prevalence of homelessness[6] (e.g., Fitzpatrick et al. 2011b), typologies and definitions of homelessness (e.g., Fitzpatrick 2000; Bramley 1988; Somerville 1992; Busch-Geertsema 2010) or indeed the self-reinforcing 'culture of homelessness' (e.g., Ravenhill 2008). As Farrugia and Gerrard (2016) demonstrate in a critical review of 'homelessness' knowledge production in the UK, these preoccupations constitute the dominant and unusually coherent research programme for British social policy analysts of homelessness since the late 1990s, coinciding with the discovery of 'rough sleeping' by British journalists and policy makers (see Chapter 1). In an influential

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[4] There are striking parallels at the height of the British Empire between the construction of the urban poor in the metropole and the subjects of colonial intervention. Founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth (1890:12) justifies intervening in the lives of those whom he called 'the homeless' by asking 'As there is a darkest Africa is there not also a darkest England?' Not dissimilarly, social reformer Dr Barnardo participated in the invention of visually racialised images of itinerant children – so-called 'street Arabs' – in the same era (Smith 1996 cited by Gerrard and Farrugia 2015:2222). Several recent influential sociological studies of homelessness (Glasser and Bridgman 1999; Ravenhill 2008) are interspersed with sketches of 'the homeless' drawn by the author. These reproduce Victorian visual tropes of 'street people' without reference or justification, imitating the style of several *Punch* magazine renderings of the era and Henry Mayhew's intrepid explorations of the streets of London between 1841 and 1861. The depiction of 'the streets' and its 'poor' as a kind of 'jungle' or 'dark continent' persisted freely in published accounts in the UK until at least the late 1990s (see Hall 2003:6-9 for insightful review). See Gerrard and Farrugia's (2015) historically informed study of the construction of homelessness as a 'spectacle', referring to Debord's (1970) original formulation. See also Lancione's (2014) excellent analysis of the mass mediatised spectacle of care towards the poor and its striking resonances with the Good Samaritan visual trope.

[5] Farrugia and Gerrard (2016) provide a useful critical review of Ravenhill's ethnographic study (2008); see also Madden's (2003) extended review that critiques Glasser and Bridgman's volume (1999) alongside other seminal ethnographic studies by Snow and Anderson (1993) and Toth (1993). Finally, see Grohmann's (2020:17-19) concise critical review of the approaches taken by Ravenhill (2008), Glasser and Bridgman (1999) and further anthropologists of homelessness.

[6] This citation (Fitzpatrick et al. 2011b) refers to the first instalment of *The Homelessness Monitor*, which has been produced annually since 2011 by a team of researchers deriving largely from the Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland. I-SPHERE comprise one of the most influential and highly cited producers of homelessness policy research in the UK, and *the Monitor* is one of the foremost reference points for journalists and researchers who seek a snapshot of the state of homelessness. It is a flagship project 'owned' by Crisis, a national industry mainstay.

intervention from within that body of work, Peter Somerville (2013) evaluates this subfield's overarching research consensus – what became known as 'the (new) orthodoxy' – that homelessness is variously the product of an accretion of risk factors and activated by particular life histories and events. Somerville rejects this prevalent framing because it mirrors epidemiology and thus conveys its unitary subject ('homeless people') as the embodiment of a 'problem'. The historical emergence of the new orthodoxy, Farrugia and Gerrard (2016:268) suggest, stems from early influential research manifestos that argued that researching 'homeless people' is only legitimate if it is animated by 'clear policy aims' rather than 'intellectual curiosity' (Fitzpatrick et al. 2000:49 cited by ibid.). Muted but resonant suggestions arise in *Braving the street: The anthropology of homelessness* – the only dedicated volume of its kind – where Glasser and Bridgman (1999:6) suggest that an anthropology of homelessness should focus on 'what drives individuals to life on the streets' ideally to inform policy-makers. Both of these imply that the study of 'homelessness' means – or ought to mean – the study of 'homeless people'.

Collectively, these highly influential research manifestos conveyed the ethical primacy of policy-oriented research as an ideologically neutral social science that can present a 'cure' for homelessness by studying 'homeless people', reflecting similar trends in international aid identified by development scholars (Harriss 2007:10; Mosse 2005:243). Their charter seems to anticipate and to militate against the replication of an academic gold rush that reportedly emerged in migration research (Andersson 2012:23; Cabot 2019). But it overlooks the possibility that the changing market for, and uses of, such research reflects the changing tides of government and the wider homeless industry; and that all these might in fact constitute each other (Jacobs et al. 1999). In sum, a false either/or dichotomy between 'policy' (for the public good) and 'intellectual curiosity' (presumably a more self-interested good) remains particularly entrenched in the field of UK homelessness research, designing out the possibility of critically engaging with such policies.

This thesis retains the use of the words 'homelessness' and 'homeless people' to the extent that these are designated as the focus of policy and academic analysis, mobilised in

social critique and invoked as the premise of the everyday business of ending homelessness.[7] It seeks precisely to highlight the social life of the category and its ability to raise profoundly 'moral questions' (Fassin 2012:4) that keep staging returns. It probes the everyday concern directed to such a 'human kind' (Hacking 1995:376) that carries multiple moral connotations and spans various behaviours: a discrete classification of person with seemingly self-evident 'criteria of identification'. Ian Hacking's (1986:161) concept of 'making up people' usefully demonstrates that human kinds – he cites the rise of the 'pervert' as one example – are not just intrinsically social creations. It is clear that the activities of so-called perverts occurred long before the contemporary category became invented with the meanings that it carries (beginning in the Victorian era). Nevertheless, the invention and circulation of such categories – here, 'the homeless' – has tangible effects and is laden with 'intrinsic moral value' (Hacking 1995:367). It provides a novel opportunity for actors to identify with, and become, such a human kind. At the same time, it constitutes the charter for a distinct field of intervention that seeks to 'change them for the better and [to] prevent others from joining their ranks' (Hacking 1995:360). 'Cause, classification and intervention [are] of a piece' (Hacking 1995:361).

'Homelessness' and 'homeless people' constitute contested and charged classifications that assume lives of their own. These terms also do not exhaust the semantic field of this human kind, increasing the difficulty of describing its constitution as a target of intervention. Sociologists – often working in the US context – provide some of the most useful starting points to unpack the travelling meanings of the classification and its 'clumsy confusion' (Gowan 2011:222). Although Teresa Gowan's work (2011) largely concerns the discourses of poverty management in the US during the 1990s, its ability to articulate the term's intersecting meanings on this side of the Atlantic is striking. She sketches several representational frames of homelessness as three contrasting ideal types, illustrating the causal mechanisms and legitimate responses that they imply (2011:29). The first she calls 'sin-talk': homelessness as an individual moral failing – an 'offence' – which requires retribution. The second is 'sick-talk', homelessness as an embodied 'pathology' which merits

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[7] The Introduction offers an analytic framework of the business of ending homelessness, situating it as the charter of 'the homeless industry'. It takes as one key source of inspiration Ruben Andersson's (2014) ethnographic study of 'the illegality industry', which draws on the work of Ian Hacking (1986, 1999), the Manchester school of anthropology (e.g., Gluckman 2002) and the notion of the interface from development sociology (e.g., Long 2001; see also Lipsky 1980 for a parallel paradigm in political science). The Introduction notes further points of convergence between the notion of the homeless industry and Andersson's illegality industry.

treatment and recovery. The last is 'system-talk', homelessness as a product of structural inequality.

These frames – of sin-talk, sick-talk and system-talk – endure in the circulation of images of homelessness and they also inform the business of ending homelessness in the UK. Analysing British news television coverage of homelessness in the 1990s, Hodgetts and his colleagues (2005) observe the dramatised character of these frames, particularly when expressed in one noticeably British vernacular: the 'rough sleeper'. As a genre of reportage that tends to peak in the run up to Christmas, these circulate as familiar montages of solitary blanketed men who hide in littered underpasses to shelter from the rain, a recurrent motif of 'no room at the inn' that addresses the public conscience (ibid.:36). Such stereotypical images cast its characters in evocatively ambivalent slots, Hodgetts and his colleagues note, as 'folk heroes' living an alternative lifestyle; as worthy of benevolence, and lastly as 'wretches' who lack moral virtue due to their worklessness and dependence on 'hand outs'. For Jeremy Swain, writing in 2011 whilst Chief Executive of Thames Reach (a major London homeless charity), these are 'essentially spoof' images that 'more closely reflect the street population of the mid-1980s and, as such, are at least 25 years out of date' (Swain 2011). For psychiatrist Douglas Mossman, challenging the related popular association between homelessness and mental pathology in the 1980s and 1990s, these 'persistent, systematic, widely held erroneous beliefs […] reflect cultural concerns in which those persons function as symbols' (1997:75; see also Mathieu 1993; Hopper 1988). Or, to quote Swain (2011) once more, 'You, the shivering, plaintive figure on the streets swaddled in blankets; can we really afford to see you go?'

The continued endurance of similar scenes is one possible indicator of the seemingly timeless and uncanny role that 'homelessness' plays in the British public imagination. The term's meanings are profoundly malleable, paradoxical, predictable and disputed. They prompt intrigue and repulsion alongside care and repression. The causes of homelessness and its trends are a recurrent subject of public debate, alternately evoking personal shortcoming, societal shame or a combination of both. This reflects – and feeds into – the persuasive, controversial and even dismal nature of homelessness as a field of intervention, not least anthropological study.

Introduction

On the shop floor

Holmsey Tesco superstore, one early morning in February 2019. Craig parks the vehicle that his employers, SHIH, hire for these regular night searches for rough sleepers in the borough's public spaces. In the homeless industry and beyond, these are known simply as outreach shifts. Craig and I have been 'outreach partners' for a month and I am reprising my role as his designated volunteer this shift. He is easily one of SHIH's most seasoned campaigners, having worked in the 'sector' for over 15 years and sharing precise reflections with me about its changing tides.

I inspect the 'shift notes', the roster of sleep sites to visit this shift, which commenced at a bracing 5:00 a.m. This list contains reports of rough sleeper 'sightings' made by members of the public online or by telephone to StreetLink – a national service established in 2012 by central government for the purpose of collecting intelligence about rough sleepers' sleep sites. Such intelligence is imperfect – not least because it is largely based on daytime observations – but organisations such as SHIH respond to the sightings as a condition of their funding from local authorities. Some reports recount encounters with people who beg and sometime recite their claims to be sleeping in a particular spot (e.g., cemeteries, bin sheds or outside a government office). Other reports are based on observations of public drinking.

Craig and I are responding to a sighting which resembles the form and content of the following adapted StreetLink report.[8]

> Site and time of report: Tesco Superstore, Holmsey Bypass, Axlow, XM4 5HQ, 8 February 2019 2:17 p.m.

> Details: Next to the exit for the Tesco, a man this morning (white, blue hair, green eyes) begging for money, mid-20s probably. I asked him if he wanted some help but he said no. I offered to get him something from Tesco but he said it was okay. His name is Jeremy Francis Luther Jones. He sometimes shouts at the shoppers. Can we do something for this gentleman? I also think someone is sleeping outside the railway station because there are used sleeping bags and tins of beer. Thank you so much for your help.

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[8] This is a fictional report. The postcode is a stock postcode used by Royal Mail to send letters to Santa Claus.

Outreach actions: [Blank. This is the first visit of an anticipated three].

Besides the inevitably mediated nature of such reports, the systematic failure to find a 'target' in this variant of hide-and-seek owes much to the tacit rules of the game. These outreach shifts normally occurred twice a week during my fieldwork. Even though they routinely took place on a Monday evening (10:00 p.m.–1:00 a.m.) and Thursday morning (5:00 a.m.–8:00 a.m.), the days when they took place were an organisational secret that was divulged neither to StreetLink informer nor informed-on. At odds with the popular image of outreach as providing an urgent form of street rescue, this produces an unpredictably delayed response – of up to 108 hours – from the time of the alert. The unannounced timing of these visits is – by design – to avoid the possibility of 'staged' reports. It presumes a continuity of presence – a paradoxical immobility – on the part of 'genuine' StreetLink targets. Such a presumption contains unrealistic expectations of prospective beneficiaries' sleep hygiene, namely that they are continuously bedded down at their sleep site during the hours of 10pm-8am. This practice bears the traces of a historically entrenched moral panic in England: it seeks to militate against aspirant public housing applicants 'pretending' to be rough sleepers in order to 'jump' the waiting list (see Chapter 1). Even though my former outreach partners generally adhered to the policy of concealing the days on which they went 'on shift', they recognised the inaccuracy of this moral panic. After all, a systematic evaluation of StreetLink reported that only 5% of outreach visits in England between 2012 and 2018 had culminated in an accommodation outcome (Moisl et al. 2018:43; Broomfield 2018).

Now, it is just past 5:30 a.m. and Craig and I are chasing the shadow captured in the StreetLink report. To speed up the shift – there are over 20 more locations to visit before 8:00 a.m. – Craig tends to stay in the car to keep it warm given the likelihood that this visit is yet another 'not found'. In fact, if a report relates to a location that is evidently in plain view of the road, it can be easily dealt with as a 'drive by' as my outreach colleagues often called it. Since this StreetLink report refers to a somewhat concealed spot out of view from the car park, I emerge out of the car myself to nose around from a distance. If I notice anything that remotely resembles the target of the report, my brief is to return to Craig in the car so that he responds. Apart from some presumably abandoned vehicles, the car park is empty; only foxes occupy the quiet urban centre-stage.

I take a quick glance around the corner of the superstore, briefly identifying an indistinct figure perched in an alcove to the side of the store entrance. Returning to Craig, I

relay this information. He becomes pensive, devising a suitable pitch to present to the unknown figure. The city-wide assessment hub has no vacancies, Craig observes to me, and the local authority is not offering cold weather hotel rooms this morning as the mercury remained above zero. This is the norm; there is rarely capacity in these schemes. He also has no timely appointments to offer – he is a few days away from annual leave and his diary is already blocked up until then – and his colleagues are unavailable at this hour to consult their availability for a local initial assessment. None of these factors are novel, even when combined. Craig seems frustrated with the situation, arriving at the only conceivable offer he can make: a professional introduction, empty-handed but for his business card and an appeal to reach out. Exiting the car to recite his lines and then quickly returning to the vehicle, Craig finds a spare Alcatel 'burner' phone to hand the person, hoping to maintain a means of communication. 'I don't have any homes, but I can give them phones', he complains to me in an ironic tone.

Craig disembarks the car before swiftly returning. We continue the shift into a cold dawn; all the subsequent visits that morning result in a 'not found' outcome.

Locating 'the homeless'

The anthropological study of 'homeless people' is largely enfolded within a wider disciplinary tension between what Sherry Ortner (2016) calls 'dark anthropology' and 'the anthropology of the good'. In her extensive literature review, Ortner shows how dark anthropology emerged in order to document the social suffering globally manifest since the 1980s in the form of 'increasing poverty, deterioration of life conditions, and increasing hopelessness and depression' (ibid.:55) as well heightened 'forms of violence by the state against its citizens' (ibid.:56) – it is an approach that takes seriously the political economic domain. Meanwhile, the anthropology of the good represents an invitation by Joel Robbins to reconfigure this landscape where 'the suffering subject […] now very often stands at the centre of anthropological work' (Robbins 2013:448 cited by Ortner 2016:58). It aims to take seriously how people 'strive to create the good in their lives' on their own terms despite – and possibly in awareness of – a profoundly uneven global distribution of life chances (Robbins 2013:457). Ortner (2016:60) expresses concern that the emergence of these two discrete disciplinary strands – of the dark and of the good – risks constructing a 'sharp line' that separates the two intellectual projects from each other, inhibiting an analytic realism that reconciles the existence of social suffering with everyday pursuits of the good. Such concerns

are particularly apt in the case of the anthropology of homelessness – briefly reviewed here – which has attended to a complex moral human kind 'at home'. Evoking as polar approaches the injustice of suffering and the pursuit of hope, it has subtly engaged in – and attempted to rebut – sin-talk, sick-talk and system-talk as representational frames of its subject matter. Yet even though it represents a research agenda *for* public good (similarly to social policy analysis), it has failed to produce an adequate ethnographic account *of* the public good.

An influential strand of anthropological analysis characterises the experience of homelessness as a state of social death. Working with 'homeless women' with 'serious psychotic disorder' in Chicago during the early 2000s, Luhrmann (2007) argues that her interlocutors' everyday experiences of humiliation and shame moulded a subjectivity of 'social defeat' – the 'internalised correlate' of societal stigma (ibid.:152) – choosing 'not to pursue social ties' in anticipation of failure and perceiving a world devoid of 'help' (ibid.:159). In their landmark study of heroin injectors in San Francisco at the turn of the millennium, Bourgois and Schonberg (2009) characterise their interlocutors – the 'Edgewater homeless' – as a 'community of addicted bodies' (ibid.:6) comprising of 'violent and destructive subjectivities' that enact 'abuse' towards one another (ibid.:19). Through such acts of misrecognition, Bourgois and Schonberg (2009:16) argue that the Edgewater homeless obliquely project onto one another the violence and malign neglect engendered by 'the restructuring of the labor market, the "War on Drugs," the gentrification of San Francisco's housing market, the gutting of social services, the administration of bureaucracies, racism, sexuality, gender power relations, and stigma'. Lastly, in Höjdestrand's study in 1990s St Petersberg of *bomzh* (2009) – a pejorative vernacular category that approximates to 'people of no fixed abode' in English – she explores her interlocutors' conscious endeavours to salvage their 'humanness' amid their social position as 'human leftovers', ostensibly isolated from the modernising post-Soviet economy and consigned to being treated, feeling and becoming 'like shit' (ibid.:2). In summary, these are studies of social abandonment that emphasise the 'bare life' (Agamben 1998) of their interlocutors, a life of 'necessity, mere physical existence' (Feldman 2006:15). They argue that their interlocutors' structural position as homeless subjects systematically exposes them to suffering and forecloses their pursuits of a good life.

Opposing this notion that homelessness systematically forecloses the possibility of constructing a meaningful life, Lenhard (2022) offers a purposely emphatic counterpoint to these portrayals. His ethnographic study of *les sans domicile fixé* in Paris between 2014 and

2016 endorses Robbins' call for an anthropology of the good (2013:458 cited by Lenhard 2022:14) that explores how 'people come to believe that they can successfully create a good beyond what is presently given in their lives'. In turn, Lenhard focuses on his interlocutors' pursuits of a 'better life' by studying their home-making practices which, he finds, are simultaneously presentist, future-oriented and nostalgic. He argues that a key paradox emerges in his interlocutors' pursuits, namely that the practices of making a home in the short-term compete with the ones that promise a home in the longer-term. The ambiguity of hope, for Lenhard, is at the heart of these fraught home-making pursuits. He argues that short-term hopes for perceived daily necessities (such as money through begging, the consumption of alcohol and other substances as well as the need to a place to sleep each night) are at odds with longer-term hopes to 'leave the street', which he argues are largely motivated, constructed and enabled by the professionals. As such, he focuses on the reflection and active labour that it takes to negotiate these demands and to maintain one's home-making project, a direct analytic challenge to the accounts of bare life that 'stop there, with the suffering' (Lenhard 2022:13).

This divergence of approaches in the anthropology of homelessness – of systematic suffering and of making a better life – corresponds to the sharp line that Ortner identifies as dividing the wider discipline. Strikingly, anthropologists' contrasting images of 'homeless people' correspond to the similarly polarised depictions of those institutions whose charter it is to intervene in their lives. To return to Luhrmann's (2007:157) study in Chicago, she characterises the women's shelter as a regime of 'rules [that] humiliate the women they are set in place to protect', where its staff enact 'tight control' with a 'schoolmarm expectation of middle-class civility'. Or, in the case of Bourgois and Schonberg's study (2009:111), San Franciscan law enforcement and public health officials are characterised in the same vein as producing similarly 'pathogenic' outcomes. In both studies, these various institutions figure exclusively as an object of critique due to their seemingly inevitable effect of reproducing their beneficiaries' structural oppression. There is no account of the intentions or experiences of the institutional personnel who ostensibly claim to serve the public good; these seem to operate only in concert with a punitive neoliberalism. The inverse, it would seem, is true in Paris, where the care provided by the homeless day centres and accommodation projects is depicted as necessarily inspiring and facilitating Parisian rough sleepers' pursuits of a better life in the long-term. Lenhard's study mostly affirms the official interpretation of these projects, abstaining from examining the unintended consequences of their service models or

their social lives. Questions of power and political economy are noticeably absent from his study. At the confluence of these 'dark' and 'good' anthropologies of homelessness, then, emerges an analytic 'black box' that conceals the complex realities and counterintuitive effects of these various institutions (Latour 1999:304).[9]

This thesis aims to move beyond this impasse by focussing precisely on the interfaces where the business of ending homelessness unfolds. It attends to the everyday labour of frontline workers as a complex site of mediation where social suffering and pursuits of the good intersect. It presents the everyday interactions between industry workers and their beneficiaries as a series of ethnographic 'scenes' (Das 2010:378) which puts the moral pursuits and critical stances of frontline workers and managers across a network of organisations in conversation with each other and also with their beneficiaries. These serve as the basis of the 'situational analysis' – a hallmark of the classic approach of the Manchester school of anthropology – deployed in this thesis, viewing each interaction as a 'freeze frame' (Kapferer 2005:94) that reveals part of a wider dynamic process of the making and re-making of homelessness and the homeless industry. It offers ethnographic interludes preceding Chapters 3-6 as well as the Conclusion in a further bid to depict such scenes.

To offer an ethnographic analysis of the business of ending homelessness, this thesis focuses on an interdependent set of homelessness organisations in and around an English city district that I call Castlebury. Part of the £1.2 billion flagship RSI funding reached Castlebury in September 2018, leading an uneven proliferation of homelessness services. It led to the establishment of a new open-access night shelter – the Sanctuary – run by CCHP. At the same time, the RSI also led to the establishment of twice weekly outreach walks run by a different organisation that I term SHIH, that operated outreach services in Castlebury and its neighbouring districts. These two services were part of a wider fragmented service landscape – an 'archipelago' in Gowan's words (2011) – that predated the RSI and were funded by the residues of more historical state funding streams.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The State of Homelessness features the everyday labour performed on the shop floor of the state-sponsored homeless industry. Craig's role – then as Holmsey's sole rough sleeping outreach worker – was a recent creation that owed its existence to SHIH's receipt of

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[9] See Mosse (2005:2-6) for an analogous argument that critical and instrumental approaches in the anthropology of development emphasised the efficacy of such institutions and so similarly blackboxed their complexity

£921,083 of RSI funding for the 2018/2019 fiscal year. This represented an increase of 136% of government funding to SHIH compared to the previous year, a trend that occurred across many of the homeless organisations where I worked (see Figure 4). Holmsey is one of the five neighbouring urban districts that SHIH was contracted to provide outreach services under the RSI, where the total recorded incidence of rough sleeping in November 2017 was 67 individuals out of a resident population of 1.1 million across these districts. In an era of austerity, these figures appear anomalous or at least counterintuitive. It seems to set such organisations apart as one of the few and inadvertent beneficiaries of austerity. One SHIH manager even reportedly exclaimed during a staff meeting in winter 2018 that there was 'no better time for the sector'. As will be seen, however, a more sober reality emerges at the frontline.

Craig's critical stance towards his own role indicates several paradoxes inherent in the business of ending homelessness. On the one hand, it speaks to the seeming futility of the charter at a peculiar time when there is in fact *increased* funding from government precisely to pursue it, albeit in uneven ways. On the other hand, it draws attention to the endurance of this enterprise – what I call the will to care (cf. Li 2007) – at a time when its outcomes feel plainly disappointing or even statistically dubious on the frontline. He alludes to how his role's interdependence within a network of other agencies – StreetLink, the local authority and the city assessment hub – frustrates the enterprise as much as enables it.

This thesis, then, explores the everyday efforts of workers such as Craig, who negotiate the industry's impossible objective of ending homelessness in what appear to be unremittingly austere times; and it details the effects of this enterprise.

The homeless industry and moral labour

The State of Homelessness repatriates insights from the anthropology of international aid to examine the English homeless industry as a distinct arena of intervention. It offers an 'aidnography' (Fechter and Hindman 2011; Mosse 2011; Gould 2004) *at home*. It pays attention to the fraught relationships between the NGOs that make up the industry and the state, which is its principal donor. It investigates the ground-level realities of conspicuous state pledges of humanitarian funding at home – a mathematical logic paralleling the aid industry where '"doubling" aid will "halve" poverty' (Mosse 2011:2; Apthorpe 2011). It presents the everyday dilemmas and justifications of workers at the coalface of the industry whose work is situated at the intersection of the state, other homeless NGOs, beneficiaries

and a wider public. It provides an account of what the business of ending homelessness involves in the everyday setting, detailing the interlocking effects of this endeavour, its varying conditions of possibility, contradictions and interdependencies.

The 'illegality industry' (Andersson 2014) and the 'aid industry' (e.g., Crewe and Harrison 1998; Mosse and Lewis 2005) represent productive conceptual mainstays in the discipline. The same cannot be said for the 'homeless industry', an object of study which often elicits vocally dismissive readings by several policy scholars (e.g., Metraux 2016) despite its evident promise. Anthropologists of homelessness have also scarcely engaged with it, even though it claims a unique charter to provide care at the coalface for its beneficiaries and it is arguably 'looked upon by the public at large as the main source of knowledge about homelessness' (Glasser and Bridgman 1999:115). For Robertson (1991:150), writing about the rise of professional institutions that seek to address homelessness in Albuquerque, New Mexico during the 1980s, modern homeless organisations assume the role of service providers who 'establish themselves as those who should be heard when questions arise concerning homelessness and its attendant issues of poverty, housing, health [and so on]'.

To term this setting an 'industry' is not to connote unjust enrichment or expropriation, and it is not to cast aspersions on the interior states of its stakeholders. The character of various dismissals of the concept of the homeless industry parallel several of those charged against ethnographies of 'Aidland', Apthorpe's (2011:209) moniker for the institutional lifeworld of aid. Talk of the 'homeless industry' not infrequently meets similarly predictable accusations of being 'ideological'. In a public engagement skills workshop for early career researchers, I offered a twenty-second introduction of my research as the study of the 'homeless industry' in those terms. Shortly after, a senior colleague who had formerly worked on humanitarian projects in the United Nations warned against the use of that phrase because it indicated 'a political stance of a particular persuasion'. Such critiques evoke seemingly irresolvable controversies that keep staging returns, such as those revolving around Hancock's *Lords of Poverty* (1989) whose work sought to 'expose' officials in the aid industry as intently self-interested and extractive characters who betray the public good (Stirrat 2008:407-408). Having a similar potential to connote greed and owing to the harmful volatility of such debates, the sidelined (or nearly non-existent) study of the homeless industry reflects a popular inclination to view financial self-interest and other-oriented projects of the public good as separate kinds of action (see Bloch and Parry 1989). This is

possibly amplified by the cultural intimacy (see Herzfeld 1996), and overexposure, of 'homelessness' for scholars in the metropole.[10]

This thesis demonstrates how workers and beneficiaries negotiated – and constituted – such a challenging field. It takes seriously their perspective as industry insiders and their various reflexive pursuits of the public good, viewing these dimensions as inextricable from each other. For example, exasperatedly departing a strategic meeting one afternoon, CCHP manager Martha descended the stairs angrily exclaiming 'there's no fucking money'. Meanwhile, founding Noah manager, Kev, often bemoaned how the sector was a 'cut-throat industry' with some executives on 'six-figure salaries' who declined to take a personal interest in charity beneficiaries. Moreover, Alf, a longstanding Noah resident, echoed similar concerns. 'They keep focusing on their renewed existence and revenue flows that the job of helping people is put aside', he told me, rehearsing what he considered to be homeless charities' implied pleas that 'we'll do it' – ending homelessness – 'later'. During a communal dinner early in my fieldwork, Alf quipped that he had heard of a state-funded shelter in north England that was 'half-full' but it nonetheless 'rejected applicants' due to 'strict admission rules'. He continued, posing the question: 'Where does the money go?' Answering his own question, he speculated that 'the shelter was keeping all the money to itself'. This set the scene for Alf's allegory taking a bitter turn. He told me that even in cold weather, supplicants for this shelter were rejected. One person who had been turned away subsequently died from hypothermia, he lamented.

The homeless industry merits attention as an ethnographic field of study to reveal what is morally at stake for those who partake in the business of ending homelessness. For one, it serves as a workplace – with its own logics, institutional cultures, hierarchies, dramas, friendships and gossip – occupying a central role in the everyday lives of caseworkers, shelter staff, support workers and outreach workers. These jobs are uniquely devoted to addressing homelessness, intervening in the lives of marginalised populations, and therefore demand serious analytic attention. The labour is plainly pivotal to the enterprise; it 'unavoidably influence[s] the aid product' and offers one of the most human glimpses of the 'ostensible limits' of the overarching project of ending homelessness itself (Hindman and Fechter 2011:3). Frontline workers enact homelessness initiatives – negotiating and experiencing the

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[10] Herzfeld's notion of cultural intimacy (1996:3) – 'a recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality' – usefully alludes to the distinctiveness of homelessness as a humanitarian concern *at home* rather than abroad, and as a vehicle for expressions of national(ising) shame and political critique.

contradictions and paradoxes that ensue – as mediators, not intermediaries (Hindman and Fechter 2011:4 citing Latour 2005). This distinction captures their agency as more than mere instruments of their state donors, focusing on the unpredictable effects of their labour and their labour itself as an effect of wider government initiatives (Latour 1999:307).

The State of Homelessness particularly focuses on the 'moral labour' (Fechter 2016) that is hardwired into the homeless industry. It explores how frontline workers' roles require them to consider 'what is the right course of action when faced with morally complex situations' (ibid.:230). It draws attention to how, in Castlebury's homeless industry, workers continually seek to end homelessness even when they are in the 'default position of falling short of expectations'; 'This is not incidental, but systemic: performing this labour constitutes an implicit part of an aid worker's contract with their organisation, aid donors, and the general public' (Fechter 2016:232). In other words, merely inhabiting the role in the awareness of such futility represents an ongoing accomplishment; it constitutes the enactment of moral labour (ibid.:232). Fechter's concept is precisely attuned to the ethical paradox of striving for the public good (Bear and Mathur 2015) in institutional contexts such as the homeless industry: the premise of its institutions is precisely their unique promise of housing their beneficiaries and yet the experience of working in them can reveal how they regularly fall short of such promises, leading to a captive situation in which workers' pursuits of the good leads to regular confrontation with what Fechter aptly terms moral distress (2016:234-235).

By foregrounding labour, this thesis illuminates what is at stake in the everyday practices of the English homeless industry and the position of frontline workers within a wider political economy. The concept of labour centres the investment of self and personal energies that is exerted – if not demanded – in the role of being a frontline worker, drawing attention to how labour can constitute a profoundly 'visceral experience' (Bear 2014:72) and an expression of human potential (Bear 2018). Moreover, labour references the repetitive, cyclical nature of such endeavours that are directed to the reproduction of life itself rather than to the production of an object (Arendt 1998:102-103). Arendt's concept usefully evokes how labour in the homeless industry can contain simultaneously fleeting and life-sustaining properties. Finally, labour serves as a useful 'analytical hinge' – 'a point of connection between the phenomenal encounters and sensory engagements that labour entails, and the wider social and political structures that shape and are in turn shaped by such encounters' (Harvey and Krohn-Hansen 2018:14).

This thesis situates labour within the homeless industry, a term that denotes a network of institutions that comprise a distinct field of intervention with a specific object: 'homeless people' as a human kind. Similarly to Andersson's (2016:1072) concept of the illegality industry, it focuses on the 'patterns and linkages, as well as conflicts and clashes, among the sectors' that claim to work towards this enterprise, attending to the interdependencies of its constituent parts. The homeless industry commonly represents itself as providing a 'pathway out of homelessness'. This popular metaphor makes reference to the industry charter to offer stratified services to its beneficiaries in such a way that corresponds to professional evaluations of their progress through the system. As a 'buzzword' (Cornwall 2007), it collapses multiple connotations – of hope, linear self-improvement, the human life-course and the industry's division of labour – into a single term to convey the industry's charter of transforming its beneficiaries into new kinds of person through the journey. In addition, the homeless industry deals precisely in unpredictable flows – of labourers, (prospective) beneficiaries and funding – representing a reactive enterprise.

The will to care

The will to care – a term adapted from Tania Li's landmark study *The Will to Improve* (2007) – captures the endurance of this endeavour amid its evident shortcomings. Li's (2007:1) concept usefully foregrounds 'the inevitable gap between what is attempted and what is accomplished' in development interventions whose legitimacy rests on the maintained promise of improvement. The will to improve is both an analytic device and a charter for action; it endures not despite the failings of such promises but exists in a 'parasitic relationship' to them, seemingly stubbornly (ibid.). It resembles a feedback loop, in which failure affords the continued conditions for further improvement. For Li (2007:7), this will becomes enacted through what she calls the twin practices of 'problematization' – the identification of its targets' deficiencies that require intervention – and 'rendering technical', the process of diagnosing these deficiencies as technical problems with modelled solutions that deploy scientific methods and bodies of knowledge. This process of planning and implementing is the work of trustees. Claiming the expert role of 'know[ing] how others should live […] what is best for them [and] what they need', trustees distance themselves from – and above – their beneficiaries (Li 2007:4). Drawing on Foucault's notion of governmentality, she shows that trustees' interventions do not seek to coerce or even to 'regulate' beneficiaries directly: instead, she suggests that such models are predicated on

beneficiaries' own freedom to act, devising tactics that change their landscapes and structures of intention in order to incline them towards particular conducts that align with planners' priorities (Li 2007:5-6).

This thesis concerns an analogous will that pursues a different end: *to care*. The charter of the homeless industry endures whilst being equally fraught with failed promises. It evokes a similarly stubborn genre of future-oriented optimism to that of development programmes in the Global South, offering a better life to its beneficiaries. Moreover, the will to care – similarly to the will to improve – is not expressed in directly political economic terms. Its charter is not to redistribute. Yet where it departs from Li's account of the will to improve is the source of its legitimacy. The organisations that I worked in did claim a privileged insight into how to care for their beneficiaries. However, whereas the will to improve deals in technical problems demanding technical solutions, the will to care is a 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1977) that operates on the basis of 'moral indignation' and frames its pursuits as the moral redress of injustice (Narotzky 2016:86). In her ethnographic study of dispossession wrought by structural adjustment policies in Northern Spain, Susana Narotzky (2016) pays close attention to the genre of political argument mobilised by socialist activists who seek to challenge what they call 'the system'. She finds that these arguments are predicated on an appeal to a shared sense of humanity, serving as the backdrop for the 'intuitive and spontaneous feeling of suffering' that informs activists' demands for dignity (ibid.:76). Activists' critiques are not cast in the usual socialist language of class struggle and the means of production. Instead, these critiques of the system are mounted against those whom they regard as the 'liars and deceivers' at the top who profit from it (ibid.:76). This thesis – as an account of the will to care – similarly focuses on the forms of 'moral outrage' (ibid.:76) that frontline workers commonly cite on behalf of their beneficiaries. These forms of moral outrage serve as the impetus of their labour and position the industry writ large as the legitimate moral authority to represent the interests of its beneficiaries.

This thesis takes this will – the claims to, and actions justified in the name of, care – 'at its word', rather than viewing it as the enactment of a singular ideology or master term (Li 2007:9). In doing so, it departs from one of the only anthropological accounts of the homeless industry, Vincent Lyon-Callo's landmark ethnographic study (2000, 2004) of the 'sheltering industry' in the American Northeast. In his setting, deindustrialisation combined with a shortage of affordable accommodation, profoundly limiting the possibilities for low-income

workers and welfare recipients to access housing. Situating himself as its principal interlocutor – as a long-term shelter staff member – he argues that the industry's practices

> reproduce and reinforce the image of homelessness as a social problem with an origin in individual deviancy. Reformative efforts often focus on "treatments" that fit within constructed views of "normal" and "deviant." These practices produce subjects who come to understand reform of the individualized self as the most "reasonable" and "realistic" ways of resolving homelessness. Through their experiences in the shelters, many homeless people are thus produced (and reproduced) as political subjects who are more likely to engage in self-blame and self-governing than in collective work against structural violence (Lyon-Callo 2000:332).

Drawing on Cruikshank's work (1996), Lyon-Callo frames this as an instance in which the tenets of neoliberalism become enacted since it redirects attention away from the structural causes of poverty and towards the behavioural deficiencies of individuals. 'Often ensnared within the material and discursive webs of capitalism and the welfare state' (Lyon-Callo 2004:18), he notes that shelter workers inevitably reproduced the deviancy hypothesis because it was the commonsensical basis of their everyday routines.

Even though Lyon-Callo's account of the sheltering industry is all about its workers, it equates their care with neoliberal governance, presuming a means-end relationship and the coherence of both. In a critical retrospective, he would later observe that his study 'failed to adequately analyze my fellow staff members as full human subjects' by glossing over 'the complexity of [their] emotional and material subjectivity' (2012:220).

Anthropologists' renewed attention to care is well-attuned to such complexities, conceptualising care as 'messy', 'morally ambiguous', 'relationally unstable' and thus 'rarely settled' (Cook and Trundle 2020:178; see also McKearney 2020). This opens up the space to depict the moral labour on the shop floor of the homeless industry beyond the means-end analytic relationship that endures in analyses of neoliberal and humanitarian governance. As Cook and Trundle (2020:179) observe, 'care practices defy easy categorization as effects of political forces'. In this thesis, it is precisely care that was the subject of contention in Castlebury's homeless industry. For example, it discusses how NGO workers contended that their state counterparts – and primary sponsors – are not caring (Chapter 2), that volunteers lack the capacity to care (Chapter 3) and that partner NGOs in the Castlebury homeless circuit are characterised by a profound lack of care (Chapters 4 and 5). As an analytic, care

foregrounds the relational and ambivalent nature of the enterprise, which is predicated precisely on interacting with – and creating – beneficiaries of this will to care.

The homeless industry produces – and is premised on serving – its *beneficiaries* of this will to care, a term deliberately deployed in this thesis.[11] Monika Krause's (2010:534) distinction between beneficiaries and citizens captures the kind of recognition conferred by the industry as a discrete field of intervention:

> The figure of the beneficiary contrasts with the figure of the citizen in a number of ways. Citizens are thought to benefit from policies with broad goals; beneficiaries are shown to benefit from specific interventions. Citizens are owed service; beneficiaries are selected for intervention if it suits specific funding priorities. Citizens are the origin of politics and the end of policies; beneficiaries are a means to an organization's success and are transformed to be shown as results.

This distinction may seem unusual in the case of the UK welfare state, which has historically conferred housing as a right of citizenship (see Koch 2018:Ch.1). The blueprints of the British welfare state are commonly traced back to the Beveridge Report (1942), a utopian vision of post-war reconstruction that attempted to resolve destitution by marking a final break with the residues of the former welfare system: the Victorian Poor Law. Beveridge envisaged a comprehensive system of social security, which became (at least partially) implemented: the National Health Service, access to free education, unemployment and sickness benefits, pensions and, importantly, council housing (Koch 2018:41). Since World War Two, nearly five million local authority dwellings have been built in England and Wales (Holmans 2005:49-50), the vast majority of them during what would become known as the golden age of social democracy.

Even though the character of the welfare state has profoundly changed since 1945, the Beveridge Report remains popularly commemorated for the comprehensive nature of its proposals (see e.g., Shore and Wright 2011:2). Moreover, even though the majority of dwellings that were originally built as council homes are now privatised (see Chapter 1), the

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[11] The usage of this designation is controversial for a few of my CCHP colleagues. They make the critical claim that the term beneficiary is in fact 'presumptuous', relaying critiques expressed to them by several of their clients (as they are called in CCHP) that rather than deriving benefit, they are in fact 'worse off having engaged with CCHP' than before. Nonetheless, it is retained throughout this thesis. This is in order to highlight that the charter of the homeless industry – as a distinct field of intervention that evokes the grammars of the aid industry – is predicated on the *promise* that it will benefit the targets of its intervention (as argued by Krause 2014 in the case of the international aid industry).

presumption endures that the remainder represent 'an ambulance service concentrating its efforts on the remaining areas of housing stress and dealing with the variety of "special needs" such as the poor, the homeless, one-parent families' and so on (Harloe 1978:14). This chimes with the popular belief that, at least in the present moment, homelessness confers a priority for council housing.

Yet when I joined Castlebury's homeless industry in September 2018, seeking council housing did not just seem like a pipedream to my colleagues: it was not even remotely on their radars. Between September 2018 and April 2020, none of the clients, guests or service users that I knew ultimately obtained council housing, even though a few were on the waiting list for it. Indeed, a former senior colleague of over five years' service in CCHP sharply observed to me 'the wait I've been told [by the local authority] is 15 years; I couldn't even get Samantha a property', citing an eligible client whose epilepsy, brain injury and severe hearing impairment plausibly implies high priority on the waiting list.

This apparent irrelevance of council housing is part of a longer history that exceeds the usual starting point of the 1980s. Contrary to contemporary commemorations of the Beveridge Report and the post-war welfare settlement, the Poor Law regime endured. Many of its former workhouses had continued to operate long into the 1960s – well past the establishment of post-war council housing – with the primary purpose of accommodating inmates in decrepit, single-sex dormitories (Greve et al. 1971; Glastonbury 1971). The endurance of the Poor Law regime throughout the supposed golden age of housing entitlement should not come entirely as a surprise. Post-war council housing was never intended to accommodate former beneficiaries of the Poor Law even though they were ostensibly most in need of housing. Instead, it was built for the 'idealized citizen of the post-war welfare state' – 'the worker-citizen' – 'who had paid his "debts" to society through contributions to labour and taxes, as well as military service in the Second World War' (Koch 2018:41). Council housing, Koch (ibid.) continues, was at its inception a profoundly moralised good, given to citizens in recognition of their patient wartime service. Part of a wider circuit of reciprocity, public housing offered its citizenry an invitation to continue serving the nation: by founding new nuclear families (Langhamer 2005:345), paving the way for the baby boom.

The residual beneficiaries of the Poor Law were instead 'discovered' in the mid-1960s in a dramaturgical *crise de conscience* about the nation's collective will to care. This

dovetailed with the invention of the homeless charity as a self-styled kind of institution in Britain and, later, the passing of 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, as the first targeted legal intervention that sought to recognise the claims of 'homeless persons' for state assistance. These historical developments constituted the emergence of homelessness as a modern-day single issue in Britain and as an autonomous field of advocacy and service provision: *the homeless industry*. Its emergence was political, catalysed by 'a critical challenge', a 'refusal of the way things are' that precipitated a novel 'front of struggle' (Li 2007:12). The evolution of this field is animated by cycles of moral outrage at state failure that produce piecemeal responses, in turn engendering further crises of legitimacy and subsequent fixes. This is a pattern which characterises the industry, the historical build-up to which is outlined in Chapter 1. It gives a detailed account of how state, market and third sector came to have their roles in this industry designated, contested, and confirmed. It also details the historical construction of the Castlebury homeless industry, offering a background of its key players.

Observant labour in an extended field site

This thesis is the product of eighteen months of labour between September 2018 and April 2020 in and around Castlebury's homeless industry. It takes as one key methodological inspiration Andersson's (2012:30-32) notion of the 'extended field site'. In his groundbreaking analysis of the business of clandestine migration, Andersson deploys this concept to coalesce a series of fragmented sectors of the illegality industry – African sending towns, border towns, the Mediterranean, Frontex offices, detention centres and humanitarian camps – as constituent parts of the same transnational enterprise. This, for him, enabled the 'tracking, tracing and mapping' of such a system that is defined by its dispersed agency across continents to engender different aspects of the same overarching experience: becoming 'illegal' (ibid.:32). This thesis considers a similarly dispersed institutional configuration which in fact maps out such a journey – 'the single homeless pathway' – for its putative beneficiaries. It employs an investigative methodology, inspired by Andersson (2012, 2016), along the lines of 'connecting the dots' between different service providers that claim to work towards the same overarching enterprise as well as between the professionals that comprise these organisations and the 'subaltern subjects' to whom they attend (Holmes and Marcus 2005:1103). The charter of following people and funds through networks (Marcus 1995) that animated Andersson's passage through his extended field site equally inspires mine. The

business of ending homelessness relies on state sponsorship and so my research unfolded across organisational settings that were recipients of RSI funding (the Sanctuary and SHIH) and exempt accommodation Housing Benefit (Noah).[12] Given the unevenly decentralised nature of homelessness policy in the UK, these funding streams are allocated to local authorities, its disbursal is to local homeless organisations and so the pathways that are produced are territorially bounded by local authority district.[13] As a result, differing from Andersson's study, an arbitrarily bounded location (Candea 2007) – Castlebury – was readily at hand for me. At the same time, as Figure 1 and Andersson's ethnography suggests, the kinds of passage through such industry circuits are not linear. Not only did my navigation through this pathway unfold unevenly over time – I did not 'start' as a SHIH outreach worker and then 'end' in New Beginnings – the same particularly applies to those for whom it was the only offer of leaving homelessness. This thesis highlights the potential of such journeys to reproduce homelessness.

To study Castlebury's homeless industry as a network, I needed to shift between at least as many roles as I did organisations. This resonates with the insights of Marcus (1995) and Mosse (2005:11) that multi-sited ethnography is also multi-positioned. As Figure 7 shows – and as my former colleagues frequently put it – I wore 'many hats', one of which was being an anthropologist. The idea of anthropology and of the London School of Economics was strangely foreign across the board in Castlebury, nearly none of my interlocutors knowing what either of these was (those who did, incidentally, were either self-identifying political activists, doctoral degree holders or anthropology/sociology graduates). Instead, my interlocutors often readily perceived me as a student 'on placement' – a role more familiar to them – which served as a useful starting point that I unpack further below. One of the first supporters of my research, Kev offered me access to the Noah night shelter as a volunteer, my first post in Castlebury. He embraced me as his first PhD mentee – having successfully supervised social work students in the past as part of their professional placements – as he welcomed the 'fresh pair of eyes' of an anthropologist, embracing an expansive notion of my work as 'the study of humans' (an enterprise with which he identified).

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[12] See pp. 67-68 for a definition and brief overview of exempt accommodation Housing Benefit, a typical mode of disbursal from local authorities to hostel accommodation providers

[13] At the same time, many 'national' or 'sub-regional' homeless organisations are also awarded 'local' homeless tenders in England. This was not the case in Castlebury, apart from the award of part of the RSI funding to SHIH, which does operate in multiple districts (unlike Noah or CCHP).

Besides being an anthropologist, I was a volunteer in Noah, the Sanctuary, UIH and SHIH; and, towards the end, a paid staff member in the Sanctuary in my second winter there. The remainder of this section provides a profile of the everyday labour of each of these positions. My progression across these roles resembled a staircase in which I was 'rewarded' at each stage by my managerial interlocutors with increasing responsibility and, eventually, financial remuneration. My continued research access seemed dependent on my willingness to accept the gifts of such roles.

The labour of volunteering in Noah alternated between active home-making and idling about. Preparing and eating breakfast and dinner on the Great Table, making friendly conversation, playing card games and chess, drinking copious cups of tea, recording observations about guests, supervising guests' adherence to the cleaning rota: this was the typical shift routine. The number of shifts I was allocated in Noah fluctuated, depending on the extent of volunteer shortages. From the outset, I offered to fill *any* gaps in the volunteer rota. In practice, these tended to be overnight shifts – where a volunteer sleeps in a makeshift bed in the storage room in anticipation of night-time disturbances – on Saturday and Sunday nights. As a result, they tended to be the least desirable kinds of shift and timings to do. September and October 2018 were quiet months for me; I volunteered in Noah every 10 days or so. Despite not yet being a regular presence at the shelter, since I was one of the few volunteers willing to do antisocially timed shifts, I was 'elevated' to the role of 'shift leader' in October 2018 after attending an in-house training session for this purpose. This role refers to the most senior volunteer on a given shift who knows the code for the shelter front door, has the 'on-call phone' and is charged with admitting guests at the front door at each ring of the doorbell (ensuring access only to guests on the list). The reason for this apparent promotion, I later learned from Kev, was that 'we [speaking on behalf of Noah] weren't sure about you at first' but that I had eventually 'proved' that I had a 'good heart' by 'getting stuck in'.

Although Noah served a key function in Castlebury's 'homeless pathway', it was only one stop. Its guests had arrived from CCHP's HEDI before being unpredictably propelled to the YMCA (whenever such a vacancy arose) and so on. The character of the 'homeless pathway' demanded research beyond the confines of Noah to investigate the interrelationships and linked effects of each service. Taking one step 'backwards', volunteering at the Sanctuary represented an additional fixture in what was now becoming a multi-sited research setting. Unlike Noah, the Sanctuary's shift leaders were paid staff

members. Similarly to Noah, the 'graveyard shifts' – so-called by its staff members because of its unattractive timing between 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. – were chronically plagued by volunteer shortages, especially since such shifts in the Sanctuary were *waking* nights. Unusually attracted to the small hours and eager to be as useful as possible to my organisational hosts, I filled these shifts about twice a week, always coinciding with Ann's being 'on shift' as the lead. In contrast to being a shift leader in Noah, volunteering in the Sanctuary during these shifts largely consisted of serving up tea and coffee to insomniac guests; the responsibility paled in comparison to being a Noah shift leader. A further difference was that Sanctuary staff and volunteers *were* responsible for the cleaning – each night was a logistical achievement

I supplemented Sanctuary volunteering with working at SHIH as an outreach volunteer, having introduced myself as a researcher in the annual public 'rough sleeper count' in Holmsey (a neighbouring district to Castlebury) in November 2018. Ryan – the outreach worker with whom I was paired up during that count – observed that he could 'use a partner' for the longer-term due to personnel shortages in SHIH, leading to our outreach partnership until he left his role several months later. Unexpectedly, Ryan's departure made me the most experienced outreach member in Holmsey within four months of my volunteering there.

Between November 2018 and April 2019 – when I combined volunteering at Noah, the Sanctuary and SHIH – my diary was full. Below is a 'typical week' from that period.

Start time	Finish time	Activity
Thursday 9 p.m.	Friday 3 a.m.	SHIH outreach
Friday 2 a.m.	Friday 8 a.m.	Sanctuary volunteering (waking night)
Saturday 7 p.m.	Sunday 10 a.m.	Noah shift leading
Sunday 10 a.m.	Sunday 4 p.m.	Noah fundraising coffee morning at St. Mary's church followed by Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene online course
Sunday 6 p.m.	Monday 8 a.m.	Noah shift leading (sleeping night)
Monday 11 p.m.	Tuesday 8 a.m.	Sanctuary volunteering (waking night)
Tuesday 9 a.m.	Tuesday 5 p.m.	Mental Health First Aid Day 1 in

		Octavia Hall meeting venue
Wednesday 9 a.m.	Wednesday 5 p.m.	Mental Health First Aid Day 2 in Octavia Hall meeting venue
Wednesday 11 p.m.	Thursday 8 a.m.	Sanctuary volunteering (waking night)
Thursday 8 a.m.	Thursday 9 a.m.	Noah redecoration meeting
Thursday 7 p.m.	Friday 2 a.m.	SHIH outreach (SWEP)

Figure 8 - Winter 2018/2019 specimen work rota

In April 2019, the Sanctuary closed as planned at the end of the winter season; and SHIH's contract renewal with Holmsey Council relieved some of its earlier staff shortages so I was less needed for outreach shifts. Dedicating the majority of my labour to Noah in spring 2019, Kev joked that I should ask the Post Office to redirect my post to Noah since I had 'moved in'. I was often on the premises continuously for several days on end – snowballing shifts together – even when staff members had left for the day and the shelter was vacant in the afternoons. I carved a niche for myself not only by being ever-present for evening shifts, but also for 'day work': contributing to the weekly grocery shops, organising various storage spaces and occasionally making lunches for staff and washing the remaining kitchen dishes at the end of the working day.

Volunteering for multiple services with the regularity that I did was profoundly unusual in Castlebury and Holmsey. For one, it was somewhat at odds with Kev's expectations of me as a member of what he called his 'inner circle' – an in-group of favoured Noah volunteers and workers in whom he confided – since the norm for being in the inner circle was both exclusivity of one's labour and a willingness to accept shifts at short-notice at Kev's request. (Being seen by CCHP staff members as a part of Kev's inner circle also entailed further positionality challenges; I reflect on these further in Chapter 5.) At the same time, I embraced as many offers of short-notice shifts across organisations as possible because I worried that if I declined, the offers might dry up. For me, my continued access felt conditional on my demonstrable willingness to get 'stuck in' to use Kev's words. My legitimacy in Castlebury seemed to be inextricably tied to my labour. These anxieties were heightened by the fact that the staff members who approved my access as a researcher in each of these settings – Kev, Ann's manager (Elle), or Ryan – were the same figures who allocated

volunteer shifts and would have had to work overtime in my absence (or otherwise cancel outreach shifts in the case of SHIH). I did not want their endorsement of me to expire: these were the only homelessness charities in the district. In the context of constant staff shortages, my labour seemed indispensable to business continuity and to these workers' ability to take time off work. At the same time, the series of research sites that I had assembled placed me under unsustainable demands. On occasional weeks, I was accruing up to 70 hours (voluntary) labour. I gave Kev one month notice of my departure from Noah in order to minimise its possibly deleterious effects, and left in July 2019 on positive terms.

Departing Noah afforded me the time to focus on casework settings, a 'missing link' so far in my career in Castlebury. By chance, Hazel – a former manager of a Holmsey day centre called UIH – offered me access to such a setting just weeks before I was due to leave Noah in June 2019. UIH is the closest approximation of CCHP's HEDI in nearby Holmsey, a site where volunteer caseworkers enrol beneficiaries into Holmsey's own homeless pathway and provide benefits advice. Volunteering in UIH allowed me to observe and participate in the everyday labour of 'propelling' clients through casework, bringing into view the transfer points of the pathway and the impossibility of conducting council casework (Chapter 6). It brought me into contact with CCHP support workers for the first time by coincidence – due to several clients inhabiting the same substandard properties provided by New Beginnings – lending me a kind of credibility with them that I had lacked by being next door in Noah.

After several months of volunteering in UIH, unsolicited job offers snowballed in my direction in hot anticipation of the winter season. Hazel had speculated to me that I would be a good fit for the position of senior caseworker for UIH for which she was recruiting, before suggesting that I consider the Holmsey winter night shelter co-ordinator role (another role for which she was recruiting). I declined these, planning to focus my energies once more on volunteering at the Sanctuary in Castlebury when it reopened in November 2019. A month later, Elle invited me personally to apply for a new support work role in the Sanctuary in anticipation of its reopening in winter 2019/20, having heard through the grapevine that I was conducting casework in UIH and recalling my willingness to volunteer unsociable hours in winter 2018/19. I also declined this suggestion – initially anxious about the possible incompatibility between paid employment and the ethics of anthropological research – and that application deadline passed. Elle later insisted once more that I send her my CV, informing me that the vacancy remained personally open for me owing to an unsuitable pool of applicants. This is perhaps one indicator of a lack of workers who have minimal casework

experience and knowledge (which, at the stage, I partly acquired from the UIH role as well as other inklings from legal research, my undergraduate law knowledge and past experience with benefits claims, eviction and tenancy documents). So I acquiesced and got the job.

The charter of the Sanctuary support work role was to 'build rapport' with guests with a view to coax them into becoming clients of the HEDI advice service. It would, ideally, present a particularly humane face of the shelter. The work consisted of making multiple speculative introductions to new guests at the Sanctuary the morning after the night before – what one shift leader jokingly termed 'trade' – and of also pursuing longstanding guests. The everyday labour of the role, however, often exceeded this, leading me to become a quasi-HEDI worker in my own right. This consisted of enrolling guests for welfare benefits and advocating for their entitlement to statutory temporary accommodation. Other casework tasks included obtaining government identification documents (for example, passports and birth certificates) and pursuing private sector accommodation for clients. Even though the support work role was explicitly differentiated from the Sanctuary 'shift leader' role (as will be seen in Chapter 3), it also occasionally consisted of filling in for shift leaders at short notice in cases of staff absence. Working in this role afforded me a valuable 'back stage' perspective to the internal operations of the Sanctuary and CCHP compared to the volunteer role, becoming part of regular staff meetings and assuming casework responsibility for guests' transit through the 'homeless pathway'. It ended shortly after the first COVID lockdown on the final week of March 2020, more closely examined in the Epilogue.

Reflections on ethics, positionality and data collection

Anthropologists have generally refrained from the kind of labour of 'institutionalising people' that my ethnographic involvement arguably entailed. Actively enrolling beneficiaries into the industry, making a wage and possessing a considerable degree of discretionary authority (in the roles of shift leader, support worker and caseworker): these are a few possible markers of an uneasy complicity. At the same time, such a fear of complicity is precisely what would write off the possibility of an 'insider ethnography' of such organisations (Mosse 2006; Lenhard 2018:10; Holmes and Marcus 2005); and it is possibly premised on an unduly tidy view of frontline workers and beneficiaries as constituting necessarily opposing interests. In the organisations where I worked, the only way that I could carve a space for myself was through my labour and through assuming a position of authority. For one, I impressed upon my former colleagues – repeatedly – that my motivation

for assuming these posts stemmed from my interest to write 'a book' about the everyday experience of the work; that this was part of my PhD in Anthropology at the London School of Economics. I received informed consent to this effect, often being told that the arrangement was a 'win-win'; and others still quipping that they had 'the same idea […] to write about the shit that goes down', indicating a common sensationalist perception of the industry and an expectation that I would participate in an economy of moral outrage.

Working in Castlebury's homeless industry demanded various kinds of situated moral commitment, which I unevenly adopted and suppressed at the time. For example, to work in Noah or CCHP generally required having a profoundly dismissive perspective of the merits of the other organisation in particular and of other homeless organisations in general. Moreover, Kev's reformist view of homelessness – that it was a kind of moral failing – was hardwired into Noah's everyday practices; but the idea that the end of a person's homelessness entailed a teleological process of self-transformation extended well beyond Noah. The humanitarian ideal that we – as workers – were uniquely and legitimately entitled to effect a change in the life of a 'homeless person' was pervasive; and even after departing my roles in Castlebury, this 'royal we' often surfaced in my writing when seeking to justify the rules and practices of my various organisational hosts, assuming the role as a kind of spokesperson. If, as Mosse (2005:12-13) observes, the outlook of practitioner-ethnographers in the development context is constrained by technical models and subsequent assumptions of 'means-ends rationality, integration and manageability', a similar variant took place for me in the homeless industry when I struggled to comprehend a sense of the public good *beyond* the industry or, more precisely, my organisational hosts at the time. In the meantime, like Mosse (2005:13) and many others, 'I was an optimist'. Not infrequently, I perceived that the value of my labour eclipsed the value of my research, a distinction that particularly surfaced in the wake of COVID-19 that I discuss further in the Epilogue.

Despite occupying various organisational roles in the industry, the extent to which I passed as a genuine volunteer was unusually limited. In the course of arriving for pre-arranged shift changeovers in the late evenings, I was occasionally greeted at the Noah front door by volunteers I had not previously met. When this happened, more often than not, the shift leader would arrive with the guest list in hand and a puzzled 'Which one are you?' Shelter guests in Noah and the Sanctuary, too, found it somewhat difficult to believe that I was a volunteer, with one suggesting that as a 'student' I had more in common with them than I did with the 'grannies'. These interactions speak to aged, gendered and raced

expectations of a typical volunteer in these organisations – and the extent to which my appearance as a visibly young non-white man connoted that I was there to be helped. As a rough estimate, 95% of my institutional interlocutors across CCHP, Noah and SHIH were white British, an ethnic distribution out of kilter with Castlebury as a local population for which the equivalent percentage is 60%. The average age for a worker across Noah and CCHP was approximately 42 years old; for volunteers in these settings, it was considerably higher. In other words, despite (or by dint of) conducting research 'at home' – I am a British national of Egyptian parentage having resided the entirety of my life in a cosmopolitan working-class London neighbourhood – I was naively unprepared for the possibility of such feelings of estrangement. In retrospect, this resonates with Narayan's (1993) insight that the distinction between being a 'native' and 'non-native' anthropologist is profoundly fluid and contextual.

Combined with other methodological factors, these aspects of my positionality limited my ability to gather certain ethnographic insights whilst affording others.[14] This thesis does not particularly feature volunteers' perspectives even though their labour is an essential component of the industry. Part of this absence, as implied above, derives from the polite reservedness of many volunteers in their interactions with me and from their relative dedication of their energies to talk instead with guests. Moreover, volunteer shortages often resulted in my being the only volunteer during many shifts, either alone (in the case of Noah) or with a paid staff member (in the case of the Sanctuary and SHIH). In that context, the frequency with which I invested my labour often positioned me in the eyes of paid staff members as reliable and also resulted in them by circumstance being the organisational interlocutors with whom I spoke the most 'on shift' (and vice versa). The amount of time shared together 'on shift' and during the day often entailed friendships with workers in a way that did not emerge with volunteers. With a certain irreverence, workers often perceived many volunteers as fitting the bill of the 'twin-set and pearls' stereotype or as otherwise lacking relatability, a nod to the historic white British icon of untrained older middle-class female philanthropists who claim a dedication to 'the community' (Treloar 2011 cited in Kirwan 2016).

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[14]There were also some necessary omissions from the extended field site that I assembled. The most noteworthy is the Castlebury YMCA, a crucial node in the local homeless pathway. This was for two reasons. First, there is no equivalent volunteer role, limiting the possibilities for access as a researcher: the roles are firmly delineated between staff member and resident. Second, as an accommodation provider consisting of self-contained student-dormitory style residential units, it lacks the kind and frequency of institutional activity found elsewhere in Castlebury's homeless industry. See also footnote 16.

The unusualness of my positionality – compared to other volunteers and staff members – generally eclipsed the unusualness of my presence as a researcher. For guests of Noah and the Sanctuary – 90% of whom were men, on average – that I was a male volunteer in my early-twenties was novel in a way that often facilitated friendships. I did not seem to carry the disciplinarian freight of some older middle-class (female) volunteers. This was partly due to a common perception that I was 'a lad' partaking in a shared masculinity and because my status as a UK student evoked a distinct kind of permissiveness and youthfulness. This resonated with the fact that I often did not seem to give off the impression that I was a 'really' a researcher despite my protestation. Some of my friends joked that a researcher would not 'have banter' and would instead 'have a notebook' to hand. And for better or worse, the fact that I smoked noticeably set me apart from staff and volunteers, occasionally prompting approving surprise in the smoking area. These perceptions seemed to persist, at least partly, in the role of paid support worker, where my apparent markers of difference continued to code me as a kind of 'cool' novelty.[15]

The constant conversations about 'what I was doing here' served as useful prompts with organisational beneficiaries to continually negotiate informed consent. The idea of a 'book', once more, evoked enthusiasm along similar lines to how workers perceived it. The only difference, perhaps, is that several Sanctuary guests, such as Bear, particularly insisted that such a book would be incomplete without 'knowing what it's like on the streets', extending me an invite to undergo this. One of the few Noah guests I knew who did eventually 'move on', Will hoped to involve me in a book about his 'experience of homelessness' so that others in 'that position' might be comforted in the knowledge of 'where and how to get help'. This thesis does not follow through with these aspirations, but even so it did not seem to lose legitimacy in the eyes of Bear or Will. Similarly to my organisational managers, what appeared to matter to them was reciprocity. The labour that I invested into working in Noah, for example, seemed to be taken personally by figures such as Will; he described his consent to being included in this thesis as 'helping people who help you'. Upon my departure from Noah, I developed friendships with several former Noah guests who circulated my phone number with others who wanted it, reflecting my desire to maintain a relationship as more than just 'part of' Noah (whilst seeking to maintain some kind of 'boundary' when I was in post to avoid breaching the volunteer agreement with Kev).

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[15] It was not uncommon for some guests and even staff members to joke – completely unprompted – that I was a 'stoner' or 'crack head' in a way that never applied to anyone else. I perceived these as tokens of affection. At the same time, the articulation of such specific labels is not neutral either.

Besides abiding by such boundaries expected of a serving Noah volunteer, I also took seriously the need to adhere to similar rules during my posts in the Sanctuary and UIH, whilst also paying due concern to the ambiguities of my variously overlapping roles of worker, volunteer, researcher and friend (see also Lenhard 2018:11). I sought to ensure that inclusion in this thesis did not feel compulsory for beneficiaries with whom I shared casework and/or friendships across Noah, UIH and the Sanctuary. Beneficiaries in the Sanctuary and UIH – where I assumed a casework role – had the option of working with other staff if they preferred not to work with me. If they did want to work with me, I did not presume that this meant that they consented to inclusion in this thesis – unless they expressly agreed. Beyond the negotiation of informed consent in the 'professional' setting, a few friends/former Noah beneficiaries explicitly declined to be included. Respecting their wishes, they do not feature in this thesis. Moreover, in cases where interlocutors did consent but were experiencing acute and exceptional distress, I refrained from including such instances in the thesis without sensitively securing specific consent to do so after the fact. Following the lead of other anthropologists who assumed similarly boundary-straddling roles across various institutional interfaces (Andersson 2012:34; Lenhard 2018:10-11), I took care not to divulge personally sensitive information between workers, volunteers and beneficiaries, seeking to respect these roles' various codes of conducts and my interlocutors' personal trust in me.

After having departed my posts in Castlebury, the work of ethnographic writing demanded reflection on how to minimise the possibility of harm. In this thesis, I anonymise all personal, organisational and geographic details relating to my ethnographic research, having done so since the beginning of this project.[16] The disclosure of the local authority area where I worked risks identifying my host organisations, because they are the only designated 'homeless charities' operating there. Their charter specifically relates to Castlebury, being sponsored primarily by the state as local charities. In Castlebury, each homeless charity pursued its own specialised role within the local industry and comprised a small workforce and so the possibility of tracing individual figures is amplified. Since I started working in these organisations in September 2018, virtually none of my interlocutors remain in Castlebury's homeless industry at the time of writing (November 2022) – either as staff, volunteers or beneficiaries – pointing to its rapid turnover. Moreover, only one of the services

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[16] This consists of attributing pseudonyms to persons, places and organisations. In addition, key identifying features of individuals have been variously altered except where these are critical to the ethnographic argument. The only exception to this rule is the YMCA in Castlebury. Because the YMCA operates in every major English city and is organisationally decentralised, there is minimal risk of identification. It did not figure in my extended fieldsite in any case. See also footnote 14.

remains in operation, the advice drop-in operated by CCHP – a reflection of the constantly changing priorities of the state as donor. High staff turnover, for one, does facilitate anonymity, as Kimberly Chong notes in her study of the fleeting, high-octane world of corporate consultancy (2012:49). Similarly to Chong, my access was premised on anonymity. As a result, given my interlocutors' resultant willingness to disclose and speak on sensitive issues in light of this undertaking, I endeavour to do no harm to their onward careers or to the enterprise of those who remain.

This thesis relies on data collected via a series of intersecting methodologies. Ethnographic data derive largely from notes recorded soon after the working day (or night) and so the quotes from these are usually – but not always – verbatim. They include recollections of staff meetings; observations of – and interactions between – staff, volunteers and beneficiaries; ambient workplace chatter and late-night intimate conversations with lone outreach workers or Sanctuary shift leaders; in-house training sessions; fundraising events and community engagement days. They also consist of autoethnographic data derived from my paralegal advocacy in the course of conducting client casework. Beyond the workplace setting, I spent time with several colleagues and former beneficiaries as friends, accepting invitations to meet them in their homes, with their pets and loved ones, on nights out and on hikes, occasionally 'talking shop' with them and noting these conversations retrospectively. Following Lenhard's considered methodological approach (2018:11), I only created audio recordings of interviews with former Noah and CCHP senior personnel and refrained entirely from visual records to ensure the anonymity of people and place. I archived and studied various institutional ephemera – for example, annual reviews, staff meeting minutes and email communications, publicity leaflets and weekly shelter meal plans – and took a keen interest in the various staff WhatsApp groups of which I was a member. Moreover, I undertook historical and documentary analysis of CCHP, Castlebury YMCA, Noah and SHIH's filing history with Companies House (annual accounting reports and board membership changes), relevant statutory legislation and case law, House of Commons debate transcripts, central government white papers and published rough sleeping strategies as well as historical local newspaper coverage of homelessness, rough sleeping and the evolving field of Castlebury's homeless organisations. In addition, by requesting Freedom of Information Act disclosures, I studied the text of these organisations' various service level agreements with central and local government. I also visited the Bishopsgate Institute archives in Central London: one of the few relatively comprehensive and openly accessible historical repositories

that, through the lens of Shelter, cover the birth and coming-of-age of the English homeless industry (see Chapter 1; Hilton et al. 2013). Finally, I examined historical planning permissions and Land Registry submissions to trace a history of the shifting uses and ownership of the various premises that constitute Castlebury's homeless industry.

The writing style adopted in this thesis derives inspiration from previous anthropologists who similarly write about spectacle (in the sense offered by Debord [1970]) and the production of suffering. It leads at times – in a manner akin to journalism and public anthropology – with seemingly 'unrepresentative', 'transitory and dramatic' events (Andersson 2012:33). For many who partake in the business of ending homelessness, it involves highly self-reflexive, reactive, personally-consuming and dramatic pursuits against a set of 'evils', variously identified as the British state, partner NGOs and the suffering of homelessness itself. It is a charged enterprise. The purpose of the chapters that follow is not to participate in – or to re-affirm – the production of tragic tropes that characterise the business of ending homelessness and the aid industry more generally. For one, this thesis does not seek to reproduce a pornography of misery (Halttunen 1995; Cabot 2016), that is to say a cathartic account that prompts an audience's intrigue and pity at the tragedy of homelessness. Moreover, it seeks to avoid partaking in what Desmond (2008) calls the 'lie of heroism', a popular image of public service officials as necessarily courageous, selfless and infallible. Instead, it commends as much as critiques their labour – and my own. It seeks to offer an 'objective' reading of the workings on the industry and the possibility of objection, 'standing [neither] above the fray' nor 'suppressing [my] subjectivity' (Mosse 2005:ix citing Latour 2000). It takes seriously my colleagues' endeavours by re-presenting their work 'back' to them, wider publics and myself in the hopes of stimulating critical reflection of the industry, in which I too have been – and remain, as a researcher – enmeshed (ibid.). It therefore stays with 'the drama' without aspiring to be sensationalist. It attends to the palpably larger-than-life figures that play leading roles in Castlebury's homeless industry. It analyses the frenetic atmosphere of the industry as a central ethnographic fact. It aims to transform its exhaustion, exhilaration, ambivalence, fears and frustrations into a meaningful object of study, a point of departure to probe the tensions and (im)possibilities written into the industry's charter. To evoke such crucial features of this institutional lifeworld, it

sometimes offers stylised (Andersson 2012:38; Van Maanen 1988) descriptions of key characters and events.[17]

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[17] In doing so, this thesis also takes inspiration from a growing wave of 'memoir'-style accounts written by other British public professionals. These include *The Secret Barrister: Stories of the Law and How It's Broken* (Anonymous 2018), *This is Going to Hurt: Secret Diaries of a Junior Doctor* (Kay 2017) and *Anti-Social: The Secret Diary of an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer* (Pettigrew 2020). Sensitively and arrestingly, they offer an account of the complexities of pursuing the public good in the UK. In doing so, they highlight a profound blind spot in British anthropology – and social science in the UK more generally – that this thesis brings into view. Meanwhile, similarly self-reflexive critical accounts of the business of ending homelessness in the UK are fewer in number and largely take the form of various blogs. These include the 'Ending Homelessness in London' blog by Jeremy Swain, a former chief executive of Thames Reach (https://www.endinghomelessnessinlondon.co.uk/), the Nearly Legal blog curated by Giles Peaker, a leading housing solicitor (https://nearlylegal.co.uk/) and a substack curated by Danielle Grufferty, a former worker in a prominent homelessness charity (see e.g., https://sunbeamsoutofcucumbers.substack.com/p/a-monopoly-on-risk)

Chapter 1
The genesis of an impossible industry and the constitution of the will to care

This chapter traces the emergence of the homeless industry in the UK, proceeding chronologically to highlight its own conditions of invention and its entanglement in various crises of governmental legitimacy over the past half-century. Moving towards the present, it then offers a history of Castlebury's own industry. It depicts the fragmentary and piecemeal processes that have led to the national – and local – homeless industry each becoming an elaborate and distinct arena of intervention. How has council housing become so irrelevant to workers in CCHP? What kind of homeless person is being 'made up' at each historical turn? (Hacking 1986, 1995) In addressing these questions, it offers an account of the historical constructedness of Figure 1 – the Castlebury homeless circuit – and the conditions of possibility in the present that concern this thesis and the livelihoods of those it depicts. Centrally, this chapter reveals the complex endurance of the efforts to end homelessness despite its shortcomings over history – the will to care – mirroring Li's (2007:283) observation of the stubbornness of the will to improve. It begins with the (re)discovery and (re)invention of homelessness in the 1960s in the UK.

The birth of an icon, the birth of a moral charter: the will to care

The BBC first broadcast *Cathy Come Home* in November 1966, a powerful rendering of the endurance of the Poor Law regime, written by Jeremy Sandford and directed by Ken Loach. It narrates the 'descent' into destitution of a fictional white English working-class nuclear family – headed by Reg (Raymond Brooks) and Cathy Ward (Carole White) – who face rejection from housing by private landlords and the local authority due to their having children. Misadministration by the local authority also plays a role in their descent. These culminate in Cathy and Reg's forced separation into single-sex former workhouse dormitories. Shortly before her children's subsequent seizure by council officials in the final scene, Cathy cries to the social workers:

Runts! I saw you laughing. Wipe that smile off your face!

Haven't you got a room in one of your houses?

Haven't you got flats that are empty half the night?

You don't care. You only pretend to care! (Sandford 1966: 1:03:20)

Cathy's impact was meteoric, rallying a popular will to care. Reputedly, well-meaning members of the British public would insistently offer money to Carole White in the years that followed, mistaking *Cathy* to be a factual documentary (BBC World Service 2011: 0:06:01; British Academy of Film and Television Arts 2016:2). As media historian Ben Lamb (2016:15) observes, the screenplay assumed a life of its own:

> After its first broadcast in November 1966, Cathy Come Home provoked a public outcry. The BBC's switchboard crashed because so many viewers called in to ask what they could do to help (Brooks, 2011). The housing charity Shelter released a poster the day after the January repeat screening stating there are 'literally thousands of Cathys in Britain at this moment' and correspondingly, the campaign received £50,000 in the first month. (Lacey, 2011: 116). […] Several MPs, including the leader of the opposition Edward Heath asked the BBC for private screenings. Labour MP Frank Allaun, referred directly to Cathy during a speech on the Housing Subsidies Bill in the House of Commons, stating 'I believe the conscience of the nation has been jolted, by a television play' (Allaun, 1966). Loach and Sandford were also invited to the Ministry of Housing to discuss the housing crisis.

Decades later, *Cathy*'s legacy seems to endure. It has been aired on television repeatedly since its original broadcast. Then an editor of *The Lancet,* David Sharp (2007:311 cited by Gymnich 2021:246) ventures that '[h]omelessness as a topic for public debate could be said not to have existed in the U.K. until […] *Cathy Come Home*'. In the British Film Institute industry poll of top-100 TV programmes to the year 2000, *Cathy* ranked second. As media scholar Derek Paget (1999:77, original emphasis) observes, *Cathy*'s pathos must be seen in context as a '*social utterance* at a pivotal time of change'. A post-colonial moment for one, its broadcast coincided with the twilight of Empire and a moment of profound soul-searching in the metropole after Suez. Even 50 years after the original broadcast, the then CEO of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation was not alone in evoking what she calls 'the spirit of Cathy'

(Unwin 2016; see also Fitzpatrick and Pawson 2016; and see, for *The Guardian*, Deans 2005, Foster 2016 and Allan 2016), remarking

> Fifty years ago Cathy Come Home shocked the UK and changed my life. It galvanised citizens, campaigners and politicians, leading to the creation of Shelter, a whole group of new housing associations, the Homeless Persons Act and a lot of serious focused activity.

Cathy marked the birth of the modern charter to end homelessness. Shelter (1966) incorporated days after Cathy's first broadcast and Crisis at Christmas (1967) followed suit soon after. It was the simultaneous invention of the modern homeless charity as a genre of institution and a mass mediatised face put to 'the homeless' as a human kind. As Hilton et al. (2013:62) notes, 'Shelter and *Cathy Come Home* became synonymous, not least because Sandford donated the "rights" for the play to Shelter, and they frequently aired it at fund-raising meetings, causing an oft-repeated misunderstanding that the play was the catalyst for Shelter's launch'. This striking association between Shelter and *Cathy Come Home* is the beginning of a process in which modern homeless charities became a kind of institution that 'participates in the construction of the subject for whom and for which they speak' (Hilton et al 2013:20). Indeed, this was the emergence of new institutional trustees, assuming the moral authority to 'act on behalf of another' (Cowen and Shenton 1996). They became the guardians both of their new constituency – iconised by Cathy – and of the public conscience (see Curtis and Sanderson 2004).

The will to lobby and the will to legislate

Believing that the spirit of Cathy demanded legislative action, these organisations entered the political fray (Crowson 2013; Raynsford 1986). In 1973, Shelter became one of the senior partners in a coalition of further anti-poverty charities – the Joint Charities' Group (JCG) – with the express goal of lobbying Whitehall to introduce what would become the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, a purposeful attempt to redress Cathy's experiences. Re-examining internal Whitehall memos, newspaper coverage and internal discussions within this lobby, Crowson (2013) observes that this was a fraught process. For one, Shelter itself was now receiving adverse press coverage in ten year retrospectives of *Cathy*, accused of having 'failed' its mission by in fact presiding over a doubling of homelessness (Jenkins 1976 cited in Crowson 2013:424); and indeed, leadership conflict and high staff turnover within Shelter were further public signs of an internal crisis (Crowson 2013:439-440). By now, the

incumbent Labour government was also already beset by era-defining legitimacy crises, such as the OPEC/IMF fallout. So Whitehall became increasingly anxious about being on the wrong end of Shelter's now professionalised public relations machine, which had developed a reputation for 'haranguing central and local government' (Crowson 2013:439). The eventual passage of the 1977 Bill presented a mutually convenient strategy for central government and the JCG to each re-signal their moral authority (Crowson 2013).

In the end, the tabling of the draft Bill in March 1977 was an outcome of these mutual dependencies and further compromises still in Westminster. Despite – or perhaps because of – the Act's promise of such benefits to these crisis-plagued groups, the final text was imprecise and legally complicated. It left key questions open for local authorities to deal with on a case-by-case basis and additionally deferred various policy dilemmas to an undefined future, as Ian Loveland (1995:Ch.3) illustrates in his detailed analysis of the parliamentary debate transcripts. Disqualifying housing applicants who had '**intentionally**' made themselves homeless was a Conservative proposal that was adopted in the final text (to the disappointment of more socialist Labour MPs) (ibid.:79-81). Given the difficulty of rendering such a condition in legal language, this criterion and a host of others relied on a verbose set of subsidiary tests that was proposed at the eleventh hour by parliamentary draftsmen (ibid.:80-81). '**Local connection**' was a further ambiguous condition that was demanded by Conservative MPs to deter holidaymakers in seaside resorts from overstaying their welcome (ibid.:91-93). The condition of '**priority need**' was introduced into statute at the urging of Labour MPs who felt that the law needed to guarantee a duty to at least a specified subset of applicants, but this subset was ultimately restrictively defined – for example, families with children and 'victims of flood, fire or other disaster' – due to Conservative MPs' anxieties (ibid.:75-76). '**Vulnerability**' represented the final priority need subset, but this deferred the test largely to the discretion of frontline officials (informed by a promised Code of Guidance from central government) (ibid.:76). The final definition of '**homelessness**', too, was rendered simultaneously diluted and slippery: it relied on an ultimately discretionary test for local authority housing officers to determine whether an applicant had access to, or the permission to reside in, accommodation which was reasonable to occupy (ibid.:97-99). (It did not specify, for example, that the accommodation had to be 'suitable', 'long-term' or necessarily 'fit for human habitation'). Ultimately, applicants did not have a strictly speaking legally enforceable 'right' against councils to be accommodated – it was the individual council's duty to 'secure accommodation' to resolve their homelessness. **'Securing**

accommodation', too, was left undefined: even though Conservative opponents of the Act feared that it would open the floodgates to demand a lifelong tenancy for post-war council housing, the wording of the Act afforded interpretive space to councils on how to discharge their duties (ibid.:91).

Due to this surfeit of convoluted legal tests and deferral to street-level bureaucrats' discretion, legal commentators continue to observe that it established a profoundly complex 'homeless persons' obstacle race' (Robson and Watchman 1981 cited recently by Cowan 2019). What would define a formidable body of judicial precedent in the coming years is both the senior judiciary's disapproval of having to hear appeals of local authority decisions in the first place and the view expressed by Lord Brightman in a leading precedent that it is 'an Act to assist persons who are homeless, *not an Act to provide them with homes*'.[18] This reiterated the anxieties of Conservative MPs during the Bill's passage that the Act would engender 'queue-jumping' in the council housing waiting list – 'a charter for the rent-dodger, for the scrounger, and for the encouragement of the home-leaver' – a catch-all euphemism for the era's various folk devils.[19] The selection of these 'folk devils' by parliamentarians is not coincidental: they represent precisely the antithesis of the model citizen for whom post-war council housing was expressly built (Koch 2018). The obsession of parliamentarians and Lord Brightman about how homeless applicants represent 'queue jumpers' demonstrates that they are characterised as lacking the British model citizen's patience. In contrast to these folk devils, Members of Parliament expressed rare consensuses during the legislative process: that 'priority shall be given for housing homeless families'[20] to avoid children being taken into care[21] and that '[f]rom the word "go" [the Bill] could not cover the [single homeless]'.[22]

The Act legally encoded these moral panics, producing enduringly perverse effects. It enacted a moral taxonomy of 'homeless people', representing a sorting mechanism that deferred to council officers' discretionary evaluations of applicants and was legitimised by law. It reasserted the primacy of the white English male-headed nuclear household, the original ideal unit of the post-war welfare state. In other words, the Act seemed to promise that *Cathy Come Home* would never be re-enacted; but even by 1977, this objective of

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[18] Lord Brightman (p. 517, emphasis added) in *R. v Hillingdon LBC Ex p. Puhlhofer* [1986] A.C. 484.
[19] HC Deb 18 February 1977 vol 926 col 972 cited by Loveland (1995:70)
[20] HC Deb 8 July 1977 vol 934 col 1728
[21] HC Deb 8 July 1977 vol 934 cols 1693-1690; the subsequent Code of Guidance reiterated this by stating that removing children from the (nuclear) family setting 'is not acceptable, even for short periods' (Loveland 1995:79)
[22] HC Deb 8 July 1977 vol 934 col 1732

redressing Cathy's injustice seemed 'out of time' and 'out of place' (Cowan 2019). In the aftermath of the Act's passing, one key research programme for legal scholars has been, in the words of Loveland (1991:249), to unpack 'the ostensibly perplexing question of why Britain's homeless population has almost trebled in the 14 years since the homelessness legislation was introduced'.

Socio-legal scholars have observed how the 1977 Act reflected, and produced, growing tensions in British central-local government relations (Cowan 2019; Loveland 1995). Westminster diverted fraught questions of eligibility to the discretion of local authority officials without additional funding for the supply of public housing units or for the administrative costs of dealing with claims under the 1977 Act (Loveland 1995:77-78). For these reasons, the Act resembled 'an exercise in "symbolic reassurance", in the knowledge that its professed objectives can never be achieved, but in the hope that merely by being seen to have done something about the problem the legislature can divert or defuse the political pressures which initially forced it to act' (Loveland 1995:5). This calls attention to the political expedience of discretion as a means of blame transfer in cases of British welfare decentralisation (Meers 2019). Meers (2019:47) suggests that discretionary welfare measures enable central government to take credit where policies have been positively enacted at a local level, to disown any negative externalities where they might arise and to minimise the fiscal burdens on the central Treasury at the same time. Such forms of blame avoidance by central government exploit ambiguities in the legitimate separation of central-local governmental responsibility in Britain and local authorities' historical role as the main governmental provider of public services in Britain. The passing of the 1977 Act, then, serves as a crucial example of how fraught central-local government relations in Britain entail a fragmented pursuit of the public good and of the critical entanglement of homeless charities in such conflicts.

The false promise of council housing

Shortly after, the 1980s saw the profoundly accelerated privatisation of council housing in the UK, eroding its supply as a publicly available good beyond recognition. The heavily discounted sale of council homes to its occupiers was a flagship manifesto commitment of the incoming Conservative Government – the Right to Buy – tapping into an entrenched English Conservative utopia of a 'property-owning democracy'. An electoral stratagem, this policy peddled sentimental aspirations of the home as the inalienable possession of the male-headed

nuclear household, a space of security and privacy. To borrow from Kate Fox's (2004:113) *Watching the English*, Thatcher capitalised on – and ultimately gave new meaning to – the bourgeois premise that:

> an Englishman's home is much more than just his castle, the embodiment of his privacy rules, it is also his identity, his main status-indicator and his prime obsession.

Famously 'rolling back the frontiers of the state', Right to Buy's implementation in 1980 commenced the mass disposal of the public housing. 42% of Britain's population were recorded as residing in public housing in 1979; the equivalent figure for 2016 is just under 8% (Harris 2016). According to 2021 estimates, there has been a 70% reduction in local authority housing stock in England since 1980 (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities 2022). Beyond the evident contraction of council housing supply, one of Right to Buy's enduring legacies is profound financial cost to local authorities. The reduction in local authorities' council housing stock has not been matched by a proportional reduction in expenditure, not least because housing management is largely a fixed cost for councils (Hargreaves 2002 cited by Jones and Murie 2006:175). Because local authorities have mostly been unable to reinvest the receipts of Right to Buy sales (Jones and Murie 2006:177-178) – these have historically reverted back to the Treasury to pay off any central-local deficits (Upton 2012:6; Murie 2015) – many of them have increasingly resorted to leasing property from the private sector to accommodate accepted applicants (Wall 2018). The elevated price of doing so represents a financial incentive for local authorities to circumvent their 1977 Act duties to the extent that this does not risk the cost of a legal challenge. In the words of public law scholar Loveland (2018:319),

> local authorities have a very limited capacity to shoulder any increased burden because of their effective lack of (in a general sense) fiscal autonomy and of (in more specific sense) any meaningful power to increase housing supply or reduce housing demand in their areas, even if—and given the political complexion of many local authorities that is a very big "if"—they were ideologically inclined to do so. Legal responsibility without political power might be thought an unhappy position for any governmental body to occupy.

To return to the framework first enacted in the 1977 Act, it largely endures in modified form as Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. One of its counterproductive legacies was to restate the charter of ending homelessness along the impossible lines of Lord Brightman's reflections

stated earlier, resonating with Craig's reflection over thirty years later on the shop floor. This thesis ethnographically traces this legacy. It asks what does it mean to assist persons who are homeless without in fact providing them with homes? The following section details the emergence of the service-providing homeless charity in the late 1980s that first pursued this challenge.

Division of labour and the rise of the service-providing homeless charity

One of the enduring legacies of the 1977 Act is that it legitimised a division of service responsibility based on whether a person was eligible for its assistance (the local authority) or not (homeless charities), although this was only fully activated later in response to a new moral panic a decade later. Partly reflecting the unremitting contraction in housing supply subsequent to the Act, it became the norm for local authority officers to apply their discretion restrictively (Loveland 1991). So in the late 1980s, British journalists and policy-makers rediscovered 'homelessness' once more, attending to a seemingly novel figure on the scene: single, young 'rough sleepers' in London. Excluded by definition from the promise of the 1977 Act, they increasingly perched on the doorstep of Parliamentarians and increasingly arrested under the Vagrancy Acts (Greene 2014).

As Cloke et al. (2010:30) observe, this quickly reached a flashpoint:

> [B]y the summer of 1990 the sight of some 3000 people sleeping rough in central London provided the British public with a potent symbol of the costs of Thatcherism and, in combination with that summer's poll tax riots, a serious legitimation crisis for the government.

In an attempt to quell the growing dissent, the Government unveiled the 'Rough Sleepers' Initiative' (RSI) in November 1990 (Greene 2014:324). The three-year £96 million flagship of the Tory response to rough sleeping, the RSI was a pledge to fund new hostel spaces and outreach patrols, to provide permanent 'move-on' accommodation for prospective RSI beneficiaries and to measure the success of the policy by deploying yearly government-sponsored 'street counts'. The RSI was territorially rolled out, selectively deployed to the most recognisable sites of spectacle. In its first phases, it focussed predominantly on a 2-mile radius around London's Waterloo Bridge, encompassing the so-called 'Cardboard City' where the BFI IMAX now stands, the Strand and Lincoln's Inn Fields. A key feature of the

RSI – and a pivotal moral affordance for the government – was its implementation by a new wave of homeless organisation that had contributed to the renewed public consciousness of homelessness; many of these, such as Thames Reach in London, became commissioned as consultants and service providers (Harding 2020:127-128).

By purposefully rehabilitating its moral authority as one premised on a will to care, the outgoing Thatcher administration sought to address the politically toxic side-effects emerging from its earlier punitive attempts to manage homelessness (Greene 2014). The RSI was an oblique attempt by the Thatcher-Major administrations to redress its earlier contraction of public housing supply under Right to Buy and recent reductions in benefit entitlement for young claimants that staged the most recent spectacle. Receipt of RSI funding was also something of a partial concession to local authorities, for whom it represented the flagship policy offering from central government to alleviate homelessness. For 'non-statutory' households – 'the single homeless' in effect, an especially orphaned constituency invented by 1977 Act – the RSI repurposed them as the rightful beneficiaries of homeless organisations (Anderson 1993:22) rather than of the state, drawing attention away from the fact that the statutory eligibility criteria and RTB are political artefacts and, as such, could be renegotiated.

The RSI engendered the growth of the service providing homeless industry in those areas in which it operated; this constituted an array of local 'voluntary organisations' that presumed a distinctive charter to 'tackle rough sleeping' (see Ravenhill 2008:67-69), targeting the orphaned constituency that appeared to be the casualties of the 1977 Act. Since its founding, the procurement rhythms of RSI funding were both just-in-time and 'lucrative' given the sums of money on offer (Ravenhill 2008:49). Although the 1990 RSI scheme had been planned to operate until March 1993, it was extended for a further three years as a reinvented RSI 'phase two' four months before the end-date of what was retrospectively dubbed 'phase one'. Phase two was later renewed at even shorter notice – just weeks before its previously anticipated ending – for another three years (1996-1999) as RSI 'phase three' (Wilson 2015:5-7). A case of information asymmetry, each phase contained changeable specifications and funding allocations that were specified in the announcement by central government (Wilson 2015). Since RSI funding typically became service providing charities' single largest revenue stream, their financial survival was at stake at each renewal, largely confining them to the role of price- and policy-taker. Given the considerable sums of money advertised at each renewal – by the end of the RSI in 1999, successive governments had

claimed to pledge £273 million in total (Wilson 2015) – new entrants flooded the market, which had increased from approximately 500 homeless charities in 1991 to 2,000 in 2001 (Walker 2001). The arrival of new charities reflected the growth in the business of ending homelessness that the RSI ushered in. Many of these ventures were speculative, seeking to shore up local support in anticipation of a possible RSI tender before aborting due to a lack of eventual RSI funding and the prohibitive costs of acquiring suitable venues. In reality, these barriers to entry favoured pre-existing RSI recipients (who benefitted from a track record of responding to RSI specifications and the prerequisite venues and workforce). Reflecting on her own career in the industry during the 1990s, Megan Ravenhill (2008:69) observes that the RSI had generated fraught local oligopolies:

> The funding mechanism had created lead charities with a proven record of good practice. These gained the lion's share of funding […] This created cronyism and jealousy within the homeless industry.

Stratification and silting-up

While the RSI naturalised a division of labour between local authorities and NGOs, it also engendered stratification within the homeless industry. In contrast with earlier policy initiatives, the RSI mapped out a blueprint of stratified service provision which corresponded to the phases of one's 'transition to settled life' in the words of the then Housing Minister, George Young (1993 cited by Wilson 2015:7). This refers to the incremental package of support advertised to a non-priority suppliant by service-providing organisations, successively escalated depending on the person's performance at each stage, beginning 'on the streets' after first contact with street outreach workers. Social policy analysts have belatedly characterised the British introduction of this model in the early 1990s as a possible case of oblique and 'incomplete' policy transfer of the US continuum-of-care homeless service model that emerged federally in 1987 (Johnsen and Teixeira 2010:7; Hoch 2000:867). At the same time, the roll-out of stratified service provision under the RSI coincided with policy developments in Britain that enshrined 'integrated care pathways' – a cognate concept – as an NHS commissioning model 'to guide costing and rationing, workflow and performance management as well as clinical practice' (Day et al. 2017:150).

In short, this was the emergence of what Sahlin (2005:117, emphasis added) calls

a '*staircase*', which homeless people are supposed to ascend step by step from the streets to a regular dwelling of their own via low-standard shelters, category housing (i.e. houses for specific categories, such as homeless male alcoholics), training flats and transitional flats. The higher they climb, the better their conditions in terms of physical standard and space, integrity, freedom, and security of tenure. Meanwhile [...] their efforts and progress in resolving 'underlying' problems [are monitored] (like debts, substance abuse, unemployment, etc.)

The outreach worker role in Britain became the conduit and preliminary gatekeeper between rough sleepers and a proliferating array of accommodation schemes – a 'linkworker', somewhat analogous to the role of general practitioners in the post-1990 NHS (Roberts 1989) – which each targeted a particular tranche of the 'homeless population', as Ravenhill recounts (2008:69):

> Designated beds became the norm: beds in hostels were often reserved for RSI clients, specific charities, [...] women or the under-25s. This meant that despite extra provision, access was severely restricted and most 'direct access' hostels were no longer open to people walking in off the streets. Moreover, there were times when reserved beds were left empty, while people wanting a bed for the night continued to sleep rough. As provision increased, access actually decreased. The most affected were males over the age of 25 and those [who were labelled as having] difficult-to-handle problems or behaviour.

Even in the new 'direct access' hostels of the 1990s – which still tended to pitch themselves to a particular tranche, the 'young homeless' – Tom Hall's ethnographic study (2003:27) of the Lime Street hostel in England reports similar tacit eligibility criteria:

> Not every young person who comes to Lime Street looking for a room is offered one. The hostel is not open to young people with criminal convictions for arson or sex offences, or to intravenous drug users (although staff members cannot always know whether or not a new arrival falls into any of these categories, unless such information is volunteered). Staff members are similarly wary of accommodating young people with mental health difficulties and those who present very 'challenging' behaviour.

Taking a *longue durée* approach that extends into the latest iteration of the sorting category – 'complex needs' – Rachael Dobson (2022) observes that this reflects now entrenched 'markets of vulnerability' in the homeless industry where specific problem needs become

repackaged in funding specifications as a demand for a service and that service providers respond by innovating their charter to become a product that meets such demands. The logic underlying the staircase is that each 'client group' bear distinct causes of homelessness or otherwise require a different kind of response that merited specialised assistance; in a term that later precipitated in the early 2000s, this refers to a client's 'support needs', an indeterminate yet travelling index of a client's patterned consumption of alcohol and other substances, mental and psychological health, childhood experiences, IQ, physical disabilities, criminal record, relationship history, gender, age and so on. At the same time, this division of labour reflects service providers' differential willingness to assume 'risky clients' on a sliding scale – high/medium/low – and to what extent they are chartered to do so.

What threads this fragmented industry together is an enduring and productively ambiguous 'master metaphor' (Mosse 2005:9) – a 'pathway' out of homelessness – and a renewed construction of the 'homeless person' as the protagonist of a 'lasting moral career' Desjarlais 1997:2; see also Fopp 2009).[23] Take, for example, the mission statement of the hostel where Hall (2003:23) stayed:

> [the hostel] aims to provide a breathing space where young people's needs are acknowledged so they can consider their options, decide how they want to spend their immediate future and make realistic choices ... an opportunity for young people to take time to evaluate what has happened in their lives and provide them with resources to turn it around ... a stable base from which to establish their goals and break the cycle of instability and homelessness

So reflects (ibid.) the hostel manager:

> Our goal for them [the residents] is to help them to leave into accommodation – leave properly, and move on to having a more stable lifestyle. In order to give them the skills for having a more stable lifestyle, while they're at the hostel the agreed goals, for example, are that they learn to budget, learn to have a realistic idea of their

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[23] Although the idea of a 'homeless pathway' in England tends to refer to the staircase/continuum-of-care model, its meaning differs widely depending on the context, so much so that it carries contradictory connotations. For example, a US non-profit called 'Pathways to Housing' represents one of the earliest cited proponents of 'Housing First' – a model which advocates the provision of rented self-contained accommodation at the *beginning* of one's homelessness, rather than as an end-point as in the staircase model. It was founded by psychologist Sam Tsemberis in 1992 (see e.g., Tsemberis and Eisenberg 2000 for a self-evaluation). To complicate the term further, the idea of a homeless pathway in social policy scholarship has tended to refer to 'routes *into* homelessness' (e.g., Fitzpatrick et al. 2013). Lastly, there is a striking multiplicity of housing and homelessness organisations and services that are named 'the Pathway', often without clear reference to any of the above senses.

employment, sign on for benefits or training. So, with Becky and Jim, all they're interested in is finding a place together ... with Marky, we need to be thinking about his drug and alcohol problem while he's here.

These all express a clear trajectory and expectation, which the hostel deputy manager enunciated: 'that the young people coming to Lime Street should set about "making a change" in their own lives' (Hall 2003:24). This resembles an ethos famously espoused by Thatcher (1993:601) when, reflecting on the rise of 'rooflessness' at the end of her premiership, she stated 'Nor are behavioural problems solved by bricks and mortar'. Her remarks echo those of Salvation Army founder William Booth (1890:85), when he was setting out what he called the 'essentials to success' for his programme of night shelters and labour colonies: 'The supreme test of any scheme for benefiting humanity lies in the question: What does it make of the individual? […] unless you change their character, your labour is lost'. These allude to liberal norms that link poverty to an individual's conduct, a moral framework which implies that one's (lack of) 'goals', 'skills', or 'lifestyle' are at fault. Seen in this light, what Hall's interlocutors are expecting is that Lime Street's residents actively reflect and work on their selves – to situate themselves at a crossroads between a problematic past and a better, independent future – because their past selves in some way precipitated their homelessness. This transformation entails readiness for 'move-on accommodation', the putative final stage of the 'transition to settled life' and is as such a moral signifier of achievement (see Moving on: interlude).

Even though the overarching objective of this staircase is to convey a person towards such move-on accommodation, practitioners then and now note that move-on accommodation of a secure, sustainable nature has always been in grave shortage. As Jon May and his colleagues observed (2005:713) of the burgeoning industry in the 1990s, the influx of funding from the state only covered emergency interventions (night shelters and hostels such as Lime Street), leading to 'bottlenecks' and 'silting up' as it was not accompanied with the 'permanent accommodation' as first promised in 1993. Put simply, the staircase was unfinished and the work of improvising its upper rungs fell on the industry itself.

This gap in the market was addressed through growing dependence on two types of accommodation provision, both of which were funded by Housing Benefit on a per capita basis: large scale university-dorm style accommodation (often provided by the YMCA and other national NGOs) and flatshares offered by smaller homeless NGOs that leased properties

from private landlords. In regulatory reforms to the Housing Benefit system in 1996, local authorities were afforded the discretion to 'exempt' accommodation schemes that provided 'care, support or supervision' from the market rent subsidy ceiling that ordinarily applied to private sector claims for Housing Benefit (Boath et al. 2010). This revenue flow has since catalysed a market of non-profit accommodation providers with a national estimated value of £816 million of government disbursals in the 2019/20 fiscal year, representing one of the industry's main funding pots (Prospect Housing 2021:14).

Castlebury's homeless industry

The following part of the chapter outlines how the national patterns and ways of working described earlier unfolded in Castlebury – the ethnographic setting of this thesis – where an elaborate local network of organisations developed a staircase of service provision.

Away from the focal points of spectacle like Central London – and the wellsprings of RSI funding – Castlebury's own homeless industry emerged in the mid-1990s. None of the specifically *homeless* charities (e.g., Shelter or Crisis) that incorporated in the aftermath of *Cathy* had a discernible operating presence in Castlebury, highlighting the highly decentralised nature of the industry. Instead, Castlebury's service offering had derived only from two charitable organisations that had maintained a continuous presence in the locality since the Victorian era: the Salvation Army (whose historic citadel started to crumble rapidly in the mid-1990s) and a YMCA medium-rise block of single dorms (constructed in 1975 to replace its original building from the 1870s). Running in parallel to this was a state-funded national drug residential facility – the Rainbow Project – founded in the late 1960s by a charismatic Baptist reverend.

A growing wave of sympathy about the rise in local rough sleepers reached Castlebury's newspapers in the early 1990s, coinciding with the rapid decline of the condition of the Salvation Army citadel due to prohibitive maintenance costs. Local coverage spoke of the 'burgeoning army of homeless', eventually catalysing an equally local response. A small group of Anglican churches established a Housing Emergency Drop-In (HEDI) to address this cohort of apparently non-statutory supplicants and incorporated it as the Churches of Castlebury Homelessness Project (CCHP) in 1993. CCHP's establishment was not straightforward, however. It had initially struggled to find an office to host its HEDI; and in March 1993, the Council had reportedly refused an application for grant funding. CCHP was only 'saved from closure', the *Informer* reports, by a £16,000 change of heart by the Council

at short notice in February 1994. In the meantime, CCHP attempted to raise funds for the renovation of the Salvation Army citadel in order to repurpose it into a night shelter. This venture was unsuccessful. From the outset, CCHP's financial survival and growth depended on its status as a beneficiary of the local authority. Its incorporation represented Castlebury's first self-styled modern 'homeless charity' – following the template conceived elsewhere in the country post-*Cathy* – succeeding the Salvation Army, whose citadel was eventually demolished and sold off in 2000.

CCHP secured financial viability for its HEDI and also enhanced the organisation's service offering by providing flatshares to 'single homeless people' from 1999: its Pathway Project. This turned CCHP into a sublandlord that offered 2 year assured shorthold tenancies to its clients for rooms in houses that private landlords had leased out to the charity for a longer term. The Pathway Project's rent receipts provided an early source of CCHP's revenue (although the Pathway Project's bottom line has been variously in the red due to irretrievable debts, such losses being cross-subsidised by other monetary flows and vice versa). The viability for the Pathway Project – as a recipient of Housing Benefit – derived from the 'exempt accommodation' rule set out nationally in 1996. Then as New Labour reformed the landscape even further in 2003, CCHP was additionally able to recuperate the cost of employing a support worker for the Pathway Project under a Supporting People contractual arrangement.

At its inception, and particularly after the establishment of CCHP's own Pathway Project, the HEDI aspired to fill a gap in the market – the perceived need for a 'one-stop shop' – for a central conduit. The HEDI functioned as a clearing house between clients (as HEDI termed them) and the Pathway Project, the YMCA, benefits agencies and the Rainbow Project. Moreover, it sought to revert housing responsibility back to the local council by advocating for those clients who its advisors believed were incorrectly determined to be 'non-statutory'. Recalling the stratification of the national industry set in train by the 1990s RSI and then rationalised by New Labour under the banner of 'joined up working' and interagency collaboration (Social Exclusion Unit 1998; Homelessness Act 2002, s. 1), each of these different projects had distinct 'support need' niches and was also strategically positioned interdependently of each other. As a residential drug rehabilitation facility for 'active addicts', the Rainbow Project effectively represented a bypass road off the main circuit. The YMCA had a niche for somewhat less risky clients who were classed as 'low(er) support need'; it was historically the first port of call for non-statutory clients. The Pathway

Project catered to those who were deemed by its support workers to have had successfully completed a two-year residency in the YMCA with a reasonable rent and behavioural record. Together, these organisations assumed tacit housing responsibility for Castlebury's non-statutory cohort, variously receiving both Housing Benefit and Supporting People funding to do so. The role of the two HEDI advisors consisted of evaluating clients' differential eligibility for these different placements and to broker between them, assembling personalised staircases. Coincidentally, it was in the mid-2000s that a few of my managerial interlocutors in Castlebury started their careers in the industry. Kev, Hazel and Emily all worked in the Rainbow Project during the mid-2000s; Tom – who would later become a leading figure in CCHP – was a trainer in the YMCA before becoming a support worker in the Pathway Project.

Rebirth – the post 2008 moment

In 2008, the Rainbow Project faced financial difficulty and reportedly closed its doors. This led to an influx of itinerant former Rainbow residents congregating on the grounds of St. Mark's, an Anglican parish church in Castlebury, according to its former vicar Andrew Williams. This inspired Andrew to institute what he called a 'Great Feast' for this new class, whom he called the 'garden people'. Modelled on Christ's Last Supper, St. Mark's would open its doors once a week to provide a meal for those who now dwelt on 'the streets', as well as providing advice and mentoring for them, Andrew told me. He was not alone in seeking to minister to the garden people. Tom, now a senior manager in CCHP, coordinated church groups in Castlebury to operate a winter night shelter in early 2009 for the garden people, without funding from local or central government; although it did receive necessary permission from the local authority to proceed. A 'roaming' night shelter, it consisted of different churches (including Andrew's parish) taking turns on a given night to host rough sleepers, allowing them to sleep on the floors of their church halls. The impetus for the Churches Winter Night Shelter, Tom suggested, stemmed not only from the closure of the Rainbow Project but also, in fact, from the seeming shortcomings of the YMCA:

> I set up – well, I didn't 'set it up', I spearheaded – the Night Shelter Scheme in 2009. That was because we weren't getting enough people into the YMCA basically for whatever the reason was. So the church leaders came to me and said 'what can we do? Because there's all these people that are on the streets in the winter time'.

This roaming Churches Winter Night Shelter operated continuously each winter until December 2013, when Andrew realised what he called his 'vision to establish a modern centre of hospitality', that he modelled on the former reception centres that were located in monasteries and ecclesiastical institutions in the pre-reformation English Church. He named it the Noah Community: Castlebury's first permanent, purpose-built night shelter. Based inside St Mark's Church Hall, it had a maximum occupancy of fifteen guests. Chapter 4 closely explores Noah's distinct ethos that revolved around the charismatic leadership of its first – and last – shelter manager, Kev, who became Noah's *de facto* director of operations. For Kev, Noah was first and foremost a moral home-making project, a place where he envisaged that his guests would experience the true meaning of home in order to reform themselves. He viewed discipline as key to this end and, as Chapter 4 particularly reveals, he perceived his role in this disciplinary schema as a caring, paternalist figure that seemed to embody the collective representation of Noah. For Kev, legitimate authority emanates from – and can only be delegated by – him. As we will see in Chapter 4, he often exercised his right to make exceptions to these rules, even though – or perhaps precisely because – he wrote them. As a self-styled 'boss', he maintained the right to enrol guests onto the shelter's closed guest list – and evict them – at his discretion: he estimated to me that he had evicted one in two guests since Noah was established. By extension, Kev asserted his personal right to admit and exclude volunteers. Crucially, he cast himself as an eminent authority on the subject of homelessness, derived not so much from expertise as much as from his will to care; he took a sceptical view of the state, styling it as 'the devil'. An interlude – 'A Noah welcome' – immediately precedes Chapter 4 to introduce the reader to Kev and Noah.

Noah's legitimacy – for its primary architects, Kev and Andrew – was precisely the fact that it was an anti-state endeavour. Charting the state's history back to the 'dissolution of the monasteries' in Reformation England, they both viewed it as an institution that engendered 'greed' and the 'growth of individualism' to the extent that it led to the systematic exclusion of 'homeless people'; and they viewed their project as 'a centre of hospitality' at the forefront of reversing this history. Kev and Andrew positioned Noah as the successors of the Rainbow Project. They viewed their charter as the provision of a better service than its predecessor, one which was not plagued by the moral pitfalls of state sponsorship. At the same time, Noah's longevity demanded that it become part of the state-sponsored local pathway – 'the single homeless pathway' – that the HEDI had been contracted by the local authority to coordinate. 'Upstream' since Noah's foundation, CCHP

functioned as the 'sole referral agency' for the night shelter, recruiting a reliable flow of suitable guests who had been pre-screened by HEDI advisors. 'Downstream', too, Noah served a key sorting role. At weekly Community meetings, Kev regularly reminded guests that he was responsible for vouching for their readiness to ascend to the next step of the staircase – the YMCA – by writing a landlord reference which discloses the guest's disciplinary and payment record. Noah's eligibility criteria anticipated a prospective guest's eligibility for the YMCA: the admission of those who might be ineligible for the YMCA risks the 'blockage' of Noah beds. Steady throughput is key. Moreover, Noah's upkeep was financed by receiving Housing Benefit from Castlebury District Council in its capacity as exempt accommodation for each guest who occupied it. So a background condition is that prospective Noah (and by extension, YMCA and Pathway) guests are eligible for Housing Benefit in the first place (i.e., have 'recourse to public funds') and are thus preferably not in employment. As a means-tested benefit, receipt of Housing Benefit tapers off disproportionately the more that one derives wages, risking renewed homelessness due to the accrual of rent arrears.

In other words, Noah's financial model (similar to that of the YMCA and the Pathway Project) was variously predicated on guests' dependence on state benefits; a guest represented a 'token' of the Housing Benefit invoice rather than a rent debtor *per se*. For example, the weekly Housing Benefit eligible rent in winter 2018 was approximately £180 and £300 for Noah and the YMCA respectively. This reflects the fact that, for these organisations, Housing Benefit represented the primary source of revenue from the state.[24] A typical financial arrangement for the funding of non-statutory accommodation in the industry, this engendered a perverse 'benefits trap'. Contrary to the claims of cultivating independence through work, these institutions largely depended on their beneficiaries' welfare dependence for their own financial survival or otherwise risk incurring the losses. Reflecting this immobility, the YMCA had garnered a reputation amongst some Noah guests who told me that it was 'grim', a 'trap' and where 'people go to die'; at the same time, however, it was also seen as a marker of achievement by workers – an aspirational 'next step' – since it could only be attained by those who had already progressed so far up the staircase.

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[24] The composition of funding from the local authority to the YMCA in 2008 was approximately 60% Housing Benefit and 40% Supporting People. In 2018, due to the reduction in (residual) Supporting People funding, the composition became 85% Housing Benefit to 15% Supporting People to maintain a comparable rate of return in real terms. This reflects the fact that the local authority can 'charge back' to central government 100% of exempt accommodation Housing Benefit up to the LHA-level and then 60% thereafter (Boath et al. 2010:8).

This financial model similarly played out in the very final step of the Castlebury staircase. During my fieldwork in Castlebury, the ideal terminus of the homeless pathway was accommodation provided by a lettings agency aptly named New Beginnings – it was the final point of the circuit that workers across all organisations sought to propel their clients towards. New Beginnings caters specifically to 'homeless' people, recruiting them through referral from organisations such as CCHP and the YMCA. It offers six-month assured shorthold tenancies in flat-shares that are variously located across Axlow City without requesting a deposit or rent in advance. Unlike many private-sector housing providers in England who are averse to accepting prospective tenants who receive welfare benefits, Universal Credit recipients are New Beginnings' niche: it only accommodates Universal Credit claimants. A significant proportion of New Beginnings' property holdings consists of former public housing stock which found its way onto the private sector through Right to Buy.

New Beginnings typifies the contemporary securitisation of housing. In my invocation of securitisation here, I index how housing has been financialised: as a security for financial institutions who issue loans to private landlords (backed against the market value of the home-as-asset) and as a generative source of profit for private landlords who in turn extract rent from tenants. New Beginnings represents a diverse portfolio of such assets. The precise value – or details – of its holdings is difficult to enumerate due to the intrinsic nature of its enterprise as a property investment vehicle and the limited reporting requirements set out in English company law. No less than four legal corporate entities are linked to New Beginnings' operations: New Beginnings Ltd, Zeta Housing Ltd, Property 2 Ltd and Alfred Plimley's Lettings Ltd. The sum total of its income and assets was approximately £3 million in the most recent financial year reported; over a recent two-year period, media agencies reported that it had received £5.5 million in Housing Benefit. In 2013, one of the entities associated with New Beginnings noted in its annual report that it had commenced 267 tenancies for homeless persons over the financial year reported. By way of debenture, a Big Four bank claims a first legal charge on the sum of the leaseholds owned by (at least one of entities that are associated with) New Beginnings.

New Beginnings' enterprise also represents a burgeoning securitisation of homelessness in particular. It represents a 'special purpose vehicle' in its own right, as well as comprising the various special purpose vehicles listed above. By design, New Beginnings capitalises on the lack of adequate state housing provision and of private-sector providers

willing to let to Universal Credit claimants. New Beginnings' property portfolio assumes the aggregate responsibility of accommodating formerly homeless persons on Universal Credit in Castlebury and further afield; it represents a financial repackaging of the state's former assets, largely comprising former public assets. The aggregate bundle of property is then parcelled out for maximum profitability: each dwelling is divided up into as many tenancies as there are rooms. In doing so, as Andersson (2012:106) similarly analogises about Frontex, it absorbs the risks and financial liabilities of the state and 'diffuses accountability away from elected officials'. The issue of housing marginalised populations changes from a political question to a market opportunity. The state transacts with New Beginnings in the form of Universal Credit precisely to minimise its social exposure – it is New Beginnings' main payer.

In this sense, New Beginnings exemplifies a form of *mediated* 'financial expropriation' to adapt the terminology of Lapavitsas (2009; see also Davey 2019). It is a form of profit that is accumulated not at the point of production (as in the labour theory of value), but from pre-existing monetary flows in circulation using financial instruments (credit-debt). What makes this form of expropriation 'mediated', however, is that it is not extraction of value from individuals' income that is taking place (like in 'classic' cases of indebtedness): it is instead extraction from the state fiscus, mediated and justified through a person's homelessness, which serves as a token rather than subject of expropriation per se. The post-Thatcher re-signification of housing as a profoundly private good (Meek 2014) legitimises this expropriation to the extent that New Beginnings is a private housing provider; this is accompanied by the ethical potency of the need to end homelessness, which facilitates such expropriation on a moral level.

In the context of no apparent alternatives, a New Beginnings tenancy is seen by many in the Castlebury industry as the only viable terminus. It is the focus of New Beginnings? Interlude.

<p style="text-align:center">*⁕⁕⁕*</p>

When I started work in Castlebury in September 2018, CCHP had just been awarded what its managers confusingly referred to as 'RSI 1'. This refers to the Conservative Government's revival of the RSI in March 2018, after 19 years of dormancy under successive administrations. As before, the RSI was a set piece policy announcement from Number 10 itself to fund winter night shelters, rough sleeping co-ordinators and outreach workers. The

timing of the revival coincided, once more, with when Whitehall was in crisis mode: not least thanks to Brexit. Theresa May – then-British PM – faced regular challenge to her governmental credentials from her own cabinet and backbenchers, especially because of the fraught state of EU exit negotiations. In one attempt to salvage her legitimacy, May signalled the end of her predecessor's unpopular austerity programme, a gesture leftwards to stave off the ascendance of a Corbynite Labour Party (Watts 2017; Morales and Ryan 2017). An imposing metaphor of the human cost of state neglect, the ruins of Grenfell Tower – as well as its displaced former residents – set the scene for this renewed performance of the government's will to care. As before, RSI funding was distributed by a bidding call overseen by a central government department (the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) and allocated to local authority areas that exhibited the highest incidence of rough sleeping in annual counts.

This was CCHP's first stint as an RSI recipient in its history. It delivered on its bid by opening a further subsidiary operation – the Sanctuary – a winter night shelter that added an extra step to the local staircase at the very beginning. The Sanctuary purposely sought to address a gap in the pathway's coverage: 'entrenched rough sleepers', a class of beneficiary that the other services in Castlebury declined to accommodate as a general norm. CCHP employed Elle – the Shelter Co-ordinator – as well as three 'shift leaders' working under her supervision. Elle undertook a recruitment drive for volunteers as well as sourcing a suitable venue for the shelter: the Vineyard Church. The founding story goes that the shelter was named 'the Sanctuary' at the behest of the Vineyard Church pastor, having trialled a night shelter there under his own initiative in the preceding winter when the so-called 'Beast from the East' in February 2018 had plunged Castlebury into arctic conditions. Martha – a long-standing senior housing advisor in the CCHP housing advice service – was promoted to the role of Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator and served as Elle's line manager. CCHP's founding strategic focus on the Pathway Project was now firmly diverted towards its rough sleeper intervention efforts. SHIH were also awarded funding as part of Castlebury's RSI bid. It employed two new outreach workers to patrol the streets of Castlebury twice weekly and a manager to oversee them – even though its workers raised muted objections at the fact that they did not have the established connections in Castlebury to refer clients to the organisations (like Noah and the YMCA) that CCHP did.

The organisational terrain of Castlebury's homeless industry, then, emerged unevenly in the period between 1993 and 2018, comprising an interdependent network of organisations

with ethoses that were purposefully differentiated from each other. One of the effects was fraught interorganisational relations, more closely examined in Chapters 2 and 5. The clearest example of this was between Noah and CCHP. Even though the two became neighbours in December 2016 – sharing respective halves of St Mark's Church Hall separated by a fabricated party wall – personnel within these organisations rarely communicated with each other and shared a distrust of those in the other organisation; there was no common area for Noah and CCHP personnel to mingle and the entrances were segregated – each organisation stuck firmly to its own side of the wall. As I would later learn, CCHP workers unanimously perceived Noah as a 'cult' and placed Kev as its 'leader'. At the same time, Kev viewed CCHP's proximity to central and local government with a particular disdain, likening it to me as 'getting in bed with the devil'. This resonated with uneasy mutual dependencies that each party viewed as asymmetric. Noah operated as CCHP's de facto landlords, as it owned the Church Hall on behalf of the parish. In the other direction, Kev was acutely aware of Noah's dependence on CCHP's HEDI for a flow of prospective guests, observing on occasion that they sometimes 'sent shit' to him – referring to unsuitable applicants – or opted to 'keep' clients to stay in the Sanctuary or the Pathway. Chapter 5 closely examines the fraught interorganisational relationship between Noah and CCHP.

In December 2019, Noah abruptly ceased operating on its sixth anniversary, a decision made by the Noah Board of Trustees. Its entire workforce was suddenly made redundant and its guests were rendered homeless. A public announcement of the explicit reasons behind this closure has never been issued by the Noah Trustees, only polite appeals for the need to 'reflect and regroup'. This is at odds with the welter of speculative theories – formulated by those who were most intimately involved in Noah – that cast blame for its sudden downfall in various directions. For one, a set of trustees reportedly told a meeting of individual major donors that 'there was no money left' – a perplexing explanation without further elaboration, given that Noah's financial longevity was modelled on a relatively reliable flow of Housing Benefit receipts. Nonetheless, it chimes with Noah's annual report for the fiscal year 2019/20, which regretted that private donations and volunteer support had become increasingly scarce and that the Sanctuary had crowded out the field by accommodating some of Noah's anticipated clientele during the winter months. Another theory – advanced by those closest to Kev – alleged that Andrew had used his clerical authority to misdirect Noah's funds. This view is opposed by one of Kev's former colleagues, who in fact accused Kev of negligently – or wilfully – halting local authority disbursals of

Housing Benefit, alongside additional mismanagement practices. A further accusation from one of Noah's most longstanding guests suggested that Kev had 'run off to Australia with the money' in order to evade law enforcement.

This thesis returns to Noah in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Before then, it turns now to the shop floors of SHIH outreach workers and CCHP caseworkers.

Chapter 2

Vocation, tragedy and ethical entanglement on the shop floor

Thursday 13 December 2018, 7pm. Ryan calls me ahead of tonight's SHIH outreach shift to brief me. The Met Office forecasts sub-zero temperatures tonight, Ryan informs me, meaning that 'SWEP has been activated'. An abbreviation for 'severe weather emergency protocol', this refers to a humanitarian obligation on local authorities to provide bed and breakfast accommodation to rough sleepers for the duration of the cold weather forecast. It is not a legal duty.[25] The objective of tonight's shift, Ryan observes, is to 'offer' SWEP accommodation.

After he collects me, Ryan and I arrive at our first reported 'sleep site' at 9 p.m. – the alcove of a Baptist church – and find a person snugly bundled in a green sleeping bag from head-to-toe. Ryan makes the usual greeting and a man emerges, responding positively and introducing himself as Bart. Bart tells Ryan that he has eschewed the churches' night shelter offering tonight. 'I'm a free man; I have rights', he notes, observing that he dislikes 'smelling other people's farts' and having shelter personnel 'tell you what to do'. Bart discloses that he has the occasional drink and is 'on the gear'. Ryan then makes his pitch: 'Do you want somewhere to yourself tonight?' Ryan responds positively once more.

This is the first time this winter that Ryan is calling the Council out-of-hours phone line to request SWEP accommodation. A switchboard operator answers and does not seem to understand what Ryan is talking about when he says that he is 'requesting SWEP'. 'It's absurd that the local authority out of hours does not know what SWEP is', Ryan responds,

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[25] In the words of Homeless Link (2012:1), an industry association which is funded by the MHCLG to render services to registered homeless NGOs and to provide examples of 'best practice': '[t]here is a humanitarian obligation on all local authorities to do all they can to prevent deaths on the streets caused by winter weather'. The main features of SWEP are that i) it is not a legislative creation but a humanitarian convention or 'best practice' which operates in a decentralised manner – each local authority determines its own definition of what constitutes sufficiently severe weather; ii) the form of accommodation that is provided under SWEP is also not prescribed, so the ways in which local authorities fulfil this obligation varies; iii) there are no explicit eligibility criteria prescribed for SWEP as there is for Housing Act provision, although there is the tacit understanding that it is pitched to 'rough sleepers'.

before labouringly explaining its significance and asking for the operator's manager (who is unavailable to talk to Ryan). The operator promises to call Ryan back. She does so after 10 minutes, asking him: 'What's the customer's name?' 'Date of birth?' 'Last settled area?' 'How is his health?' Ryan facilitates this back-and-forth, relaying the information between Bart and the operator. The operator appeals for patience once more, promising a further call back. It arrives another 10 minutes later, delivering good news: a room in a Travelodge 5 miles away has been booked for the night under Bart's name. I quietly hurrah: this is the first time I observe an outreach client being accommodated, even if just temporarily. Ryan invites Bart back to his reliable Nissan hatchback to embark on the journey, which takes about 20 minutes. Arriving at the Travelodge, Ryan, Bart and I arrive consult the reception and find Bart's room card ready. The receptionist observes that complimentary breakfast is included. We all exchange handshakes before departing.

Back in the Nissan, I praise Ryan for his persistence. Ryan is much more sober than I am. 'It's only for the night, Simon', he says sternly, before observing that it's going to be a 'let down' for Bart when he leaves the following morning. He regrets that he has dislocated Bart from his probable network of 'dealers' speculating that the 'dope sickness' is going to feel 'horrible', 'like death'.[26] Bart does not have a bus card, Ryan continues, anticipating that he will have to make the 5 mile walk back towards the Baptist church tomorrow in such a state.

<center>***</center>

This vignette depicts one instance in which Ryan evaluated the effects of his labour. In his critical reflections of what the morning after would likely hold for Bart, he subtly attributed at least partial blame to himself for Bart's possible inconvenience and suffering. At the same time, however, he enacted a will to care. Forcefully advocating to the local authority on Bart's behalf, Ryan facilitated his access to cold weather accommodation. Despite the arguably clear merits of offering Bart reprieve from the bitterly cold conditions, Ryan's reflections suggest that these situations present significantly more ethical complications than I had initially recognised; and that workers may be inclined to accept a kind of personal responsibility for the negative outcomes of their pursuits of the good, even if these arise out of circumstances that were plausibly beyond their control (for example, Bart's reliance on heroin and the local authority's choice of accommodation) or otherwise unintended. In short,

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[26] This is a reference to heroin withdrawal.

Ryan narrated this situation along the lines of the proverbial 'doomed if you do, doomed if you don't' – a negative outcome seemed inevitable to him no matter what his efforts were – and yet he also seemed to hold himself responsible for its effects.

These forms of ethical complexity – as a category of experience – can be usefully framed as moral tragedy. The term 'tragedy' has conflicting connotations and so it first requires brief disambiguation. Anthropologists have generally refrained from deploying tragedy as an analytic category, even though the discipline has historically devoted its energies to the study of suffering (Robbins 2013) and other 'dark' systematised dimensions of human experience that coalesce around 'depression' and 'helplessness' (Ortner 2016). At first glance, this lack of explicit attention to tragedy seems paradoxical. In a careful reflection of how she herself has ethnographically depicted the perennial 'European refugee crisis', Heath Cabot (2016) responds to this paradox from a different perspective. She argues, in fact, that there is possibly an uncanny family resemblance between ethnographies of such crises and refugee advocacy, since both are prone to staging and capturing 'stories' that depict a person as 'deserving of sympathy' (ibid.:652). As a 'representational tactic', such narrative modes risk reproducing 'tragic tropes', she notes, where a sincere and abject cast of characters are always already in situ, the downward narrative arc is well-paved and its audience awaits catharsis (ibid.:654-655). Possibly, then, this paradox arises from a pre-existing specific anthropological tendency to adopt tragedy as a textual aesthetic, concealing (for whatever reason) its potential in its own right to be a valuable category to think with and to use for ethnographic comparison.

In her invocation of tragedy, Cabot (2016:654-655) largely takes to task the ordinary language sense of 'the tragic':

> a "very bad event that causes great sadness and often involves someone's death" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary); "synonyms" listed include "disaster," "misfortune," "catastrophe," and "calamity."

In other words, tragedy in its ordinary guises is typically associated with the trope of suffering, tending to index passivity and pity.

This chapter diverges from such notions of tragedy. Instead, it deploys the notion of '*moral* tragedy' to capture workers' feelings of responsibility for the negative consequences of their active pursuits of the good. These emerge from particular kinds of ethical dilemmas in which there is no 'right answer'. In so doing, my analysis follows recent approaches in the

anthropology of ethics and morality by Cheryl Mattingly (2014) and Morgan Clarke (2012). Set among low-income African Americans in Los Angeles, Mattingly's work shows how one mother, Dotty, confronts the incurable sickle cell anaemia of her daughter, Betsy. This is a case of moral tragedy, Mattingly (2014:108) notes, because in the very process of caring for Betsy, Dotty consciously comes to 'embody' a particular subject position of 'Superstrong Black Mother'. Becoming a 'Superstrong Black Mother', Mattingly (ibid.) suggests, leads Dotty to recognise that she has 'paradoxically' engendered 'moral problems' of her own making, namely her viewing Betsy exclusively through a medicalised lens (originally a skill cultivated to adapt to Betsy's condition) at the expense of recognising her as her daughter, the very premise of her motherhood in the first place. For example, Dotty realises that she mistook one of Betsy's cries as a symptom of illness rather than an indicator that Betsy merely misses Dotty's affection, reflecting 'my God […] I really, really am detached' (Mattingly 2014:111). Yet this was precisely the result of Dotty's skilful cultivation of the ability to interpret the signs of sickle cell and to communicate forcefully with clinicians on their own terms. This learning process was part of Dotty's reflexive pursuit of the good, where she recognises that declining to care in this way only risks an even greater ill and that the ability for Betsy to 'experience life' on her own terms is ultimately an impossibility (ibid:.110).

The import of Mattingly's approach to moral tragedy is that it emphasises the entanglement of self and other that projects of care entail, as well as actors' capacity to recognise the effects of this. In fact, using a mother-child metaphor, Lily – a former CCHP advice worker – offered me during an interview what she felt was the 'perfect analogy' for the worker-beneficiary relationship:

> I heard a woman on a podcast the other day talking about how, if you want to raise a child well, the only thing you need to do is make sure that the mother is taken care of. Because if the mother is taken care of, then the kid is going to be taken care of. That's it in a nutshell.

Moreover, Lily perceived that her job pursued incommensurable goods. For one:

> It did really feel a lot like institutionalising people. You celebrate because you get one person accommodated in one week and then two weeks later they're back [without accommodation, seeking Lily's services again]. It's just not set up to help people. So that became really displeasing.

At the same time, the alternative to 'institutionalising people', Lily hinted despairingly, is potentially much bleaker:

> What sort of job has that level of stress and responsibility with people coming to you? And "if you don't help me, I'm going to be sleeping out in freezing cold temperature tonight." But having that hanging over your head …

At this point, Lily had begun to reference one particular case of 'a 21-year-old, with, like', before she interrupted herself, noticing that she was on the verge of tears, and apologised to me. Having personally mourned the deaths of several CCHP clients and having otherwise become intimately familiar with her clients' distress of 'being on the streets', she struggled to articulate these. Or, recalling Ryan on the shop floor, the offer of SWEP accommodation engendered a sense of self-blame for exposing Bart to the possibility of new harms, but disappointing too were the possible harms of not assisting him in that way.

For both Ryan and Lily, there is no readily deployable measure that can minimise or resolve this disappointment by weighing up the virtues of either option there and then: they are incommensurable, they are equally presented in the immediate demand to act, and they view the background conditions of these immediate and limited possibilities as something they cannot negotiate. Lily, Ryan and Dotty, then, appear to be expressing 'insolvable moral dilemmas' (Mattingly 2014:110-113). These are, respectively, to medicalise or institutionalise (entailing possible pitfalls, uncertainties and futility) on the one hand or, on the other hand, to forego doing so, also mortally imperilling those they care for. They all recognise that these are 'rival and incompatible claims' that have first arisen 'for unforeseeable reasons out of their control' (Mattingly 2014:108-109).

Mattingly's elaboration of moral tragedy is valuable because it allows us to compare similar types of *caring* experience across differing social histories and specific roles, foregrounding how these can yield different kinds of dilemma and actors' evaluation of the negative consequences of their care in such situations (ibid.:119). Meanwhile, Clarke's notion of vocational tragedy (2012) enables us to locate such dilemmas as inherent to the possibly inevitable forms of misrecognition that take place in *rule-based* pursuits of the public good. In his study of Islamic judges in Lebanese *shari'a* courts, he finds that the ethical imperative of giving effect to the *shari'a* is a profoundly paradoxical enterprise in this setting: shaykhs are required in this role to apply its rules in their guise as quasi-state functionaries; at the same time, being a 'true' shaykhly judge is widely construed in Islam as being a personally

responsive figure who does not merely 'apply rules' but instead gives 'moral instruction', adapted on a case-by-case basis and informed by personal engagement (Clarke 2012:107). The ethical complexity is heightened, on the one side, by the expansive nature of *shari'a* jurisprudence which is typically construed as rich and as open as an 'ocean', and on the other hand by the possible consequences of not fulfilling one's shaykhly vocation in the proper manner: eternal condemnation. Clarke finds that this engenders a case of what he usefully terms 'vocational tragedy' in which the means of reconciling these irreconcilable demands are not given but highly personalised by shaykhs themselves, giving rise to differing shaykhly 'styles'.

In this chapter, I frame frontline workers' experiences of enacting care as a similar 'acting out' of vocational tragedy (Clarke 2012:108) that inheres in the hardwired constraints of their various roles. Clarke's notion of differing professional styles helpfully enables the tracking of different strategies that develop reflexively in response to such constraints. Mattingly's work on moral tragedy frames workers' reflections on the negative effects of their will to care in situations where care seems impossible to them; and it draws attention particularly to where workers believe that they misrecognise their beneficiaries in doing so. By paying attention to both how workers negotiate such entanglements of self-other at the same time that they negotiate various rule-based regimes, then, this chapter foregrounds a common feature across all of these frontline roles that engenders such tragedies in the first place: the fraught basis on which the state sponsors their will to care and simultaneously limits the conditions for its realisation. This is a pattern that characterises the making and re-making of the homeless industry writ large. As the following section suggests, these hardwired limitations are at odds with the motivations that animate workers' care in the first place, amplifying the palpable sense of entanglement and futility.

The impossibility of care, the will to care

Why might frontline workers in England's homeless industry possibly feel that they have been set up to fail? I asked Lily to explain how her job 'institutionalised people' since she observed earlier that it was the main thrust of her role, yielding tragic impasses in the process.

Lily: The more I worked there, the more disillusioned I became with everything, like, the systems you're up against […] People don't have any choice whatsoever. So if you somehow manage to get somewhere with the council – which is nigh-on impossible – you're going to end up in a shithole miles away from where you want to be, where

your support network is. You're going to end up in a crap temporary accommodation a long way away and you're going to be expected to be really grateful for that. You're not supposed to say 'no, thank you'. You're not supposed to say, 'well, actually, I'm disabled, so it'd be really helpful if I had a ground floor.' You're not allowed to have any complaints about that sort of thing, but the chances of you getting somewhere with the council in the first place are slim-to-none [anyway]. You might as well just have four limbs missing and you're still going to have to make a case for yourself. So that was all horrible at the council business. But the one thing that really didn't sit well with me at all was that the people, okay, so another example of 'the system' is that the people who were on benefits – [and] who didn't fit the criteria of 'priority need' – would end up in these bedsits owned by billionaires; and they're getting charged the maximum amount their benefits will allow, to live in the worst possible accommodation. And that's the only option for you. And if you want to go back to work, you can't, because then your benefits will be stopped or reduced. There just didn't seem to be any good, sustainable option for anyone.

Focussing particularly on its beginnings and endings, Lily here is depicting a typical experience through the circuit of homeless services; these comprise what is commonly known as the 'pathway out of homelessness'. It was Lily's brief to ensure safe passage through this pathway, from client registration to settled accommodation. Yet her framing evokes her own sense of entrapment within it and perhaps even a tinge of responsibility for the consequences to her clients. Even though I had sought to reassure her – she is justifiably one of its most decorated former employees and remains well-liked by her colleagues and clients after her departure – she responded soberly. It was only a 'handful of cases where I felt like I actually did something good there and so this person is going to be better off because of where they are now', she responded. She did concede, however, that she 'really tried, really hard'. For Lily, the process that she set in train as an advisor does not seem to befit the term 'pathway'. Rather, it resembles a 'system' with various adversaries at each stage who variously confound, and extract value out of, her clients.

Many other frontline workers who worked in CCHP and beyond share Lily's critical stance towards the industry and her perception that the labour is apparently futile. In Mattingly's words, their disenchantment expresses a self-awareness that they have had 'to act in ways they would otherwise reject, to do bad things, because of circumstances they did not initiate and whose consequences they did not or could not foresee' (2014:108). Yet this

conception demands a subtle adaptation in the case of tragic forms of work. Dotty's entwinement with her daughter Betsy and her incurable congenital illness differs from the entwinement demanded of Lily and other workers in the industry as part of their role. Lily, for example, did initiate her own employment in CCHP and conduct casework as part of her role. Yet as Lily observes, the role of caseworker in England contains a set of circumscribed conditions of possibility, which one only really recognises after being recruited. For example:

Lily: When I first encountered the council I was like (*Lily mimics a well-done scream; we laugh*). Can you quote *that*?

Simon: Sure! Also – how? Why?

Lily: I was talking to Peter [Lily's partner] about this yesterday! The first person that I worked with was a woman who was seven months pregnant and had slept in Castlebury Common. And they weren't going to accommodate her. And they didn't accommodate her, actually… she ended up back with her abusive parents! And that was just, like, *absolutely* mind-blowing to me! I could not *believe* that this was what it was. That this is how it worked. I'd be, like, she's seven months pregnant. Obviously, that's an open-and-shut case to me.

This reveals part of Lily's self-conscious development of a caring *habitus* that responds to the demands of the vocation: recognising others' suffering on the face of it, habituating to obstructive state counterparts, realising (with astonishment) that 'this is what it was' whilst not necessarily accepting it, and having a powerful knack for reanimating a sense of tragedy. As Matthew Desmond (2006:391, 393) interprets Bourdieu (1997), this is the development of a set 'of dispositions and ways of thinking […] and acting', acquired over time and through practical action, that informs Lily's understanding of 'the system' and 'guides' how she confronts it.

In the HEDI role, the vast majority of paradigmatic knowledge acquisition – particularly the basics of how to conduct casework – occurs on the job, rather than preceding it in an entry-level role or accredited qualification. Put differently, the *habitus* of a CCHP worker, perhaps more so than other professions, is quintessentially moulded once in the role and is largely imprinted by the organisation. 'All of the stuff about the Housing Act, all of the benefits [rules]: I had no knowledge of any of this when I started working there', Lily observes, even joking off-handedly that the CCHP training budget had been slashed when she

was in post but at least there was still 'Google'. In this regard, Lily is representative of my former paid colleagues in the Castlebury homeless industry. None of them reported having a legal qualification or prior legal experience, even though their role often requires many of them to interpret legal documents regularly (such as tenancies, eviction letters and appeals about benefit and statutory legislation). Further, only 15% of them reported that they had any previous employment in another homeless service before commencing their current post. So for the vast majority of them, their current employers represent their first job in the industry. Part of this derives from the scarcity of local job applicants with specifically industry-derived forms of knowledge, expertise or prior experience: since its founding in 1993, CCHP is the only homeless advice service that operates in Castlebury; and there has been no instance in institutional memory of a council housing officer, former Citizens Advice employee or caseworker in an equivalent homeless service in another local authority area making the switch to CCHP.

Instead, as Lily notes, recruitment in CCHP's frontline roles is predicated on one's moral substance, which Lily described as 'taking a leap of faith' as to whether 'you fundamentally care about people or not'. For her, the character virtue of 'care' – above all – anticipates whether a potential hire will be a persuasive advocate for beneficiaries:

> We don't want to know about your 'statistics' and I don't want to know that you're a good 'communicator' […] If I look at [Nicolas and Peter, two of her former colleagues], we all cared. So then I also think you [a putative/imagined job interviewer] have to ask: do you want to challenge the system?

The legitimate pursuit of the vocation, then, intrinsically places demands on a person's moral self: first, foremost and above all, the ideal worker needs to have the will to care. *This* is what putatively inspires and prepares caseworkers to challenge the system; it carries the promise and unbridled potential of effecting a transformative change in the world through their labour (Sanchez 2020), investing workers with a seemingly unique responsibility to do so regardless of the means. Even though this necessary virtue was frequently observed to me in validation of others – that so-and-so is 'really caring' or 'really does care' – there is no consensus about the term's content.

Lily provides a sketch – and her colleagues unanimously regard her as an exemplar of the will to care. After some prodding, she admits that she developed her capacity to care in her former work managing pubs, where she learnt 'how to hold people's stories', and she also

observes that, fundamentally, her labour in CCHP demanded repeated exposure to the 'trauma' of others 'when they're going through the worst time of their life', leading to her own 'vicarious trauma' and, ultimately, burnout in the absence of organisational support. This also suggests that it contains self-sacrifice, which Lily hints at further: she 'accepted a 10k paycut' compared to her former role by joining CCHP and risked becoming 'the lowest paid person at a charity' where 'you're told you've got a contract for a year and we don't know if we're going to renew it or not'. These indicate a notion of care that exceeds economic incentive, is devotedly relational and responsive to the other (Muehlebach 2011:65), and is practiced as empathy (Brown 2016:592-4) and predicated on one's shared humanity without expecting a commensurate return (ibid.; Scherz 2014). Yet, zooming in to the case that Muehlebach (2012:103) discusses in austerity Northern Italy, where the proper exercise of care is defined as the opposite of doing a 'job' – especially a state job – there is a key difference. In the present case – and especially as I will describe in the next chapter – the legitimate practice of care in the UK homeless industry can only really take place as such as a paid employee, not a volunteer such as in Muehlebach's ethnography.[27] This, then, is an ideal of shared professional status that is consciously predicated in explicit contrast to 'technical expertise' (cf. Mosse 2011; Ferguson 1990); it is 'animated' precisely by professional 'feeling', *not* 'knowledge', to reorder Muehlebach's words (2012:128). It claims a greater degree of affective self-investment than professions that seek to improve the lives of others, such as those that have historically dominated the development sector (Li 2007).

This unsustainable degree of personal entanglement – upon which the role is predicated – exposes workers to the heightened possibility of vocational tragedy: it enrols their selves, demands adaptations to their *habitus* and places their intimate selves at the coalface against 'the system', maximising the potential emotional blow. On the interstices of charity and a different variant of the system – UK asylum and immigration law – James and Killick (2012) identify a similarly unsustainable demand for compassion among legally accredited caseworkers. They write in the context of funding cuts to legal aid, which heightens the need for caseworkers to evaluate the financial viability of helping their clients on a case-by-case basis. Despite this, they (ibid.:454) find that those reforms have not

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[27] Chapter 3 demonstrates the highly hierarchical nature of the division of labour in Castlebury's homeless industry. Paid frontline workers distinguished their work as more valuable than that of volunteers, commonly perceiving volunteers as a class of labour that poses a potential obstacle to, and competitor in, the enterprise of acquiring the trust of beneficiaries. They viewed the acquisition of guests' trust as crucial to their charter of transforming 'the homeless' into 'the homed'. Accordingly, paid staff members constructed such volunteer-guest relations as breaches of 'boundaries', reserving the exclusive right to cultivate such relations themselves, to determine the content of these boundaries and to police these boundaries.

eliminated caseworkers' capacity to respond empathetically to their clients' concerns and to activate clients' possible rights to citizenship as such; its consequences cannot be neatly termed neoliberal or otherwise, instead revealing

> a range of divergent, even incommensurable, effects: the need for expertise, the imperative to deliver such expertise with empathy, the excessive emotional pressures and financial strictures that might lead to compassion fatigue and drive case workers into less onerous forms of employment, and the feedback loop that validates affective characteristics in terms that market-driven policy makers might understand, thus aspiring to secure further funding to keep alive the possibility of this expert advice and empathy.

This thesis echoes such a critique. It challenges the view that caseworkers' care enacts a sleight of hand which diverts attention away from other theatres of repression (Fassin 2005:375 cited by James and Killick 2012:437); and it also challenges the argument that caseworkers' deployment of legal categories as a heuristic device necessarily implies that they subscribe to the legitimacy of those categories or are only consigned to reproduce them (Coutin 1994 cited by James and Killick 2012:431). It does so by foregrounding – as it crystallises in moral experience (Zigon and Throop 2014) – the impossibility of fulfilling the multiple expectations that are (tacitly) written into caseworkers' job specifications; and it foregrounds caseworkers' conscious awareness of having to contort their *habitus* in order to address them. As will be shown, this impossibility is arguably amplified compared to that experienced by the caseworkers in James and Killick's case. The charter of Lily and her colleagues *is* to activate their clients' access to housing and welfare benefits; but lacking legal knowledge themselves, they rely on legal aid funded lawyers in select cases, who they rarely access and, as will be seen, are in fact often discouraged from doing in any case. These post-law conditions of possibility for helping their clients are profoundly constrained, as Lily observed at the beginning of this section. Combined with the personal entanglement demanded by the job, these constraints condense into the fate-like background condition of workers' experience of moral tragedy. I unpack these now, using Lily's earlier reflection as my cue.

Getting 'somewhere with the council […] is nigh-on impossible'

When a person first seeks housing advice from CCHP, its caseworkers first need to quickly prejudge whether the prospective client fulfils the following Housing Act criteria, which serve as a sorting mechanism:

Housing Act 1996

<u>188 Interim duty to accommodate in case of apparent priority need.</u>

(1) If the local housing authority have reason to believe that an applicant may be **homeless**, **eligible for assistance** and have a **priority need,** they must secure that accommodation is available for the applicant's occupation.

This is due to several reasons. First, CCHP defines itself – and receives funding in its capacity – as a '*single* homeless charity', purposely setting its stall to serve those to whom the Act affords limited coverage on paper. This is CCHP's organisational remit and founding charter: to serve Castlebury's growing 'army of homeless' (*Castlebury Informer* 1986). If a person presents to the office with children, this implies that they 'are priority need', that is, presumably unquestionably eligible for state support. Accordingly, they are given advice to this effect at the CCHP reception, redirecting them to 'approach the council'.[28] Second, if a prospective single client *is* on the face of it 'priority need' – typically by virtue of its complex subsidiary test, medical 'vulnerability' – the anticipated task becomes 'fighting the council' as Lily and her colleagues regularly called it, the major bypass road off the homeless pathway. This refers to the challenge of activating a client's entitlement by persuasively

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[28] Pregnant women represent a complicated 'boundary case'. Pregnancy constitutes a 'priority need' according to Part 7 of the Housing Act, 'regardless of the length' as clarified by the Homelessness Code of Guidance paragraph 8.5. For this reason, it is an 'arguable' case for HEDI caseworkers, as seen by Lily's efforts. However, the norm among local authority officials is to request documentary proof of pregnancy from a medical professional. Many insist on the NHS certification of pregnancy known as MAT B1, which is only issued after 20 weeks of pregnancy even though an ultrasound scan can attest to one's pregnancy much earlier (as early as 6 weeks). It is perhaps not coincidental that the abortion threshold in Britain is 24 weeks of pregnancy. The scepticism surrounding the 'sincerity' of a woman's pregnancy reflects longstanding moral panics in Britain expressed since at least the late 1970s. These were articulated even – or especially – in the House of Commons at the time of the original debates of the homelessness legislation in 1977 (see Loveland 1995:75-76). Some MPs 'conjured up the […] scenario that young women would become pregnant and, once allocated council accommodation, would have an abortion, thereby gaining housing without the added inconvenience of child-raising' (Loveland 1995:76). One of Koch's interlocutors, Helen, a white single mother in her early thirties who lived on the Park End estate, reported that working-class pregnant women such as herself are stigmatised as the '"scum of the earth single parent" that got pregnant to get a council flat' (Koch 2018:92). These prejudices endure even when the link between a Part 7 acceptance and the offer of a local authority tenancy is particularly tenuous now more than ever. For these reasons, several homeless pregnant women in Castlebury became guests in the Sanctuary and Noah night shelters when these operated because they were unable to activate the Housing Act duty. Lily referred to a case after July 2021 when both of these shelters (and the COVID accommodation scheme; see Epilogue) had closed down. In short, pregnant women's lack of effective entitlement to state assistance means that many of them become beneficiaries of the industry.

appealing to their local authority counterparts (often by email or telephone call to a duty triage officer) that the person satisfies the criteria – this is the act of 'lodging a homelessness application'.

'Fighting the council' is beset by the conjoinedly discretionary and adversarial nature of the relevant Housing Act provisions. Even though 'vulnerability' functions as CCHP caseworkers' main sorting mechanism to anticipate eligibility – to them, it is arguably the most contentious yet provable criterion – they observed to me that the typical retort from council managers is that the person is not, in fact, '*homeless*'. One such claim of homelessness was 'contrived', for example, as an email from a council manager stated, implying naivety on the part of the CCHP caseworker. (The 'eligibility for assistance' criterion, a more recent addition to the framework, is almost never a ground of contention since it relies on an applicant's immigration status of having 'recourse to public funds'. It is not open to local authority discretion like the others). Such recourse to claiming that an applicant is 'not homeless', as Wilde observes behind-the-desk in a local authority housing office (2022:31), is common across the board.[29] Given that this criterion demands proof of a 'lack' – of accommodation in which the applicant can reside – this has made it particularly prone to a 'fallacy of folk logic' that 'one can always disprove a negative' (Hales 2005), a putative truism commonly enacted by council officials to discredit one's homelessness. Based on in-depth interviews with local authority housing officers across England, Sarah Alden's study (2015) offers support for this trend. She cites a housing officer's recollection of when 'a service user who was deemed to meet the priority need threshold for mental health being sent away, on the proviso that "further checks" [about their fulfilment of the 'homeless' criterion] would be made:

> The manager at the time, well […] she would basically say 'no, tell them they are not homeless' or whatever. (Officer Three, LAHAS B)' (ibid.:71)

The ideal result of a homelessness application is a decision letter (preferably a positive one) where the council officer explains the reasons for the decision about the applicant's eligibility for statutory assistance; there is a specifically prescribed legal mechanism (Housing Act 1996, s202) for the reconsideration of the written decision by the council, and, thereafter, a

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[29] Giles Peaker (e.g., 2016) provides a critical compilation of such instances and others on his blog *Nearly Legal*. Historically, meanwhile, many socio-legal studies of homelessness decision-making have focussed on how the 'vulnerability' criterion is contested, much like how CCHP caseworkers anticipated their local authority counterparts' rejections (e.g., Bretherton et al. 2013). Since a change in the case law – *Hotak* [2015] – the vulnerability test is arguably less restrictive and therefore more capacious than before (Loveland 2017:310).

specific statutory right (Housing Act 1996, s204) to appeal it in a County Court. A large number of negative decisions – if not the majority of them – are, however, 'non-decisions' in which there is no formal acknowledgement that the application has even been made in the first place: 'gatekeeping' in the words of housing advisors. This applied, for example, in Lily's recount of the pregnant woman in Castlebury Common. It also applies in Chapter 6 where I discuss Amir, a former client of mine.

The issue with non-decisions is not merely that they are only challengeable through the more complicated mechanism of judicial review, the general common law of the legality of public authority decisions. Since legal aid reforms in 2013, this distinction between decisions and non-decisions determines applicants' access to free legal representation to contest them (Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012). Section 204 appeals are a defined class of 'civil action', the merits of which the reformed funding regime recognises more readily for legal aid funding than for judicial reviews; the latter's complexity and limited prospects of success makes it highly costly and time-consuming to secure legal aid (see Peaker 2015; Public Law Project n.d.; The Civil Legal Aid (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2015; Law Society 2022). In fact, judicial review precedents relating to homeless applicants have been so restrictive and self-negating on the Housing Act's *own terms* to lead legal scholar Ian Loveland (1991) to pronounce 'the end of the homelessness legislation' just over a decade after it was originally passed.

Although 'fighting the council' is a task that HEDI caseworkers take seriously, they did not in fact ever lodge claims for judicial review or statutory decision appeals. The role consists of triage, advice and referral; it is *not* litigation.[30] This stems, at least in part, from the fact that none of my former colleagues in the HEDI or indeed CCHP writ large were legally trained, and the complexity of such legal action in an adversarial system – where the local authority will presumably have professional representation – largely precludes non-lawyers' pursuits of such claims. (The lack of legally trained HEDI caseworkers might partly derive from the common CCHP recruitment practice of backfilling from other roles and also due to the somewhat uncompetitive salary relative to the legal job market). Consequently, the role of HEDI caseworkers within the division of labour is instead to search for legal-aid

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[30] Nonetheless, experienced HEDI caseworkers did engage in appealing clients' negative benefits decisions in the First-tier Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support). This is partly because the 2012 legal aid reforms abolished entitlement to public funding for professional legal representation in such cases (Rutledge and Royston 2015), and also due to the fact that the UK tribunal system as an organ of administrative justice is arguably more accessible for non-lawyers than the courts system (see Thomas 2013).

funded solicitors and to persuade them of the merits of the case. Chapter 6 offers one illustrative example, from my former perspective as a caseworker, of seeking to activate a clients' Housing Act entitlement and the fraught work of securing such legal representation. In the absence of legal action, if local authority officials do not seem amenable to the persuasion of HEDI caseworkers, caseworkers have in the past used their discretion to seek managerial discretion for CCHP to book clients a room in the local Travelodge for several days, reportedly at CCHP's own expense. Alternatively, HEDI caseworkers might simply decide to offer clients a list of local solicitors' firms that conduct legal aid litigation against local authorities, advising clients themselves to contact them. In November 2019, this list contained twelve firms; by August 2022, it had whittled down to six.

Combined with an already stretched and underfunded legal aid system, this depicts one example of what are known as 'legal aid deserts' (Hynes 2012). This makes the extralegal practice of 'gatekeeping' applicants a minimally 'legally risky' exercise for local authorities from a cost-benefit perspective, since the prospects of legal challenge are low. For these reasons, it is one of the most difficult kinds of casework obstacle for housing advisors to surmount.

So the 'impossibility' on a fiscal-legal basis for clients to 'get anywhere with the council' is a pervasive experience among CCHP advice workers. As a result, only a minority of clients are adjudged by CCHP caseworkers as having an arguable 'council' case that is worth pursuing in the first place. The everyday labour of the HEDI role consists less of securing clients' Housing Act entitlement and more of enrolling them into the local homeless industry that exists precisely to assume responsibility for 'non-statutory' individuals.

Beyond these fiscal-legal constraints on caseworkers' ability to realise this part of their charter, intrinsic constraints written into the role have an arguably even more limiting effect, as Lily and her colleague Sebastian recounted:

Sebastian: Lily was kicking the council's fucking ass!

Lily: I was, actually! I was, I was. And I was encouraged not to. But I did it anyway.

Sebastian: Yeah! She and Nicolas were always told 'you can't challenge that' [adverse homelessness application decisions and gatekeeping]

Lily: Yeah… We were always told that. 'You've got to be careful how you speak to them and you've got to be careful… because they're funding us'.

> Sebastian: Even just yesterday, [Nicolas' manager] was saying to Nicolas, he was really heated [about a particular adverse decision], and [the manager] said to him 'Nicolas, your reputation [with the local authority] is on the line'.

This refers to an awareness of the need for self-censorship, not dissimilar to those engendered by recent central government contracts issued to Citizens Advice to receive funding (McDermont and Kirwan 2018:121), which limit the scope for criticising central and local government. Such self-censorship responds to managers' perceived need to tread delicately around the local authority – CCHP's single biggest donor – given that, ultimately, it could withdraw already uncertain funding at the next possible contract review, seriously imperilling the organisation's continued ability to provide a service. This dependence reveals a key contradiction between the multiple ethical entanglements intrinsic to the role of CCHP caseworker. They feel uniquely charged with the responsibility to advocate vigorously in the interests of their clients; but because the opposing party is in fact their primary funders, they feel responsibility for risking the very existence of their role and those of their colleagues. Knowing this, Sebastian redoubles his celebration of Lily's style of advocacy for her clients, reacting to the telling off: 'Fuck that! Some things are bigger than rep. We're just humans at the end of the day'.

Anthropologists have observed that the state is particularly prone to inviting such moral paradoxes, since it itself is an 'ambiguous moral configuration' that can simultaneously enact both care and violence (Fassin 2015:xi; see also e.g., Jusionyte 2018) and evoke both hope and dread (Lea 2021). Rather than locating CCHP's double-bind to care and self-preserve as a manifestation of the state's categorical ability to madden writ large (Aretxaga 2003) – maddening though such predicaments are – it is clear that the binds that Lily and others faced are relationally mediated and produced in everyday situations (Thelen et al. 2014; Fuller and Bénéï 2000). These include the subtle telling off from a manager that Sebastian observed and the care that Lily feels when observing clients facing 'hostility' from various named council officials, many of whom acquired personal epithets in CCHP office talk as a 'star', a 'dick' or otherwise depending on how they responded to clients' needs. At the core of this is not so much the internal conflict 'at the heart of the state' (Fassin et al. 2015), but, rather, a relational triad: between caseworkers, their clients and council officials. In this, CCHP's role is Janus-faced, relating humanly to beneficiaries and as persuasively as viable to their local authority counterparts.

CCHP, then, is not easily characterised as a straightforward agent of the state operating as its shadow (Wolch 1990) nor of its putatively neoliberal policies. Its relationship with the state is profoundly interactive and personalised in a similar manner to ordinary citizens who evaluate the merits of, engage with, and possibly co-opt the state depending on how it aligns with their own personalised life projects (Alexander 2002; Koch 2018). As Jonas, a former longstanding CCHP manager once disclosed to me, 'do I have sympathy for the local authority? No, I don't. I can't. Because to me at CCHP, we're seeing the people who are suffering. And just my principles, my morals, my values, my beliefs, means that I believe that everybody deserves a home'. This relational and personal recognition of suffering, informed by moral conviction, is what makes CCHP, as Jonas put it, 'distinct from the local authority'. He is subtly claiming that the local authority is not similarly attuned to suffering, so does not similarly perceive the need to alleviate it and is perhaps even responsible for it in the first place. Dismissing the pretence of the partnership ideal of New Public Management (see Hood 1991) – the model of the CCHP-state relationship – Jonas continued: 'I think the only time that I genuinely felt that we were equal partners around the table was at the very beginning of COVID and lockdown'. Jonas here is referring to a longstanding feeling of asymmetry between CCHP and the local authority, recounting one case to me in which its commissioners had required him – at short notice – to write and redraft over one hundred pages of CCHP internal policy documents (relating to, for example, health and safety, safeguarding, business contingency, data failure, risks, recruitment, gifts and so on) as a condition of continued funding for two key casework posts.[31] Jonas described the process as a 'bloody tough kick'. He had also observed to me that there was a smokescreen of 'politics' which meant that he was never told the reasons why other Castlebury industry players (such as SHIH and the YMCA) were given contracts on significantly more preferential terms than CCHP. He described this as feeling 'shafted big time'.

In sum, Jonas claims that CCHP and the local authority are essentially different kinds of institution, because each of them enacts antithetical values. In doing so, he draws similar fault lines to those that English council estate residents might do in relation to elected politicians. Koch (2017) observes that residents construct an 'us' in relation to 'them' politicians, because the latter lack the attributes that residents view as essential to be a locally

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[31] The primary – if not sole – purpose of these documents is to satisfy funding requirements. They are seldom, if ever, referred to or utilised in the everyday business of CCHP, even in cases when they are ostensibly relevant. Frontline workers and managers were unaware of their content and even their existence. Indeed, they are nearly always only accessed to update them again around the funding renewal deadlines of the local authority or other institutional donors.

valued person, such as caring for the upkeep of the local environment and showing dedication to being a member of residents' social networks. Similarly, CCHP's ontological difference is predicated on its professedly genuine care for its constituents – enacted in the relational practice of witnessing – in explicit contrast to the council's perceived lack thereof. Scaling up beyond Lily, Jonas and even CCHP, this represents a positive feedback loop in which homeless charities and government institutions seem to 'make up' each other (cf. Hacking 1986) and the wider industry. A cycle of state failure and virtuous charity, this entrenches caseworkers' caring convictions – their unique selling point – at the same time that the possibilities for them to enact care are simultaneously funded and constrained by the state.

In light of this 'nigh-on impossibility', then, how else might frontline workers channel their vocational will to care in the industry? This is where the journey through the homeless pathway continues, leaving the CCHP office to return briefly to the 'the streets'. To the majority of CCHP's clients – those who are deemed 'non-statutory' – the advice is to embark on a winding circuit of various homeless service providers. If the client reports being a rough sleeper, then the first step of this circuit is to expect the arrival of Ryan and his outreach colleagues.

For outreach workers who are employed by state-funded NGOs, a different variant of vocational tragedy exists. One example is how the role requires them to become a quasi-immigration officer, which is putatively at odds with workers' will to care. This refers to the role's oblique inclusion by central government to contribute to the 'hostile environment'. Coined by the then Home Secretary (and later Prime Minister) Theresa May in 2012, the hostile environment is the UK Home Office's flagship policy of immigration deterrence. Its charter, put briefly, is to repel and expel 'illegal immigrants' from the UK by heightened recourse to state force (deportations and detentions) and heightened surveillance of the UK populace (for example, when opening a bank account, starting work or letting a home). It has also engendered heightened immigration conditionality for welfare benefits, encompassing EU/EEA nationals. For example, since April 2014 until the introduction of the EU Settlement Scheme in August 2019, out-of-work EU/EEA nationals were rendered an ineligible class of welfare claimant, excluding them from access to Housing Benefit and its successor, Universal Credit housing costs.[32] Legal researchers have observed that the recorded incidence of EU/EEA nationals rough sleeping in London, for one, has increased following these welfare

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[32] The EU Settlement Scheme entitled EU/EEA nationals who proved 5 years' continuous residency in the UK to 'settled status', an immigration status that carried similar welfare rights to UK citizens.

reforms (Demars 2017:8). One of the hallmarks of the 'hostile environment', then, has been to disperse immigration enforcement unevenly across state, society and market; and this has variously taken place through compulsory state-NGO information sharing and fines for non-enactment of immigration checks.

As the next section demonstrates, the outreach worker role plays a fraught part in the 'hostile environment' due to the possibility that sensitive information about 'deportable' (De Genova 2002) beneficiaries might be shared with the Home Office. This is a double-bind that emerges from state sponsorship. The next section depicts this as one of the vocational tragedies written into the business of ending homelessness.

Tinkering against a hostile environment

I took a keen interest in the kinds of inspiration that propelled frontline workers to take up their roles. For many I befriended, bringing humanitarianism home was a recurrently cited personal justification for their work.[33] With Radio X playing in the car during a typical outreach shift in late 2019, Harry, Ryan's SHIH outreach colleague, reconstructed his trajectory to me. He reminded me that before being an outreach worker in SHIH – his first gig in the industry – he was a senior volunteer in Calais' refugee camps, coordinating the provision of aid to its inhabitants. It was a devotional undertaking: Harry had served in this role for over a year and viewed himself as up against the flagrant 'police brutality' in those camps that, he told me, wrought regular harassment. This was not a self-aggrandising discourse, however. Harry said that he was familiar with the critiques of the ambivalent role that he was playing: 'managing' the problem, not resolving 'the causes', he told me, which he saw as a 'parallel' to his current role as an outreach worker. But this did not deter him even after leaving Calais from being an ardent opponent of the politics of migration and a proponent of what he viewed as Britain's 'responsibility' for it. Immediately 'after Calais', as he put it, he assumed his current post in SHIH. He observed that he was not the first of his SHIH colleagues to have made the switch. In a characteristically self-aware manner, he observed to me that saying 'I was in Calais' as a self-apparent response to the question 'What got you into this job?' has become 'cliché'.

Despite his self-critiques, Harry's earlier experiences as a humanitarian worker comprise a key part of how he views himself, now colliding with the professional

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[33] Indeed, Elle, the manager of the Sanctuary in Castlebury who we meet in the next chapter, introduced herself at several volunteering induction sessions as a Calais returnée.

expectations of his outreach role. I offer one example of such a fraught expectation. As an outreach worker, Harry was required to specify the 'nationality' of all newly identified rough sleepers – even in the absence of the subject's self-identification or consent – on a computer database. The database also consists of an individual rough sleeper's name, 'sleep site', apparent 'support needs' and a brief description of his appearance among other factors. This database records SHIH's performance as a service provider to the local authority and it serves as one of the main sources to determine the incidence of rough sleeping locally, among possibly more insidious functions.

Harry speculated that this database also represented collusion with the Home Office's Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) department, reminding me with a quiet disgust that rough sleepers on one similar database in Central London had become targets for deportation. This refers to instances of 'information sharing' that reached the headlines throughout 2017 (see e.g., Corporate Watch 2017; Taylor 2017) between the Home Office's ICE department and outreach personnel working in several homeless charities commissioned by the London Mayoralty as well as Brighton and Hove City Council (*The Argus* 2017). Justified by the Home Office's dubious re-interpretation of EU/EEA rights to freedom of movement, 'EEA rough sleepers' were invented in May 2016 as a novel class of immigration enforcement target, being construed as people who were expressly 'abusing' these rights. This was an unprecedented legal construction compared to the approach taken in the rest of the EU (Demars 2017:2). Virtually all of the subsequent removals and detentions in the most active phase of enforcement action specifically concerned those from Central and Eastern European member states (Demars 2017:21).[34] The intelligence for these enforcement actions was at least partly derived from their subjects' inclusion in equivalent outreach databases as the one that Harry works with (Demars 2017; Corporate Watch 2017). The blanket presumption that EU/EEA rough sleepers are deportable solely on the grounds of their rough sleeping status was later ruled unlawful in a landmark judgment in December 2017.[35] However, this judgment left open the possibility of future ICE involvement – on a case-by-case basis – that neither systematically targets rough sleepers nor discriminates based on member state nationality. This followed a backlash from critical commentators and NGOs,

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[34] According to Home Office disclosures, in the most active phase of EEA rough sleeper enforcement actions by ICE (May 2016 and October 2016), 92.5% of recorded visits were to the sleep sites of rough sleepers of the following recorded nationalities: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (Demars 2017:21). Subsequent to these visits, 96% of deportations and detentions were of nationals of those EU member states (ibid.)

[35] R (On the Application of Gureckis) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2017] EWHC 3298 (Admin).

including Liberty (Barnes 2017) and the Advice on Individual Rights in Europe Centre (2017). Many of these critiques – including one from 'within' the industry, namely Crisis (Downie 2017) – explicitly denounced the role that various outreach services played in facilitating such information sharing.

By the time Harry occupied his post and shared his reflections with me in autumn 2019, the relationship between his inputting of data (as required by his role) and the subsequent negative effects was ambiguous. Moreover, the introduction of the post-Brexit EU Settlement Scheme had the somewhat paradoxical effect of affording some out-of-work EU/EEA nationals a passport to quasi-citizenship that they previously did not have, rendering them a less 'deportable' class. In addition, as Demars' (2017:44) study of ICE enforcement actions against EU/EEA rough sleepers suggests, it is impossible to directly trace or predict the effects of a particular individual rough sleeper's inclusion into these databases or to identify the geographical extent of enforcement action. In other words, the highly technical nature of the enforcement regime and its uneven geographical coverage mean that the effects of outreach workers' data inputting in Holmsey were highly unpredictable and difficult to trace. The opaque nature of specific information sharing arrangements and the fact that the data has the potential to assume a subsequent life of its own unbeknownst to the outreach worker inspires a plausible fear of harming beneficiaries in the very process of registering them.

Harry seemed to suspect as much, that his role might possibly have the insidious effect of making its beneficiaries 'deportable'. When I asked him whether he thought his data entries might 'go to the Home Office' as they did in the Central London reports in 2016, he responded that he did not know. He continued that where he suspected that declaring a person's nationality on the database might increase the person's deportability, he told me that he used the 'Other' option to confound the mechanism, realising that such an option was available by scrolling through the drop-down menu.

The role of outreach worker, then, on one level, demands a tragic kind of misrecognition that is at odds with the care upon which it is predicated, because it requires its workers to transform their clients into bureaucratic objects by inserting them on a system feared to effect deportations. At the same time, this is a necessary condition for them to be properly registered as charity beneficiaries and for the very funding of Harry's role. It recasts Harry in the role of a quasi-immigration officer, a subject position which he consciously

seeks to elude. Because it is solely the outreach worker's ability to enrol a rough sleeper onto this database after the 'first bedded down contact' – an individualised practice of witnessing – he does have this capacity to prevent becoming complicit with the Home Office 'hostile environment' charter that has become a condition of many organisations' receipt of funding from the state.[36] This affords Harry the ability to 'tinker' with the database interface (Mol et al. 2010:14-15) inspired by his own politics and ethics, one 'style' of negotiating vocational tragedy (Clarke 2012). It represents a form of 'experimentation' (Mol et al. 2010:13), where Harry triangulates the possibilities afforded by the code, the division of labour, his own sense of right and a pre-emptive racialisation of the person. This, then, is one way in which the perhaps inevitable dehumanisation inherent in rule-based regimes of helping others (Clarke 2012:108) is consciously negotiated.

At the same time, I observed workers recognise that they themselves had become tragically misrecognised by their beneficiaries. This takes me one step along the 'homeless pathway' to another origin story: Ann's reconstruction of how she became a shift leader in the Sanctuary night shelter at its first opening in September 2018.

The limits of sanctuary

Resembling a process of epiphany, Ann recounted how she became 'addicted' to the job, 'addicted to volunteering' and 'addicted to the night shelter'. Her recollection features the first Sanctuary guest with whom Ann became acquainted – Harper – whom Ann described as never 'engaging with services'. Ann recalled that she had first encountered Harper rough sleeping during an informal walkaround in Castlebury town centre. With the important objective of publicising the Sanctuary's grand opening to prospective guests, the walkaround was headed by Martha – a second-level manager in CCHP, the Sanctuary's parent organisation. Ann remarked with pride that she had 'coaxed' Harper into visiting the Sanctuary that night by pleading personally with him in the town centre to come 'just for a little bit of soup [because] it's really nice'. Ann continued her story with a glow. She recalled that after Harper had – to her happy astonishment – eaten some of the soup, he asked her if she would 'tuck him into bed'. She did this happily, she noted, now wanting to go for what she called the 'hat trick': convincing Harper to visit the CCHP main office to honour a meeting with Martha for a casework appointment. Ann told me that she knew she shouldn't

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[36] This is because Harry's answer to the 'nationality' question cannot be authenticated in any case without another outreach worker in another locality encountering the same person during an outreach shift, somehow verifying his nationality status and cross-checking all this on the database: cumulatively, a low likelihood.

make him 'promise that he will'. Instead, when tucking Harper in, Ann elicited a simpler 'promise that he'll try'. Ann concluded the vignette succinctly, shooting me a confident glance. 'He did make it', she told me. Shortly after, Ann proved her will to care to Elle, it seems, since she offered Ann a paid staff post at the Sanctuary.

In Ann's words, this was the 'first time' that Harper felt 'cared for' and 'really supported'. In her reflection, this transformation – into an 'addict' of the vocation – occurs at the same time that she also effects a 'change' in Harper's life. A story of her moral becoming as a frontline worker, this is about the moment that Ann recognises and enacts her own will to care, palpably changing Harper and herself in the interaction.

Yet Ann later learned that the role of supervising the night shelter casts her in a position of authority where she in fact becomes recognised by even her most liked guests as an agent of exclusion, not care. In mid-January 2019, shift leaders handed out flyers to their guests that declared that the Sanctuary would unexpectedly close – coinciding with a pronounced spell of cold weather – in just two weeks' time. Ann had earlier observed to me in hushed tones that the Vineyard Church's caretaker regularly accused the Sanctuary of failing to be good tenants and spread rumours to this effect. These allegations plainly exasperated Ann, who worked the most shifts there and endeavoured to maintain the venue's order to the best of her ability. Instead of being an open-access, thirty occupancy shelter located in the Vineyard Church, the flyers announced that the Sanctuary would soon become a closed-access ten occupancy shelter located across seven churches in Castlebury. Although the flyers did not explain the reasons behind this change in operations, they invited Sanctuary guests to register as a client at the CCHP office to seek housing advice. Even Sanctuary staff members lacked information on some of the consequences of this change. 'Can they cut our hours like this?' one mused to another during an overnight shift; another wondered if this meant that their employment would abruptly end.

On the final night of the Sanctuary's operations at the Vineyard Church, Ann worked her final shift in the shelter, spent largely consoling frustrated guests about the closure. Entering the kitchen to prepare a cup of coffee to sustain her through the small hours – by now, it was about 2 a.m. – she ran into Tsvetelina, an intermittent sleeper and a guest who Ann admitted was one of her 'favourites'. Given the closure of the Sanctuary and her lack of having anything lined up the following day, Tsvetelina asked Ann in a gently broken voice 'Where can I stay?' Tsvetelina had already sought housing advice from the CCHP office,

which led to her enrolment in – and then almost immediate eviction from – the Noah night shelter shortly after.[37] Knowing this – and earlier remarking to me the 'appalling' unfairness of Tsvetelina's eviction from Noah – Ann was speechless and seemed devastated. 'I'm sorry', Tsvetelina continued. This apology triggered a sudden wave of emotion over Ann, who found a few words. 'No, don't be sorry to me! It's not your fault!' The conversation ending shortly after and with Tsvetelina out of earshot, Ann closed the kitchen door and turned to me, infuriated. 'Fucking churches!', she exclaimed repeatedly, alluding to the reason why the Sanctuary was abruptly closing. Rummaging for a nicotine gum, she continued: 'What can I do? I only make the fucking teas and coffees! Poor Tsvetelina, she's done nothing wrong'.

Ann seemed to believe that Tsvetelina was admitting guilt, and therefore issuing to Ann a personal apology, for her renewed homelessness. This moment crystallised into what Jarett Zigon (2007) calls a 'moral breakdown'. His concept refers to a conscious moment out of the flow of the everyday in which an actor is presented with a 'dilemma, difficulty or trouble' and becomes enfolded 'uncomfortably and uncannily in the situation-at-hand'; a type of experience in which 'the very process of stepping-out and responding to the breakdown in various ways alters, even if ever so slightly, the aspect of being-in-the-world' upon return (Zigon 2007:138). Given that Ann viewed Tsvetelina as 'one of the good ones', as she put it, and that she felt that Tsvetelina had been unfairly treated in Noah, Ann did not see a reason why Tsvetelina needed to apologise, let alone to her. Ann regretted that Tsvetelina expressed remorse to her as an authority figure – she did not want the apology, which only seemed to deject her. To Ann, the roles were misrecognised: 'the churches' and Noah's regime are in fact responsible for Tsvetelina's homelessness, not she or Tsvetelina. At the same time that Ann located the cause of Tsvetelina's homelessness, she reframed the capacity and effects of her care. Compared to when she had first become a shift leader, Ann now expressed profound disenchantment with the role, angry at what she perceived as its intrinsic constraints: the Sanctuary's dependence on 'the churches' for a space to host the shelter and on Noah for serving as the next stop on Castlebury's homeless circuit. These constraints are written into the Sanctuary's charter as a winter night shelter enabled by the RSI, funded only on a short-term basis and limited to the costs of paying for staff and venues. As a result, the Sanctuary relied largely on local churches (to host its nightly operations) and Noah (for its guests'

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[37] Chapter 4 more closely examines the controversial circumstances in which Tsvetelina was excluded from Noah by its manager, Kev, who made a 'spectacle' out of her in a performance of authoritarian humiliation.

forward mobility). These stakeholders were the central and only targets for Ann's critique, even though the insecurity of the Sanctuary's operations and Tsvetelina's 'pathway out of homelessness' arguably stem at least as much from the incomplete nature of the RSI as Noah's disciplinary regime and the Vineyard Church's changeable buy-in.

Becoming a machine?

The tensions between enacting a will to care in these various roles and the inadvertent forms of misrecognition that result, then, are an occupational hazard across all these roles. I have suggested that these arise due to constraints that are written into the industry's charter but that also enable its performance in the first place. I have also emphasised that these forms of misrecognition are experienced consciously and interactively. Lily offers a final description of how she perceived the labour process, emphasising its conveyor-like rhythms:

> During drop-in, you have 3 hours to see God knows how many people? […] You're looking sometimes like four or five […] and then you're trying to tell me that I'm supposed to see this person and while I know there's four more people waiting for me, I have to wait, I have to put them to the back of my mind and go and put my notes on the system for the person that I've just spoken to. I've got to dump all of that out of my brain onto the computer and then as quickly as I can and then go and see the next person. […] How am I supposed to do my job properly or give myself a chance to process any of what's just been said to me? They expect you to be superhuman. I think there was an expectation to be a machine […] do it all properly and not really feel anything […] I think because [Lily's manager] had done it, there was a lot of 'well I used to do it, so what are you bitching about? Why can't you do it so quickly and as good as me?'

This speaks to similar pressures faced by legal aid immigration practitioners (James and Killick 2012) who are prone to 'compassion fatigue', stemming from a confluence of simultaneous factors: an intensification of the workload, an increasingly arbitrary Home Office bureaucracy at the same time as caseworkers commonly felt even more empathy towards their clients. Such compassion fatigue, James and Killick (2012:436-437) note, can result in the departure of workers to other forms of legal employment that are less onerous on the self. In CCHP, however, the normative ideal of the will to care means that consciously burnt out workers who contemplate such a switch commonly fear that they are 'ditching' the organisation and their beneficiaries, inducing as Lily put it 'a huge amount of guilt' when

contemplating another job and especially after she departed the organisation; this fear often inspires others, perversely, to stay in post, heightening the potential for feeling alienated.

One strategy is to frame the role as a kind of game in which one seeks the 'wins', evoking Michael Burawoy's (1979:46-73) classic account of 'making out' on the shop floor of an engine factory in Chicago. Burawoy's term refers to how machine operators in the factory valued their work – and were reimbursed – on the basis of piece-rate incentive structure. Each worker exclusively commanded a particular machine on the shop floor, enabling them to 'own' their work and incentivising workers to produce at an optimum rate. Although such parallels between mechanisation and casework have their limits, they draw attention to the caseworking norm that each advisor 'owns' a case from start to finish and comes to identify with its successes and failures, enabling individual satisfaction from a positive outcome and exposure to personal blame when other staff can 'make out' just as well (as Lily alludes to in her manager's critiques). Moreover, it points to the production line rhythms Lily articulates earlier: a perceived need to process people as quickly as possible to maintain a steady work flow and the occasionally cyclical rhythm of repeating casework with the same clients. Further, it attends to how the shorthand terms for clients – as an example of a casework category – come to denote the possible satisfaction derived from a 'win'. The constraints of the role engender the possibility of heightened satisfaction. This is how Lily narrated, with a tinge of wistfulness and sarcasm, what originally kept her in the job after her first encounter with the local authority when it declined to accommodate the pregnant lady in Castlebury Common:

> Lily: The bug… So I remember the first time that I got a priority need case. I remember that *distinctly*. And I was *absolutely* buzzing. I was buzzing. I was, like, the best high ever. And he was buzzing as well the guy. It helped that he was so excited and it didn't take a lot of work. He had severe asthma […] so they [the Council] weren't fucking with that.

The personal 'ownership' of individual clients' cases, then, amplifies a sense of conflict with the local authority – of 'I' versus 'they' – in which the wins are felt perhaps as intensely as the losses. Such wins are expressed using a language of acquisition: Lily 'got' a priority need case; similarly, other CCHP colleagues equally expressed the losses as not being able to 'get' accommodation or benefits for their clients (see Introduction).

Similar feelings of alienation, however, can also emerge from within one's own organisation and its division of labour. Sebastian depicted to me a case in which he felt frustrated at how his colleagues seemed to stay in their own lane even though he went beyond his in order to care for beneficiaries from a different CCHP service to his own. Approaching the doorstep of the CCHP office on a crisp Thursday morning with his keys and a coffee in hand, he described being greeted outside the building by two HEDI clients: one of whom, Clarissa, had severe hearing impairment and intellectual disability; the other, Keira, was recently evicted with 'her whole life in two suitcases' in tow, reportedly having spent the night outside the office in anticipation of its morning opening. Sebastian was the first to arrive that morning, and his hands were already full. Keira was eagerly catching Sebastian up on her meeting with SHIH and seeking a water refill, he recalled, and Clarissa was sobbing to him, her phone having run out of battery. Two of his colleagues – Jacob and James – arrived to the office porch shortly after him before, he narrated with disappointment, 'walking right past' and 'totally leaving me out there [alone] to speak to them [Clarissa and Keira]'. Jacob and James then closed the door on Sebastian, frustrating him further. He now had to 'juggle' his phone, his coffee, Keira's water bottle, Clarissa's phone and charger at the same time that he attempted to open the office front door. He wished his colleagues would just 'give [him] something [to go on]' instead of brushing past, he recalled, concluding:

> If we can't give someone rough sleeping, going through the devastating trauma with that, a chat for ten minutes, a phone charge and a coffee, then why the fuck are we in this job? And I know what will happen if I say anything about it – [his manager] will say it's my fault for spending time out there, so the people out there come to expect me to help them. But I'm sorry, I would rather that than they think no one gives a shit. How bizarre is it that showing kindness to the people we work with isn't standard?

He would later observe that he confronted Jacob about this, receiving a shrug and a jab for 'caring too much; that's your problem'. James, too, apologised, regretting that he did not 'have the bandwidth' at the time.

Sebastian's disappointment represents a critique of his colleagues' seeming failure to care not only for Clarissa and Keira, but also for him. In the opposite direction, Jacob accused him for caring too much. They each questioned the other person's will to care, variously attributing blame. This speaks to the difficulty in reconciling divergent and personalised notions of care within even the same organisation, conjuring up forms of misrecognition and

relations of antagonism analysed throughout this chapter. However, Jacob's shrug at Sebastian's complaint uniquely indicates that caring *too* much can also expose an actor to blame, rather than the lack of care variously attributed so far in this thesis. The following chapter revisits this issue from a different angle by exploring how Sanctuary workers discredited volunteers' care (as a discrete category of labour) as improper.

Conclusion: Landscapes of antagonism

This chapter has argued that the various contradictions written into frontline workers' roles become enacted as moral tragedy in their pursuits of care. It has examined workers' conscious confrontation of these contradictions, the working styles that they develop in response to them and, particularly, how they attribute and assume responsibility for the negative effects of their labour. A common thread across these vocational tragedies (Clarke 2012) is a sense of unease about the possible consequences of enrolling their beneficiaries into the industry in the first place, what Lily called the work of 'institutionalising people'. Yet the alternatives to 'institutionalising people' appear rarely feasible (the activation of clients' legal entitlements to state assistance) or unattractive to say the least (doing nothing) in any case. This yields pervasive and recurrent feelings that resemble what Anne-Meike Fechter (2016:235) describes as 'moral distress': 'knowing the right course of action, but not being able to pursue it due to institutional constraints [or, more specifically] the impossibility to achieve development goals; the apparently arbitrary nature of donor funding priorities, or the institutional limits of their own organisation'. Here the right course of action is not so easily palpable on the frontline, amplifying workers' expressions of futility through, for example, the revolving door metaphor that Lily invoked or Ann's anguish that all she does is 'make the fucking teas and coffees'. At the same time, it has striking resonance with Fechter's (2016:235) proposition that 'experiencing such distress is an implicit, unwritten part of the aid workers' contract – not just with their employer, but perhaps also symbolically with the general public'.

In this context, the assignment of blame in varying directions is unsurprisingly common. This seems to chime with Herzfeld's (1993) influential argument about bureaucracies that cross-cultural notions of 'the system' function as a ready repository for actors' blame in such a way that excuses their own personal shortcomings, a pattern enacted hierarchically in bureaucracies themselves. Similarly, in his insightful analysis of *Aramis* – a failed high-modernist public transit project in Paris in the 1980s – Latour (1996:74 cited by

Mosse 2005:157-158) suggests that it is when projects fail that actors start 'pointing a finger and blaming someone or something', suggesting that these are speech acts that emerge in cases of failure – an attempt at self-exoneration.

Yet here, the seeming failure of frontline workers' everyday endeavours – and the sense that their charter is an impossible one – does not only result in their blaming others. Instead, what also commonly takes place is a kind of self-blame or assumption of responsibility, justified by reference to the real-life suffering that they perceive everyday in the lives of their beneficiaries. This engenders a situation that both challenges the will to care at the same time as it legitimises it, transforming it into a product and producer of moral indignation. Rather than producing wholesale indifference (Herzfeld 1993), the will to care is a highly emotive cultural force that promises to transform such indignation into action (Rosaldo 1993). It sometimes targets what it commonly constructs as the state's indifference and 'rejection of a common humanity' (Herzfeld 1993:1); it sometimes critiques the wrong kind of caring performance. In doing so, the will to care poses a potentially persuasive source of moral authority as well as a site of contestation. The following chapter probes one such conflict that takes place within organisations: how (paid) frontline workers positioned their will to care as more legitimate than that of (unpaid) volunteers.

In sum, this chapter has shown how everyday experiences of tragedy emerge out of – and constitute – what Janet Newman (2014) describes as 'landscapes of antagonism'. Her concept focuses on how local authorities in the UK under austerity are prismatic sites which refract and reproduce wider political and social tensions. It recalls, for one, Loveland's observation (2018:319) that, in the business of ending homelessness, they occupy a particularly 'unhappy position' where central government decisions (such as the depletion of rental subsidy for low-income benefits' claimants, fiscal budgetary constraints and the effects of the Right to Buy) are imposed from the 'top-down', unpredictably catalysing increased demand for local authority services from the 'bottom-up'. In the case of CCHP – receiving increasing sums from central and local government as a response to such demand – its workers regularly encounter the contradictions of the work of holding the local authority to account but whilst lacking the effective capacity to do so, a predicament which commonly leads to the projection of antagonism back towards its funders. In the case of SHIH outreach workers, their labour has been somewhat insidiously co-opted by central government to dovetail its hostile environment charter from the top-down, leading to a differently 'unhappy' situation on the local level where compliance is demanded (and can possibly be eluded). In

the case of Sanctuary workers, the hardwired constraints of their service (as written in by their central government funders) cultivate an uneasy dependence on other limitedly resourced local agencies, transforming them into nearby targets of blame when their inadequacies become apparent.

Although Forbess and James (2014) observe somewhat similar adversarial state-NGO arrangements in the case of British professional legal aid workers, this chapter has presented a distinguishing case. As legal aid professionals, their challenges against the decisions of state agencies – even those that fund them – are buttressed by the professional belief that they are 'actively defining, through their cases, how the law should function in a fair society, thus potentially making legal history' through the common law system (ibid.:78); and they seek to leverage the tensions between the state's 'labyrinthine multiplicity of different agencies' (ibid.:74) as well as the arbitrary and inconsistent nature of decision-making by low-level state officials on behalf of their clients. CCHP, meanwhile, is neither legal-aid funded nor composed of legally trained professionals, even though their labour might initially resemble legal advice. Its advice workers lack the same conception of the law as such a vehicle for social change. In the absence of a common effective commitment to such a collectivising professional charter – access to legal representation and to justice – frontline workers in the homeless industry enact highly personalised and individualising renditions of the will to care, leading to moral distress and various forms of misrecognition. Extending beyond CCHP's advice service, interactions at the various interfaces of the state, other service providers and even within one's own organisation are experienced as tragedy, becoming projected as everyday relations of antagonism in multiple directions.

In these circumstances, Venugopal's (2018:245) observations of the social construction of failure in the development industry are apt: frontline workers' experience of tragedy 'sustains the larger enterprise by keeping the wheel of […] intervention and disappointment spinning'.

Feelings of futility: interlude

A Friday late afternoon, the CCHP office was gearing down for the bank holiday weekend. The majority of its staff were wrapped up in various plenary meetings; its drop-in was now closed until Tuesday morning. Meanwhile, Sebastian attended to a cascade of financial spreadsheets. He is one of CCHP's most experienced workers. He sat alone in the main office; for a pleasant change, he was not tied up in the meetings that were occupying his other colleagues.

The doorbell rang; it was now 4:30pm. Sebastian welcomed into the empty waiting room a woman, who he would later describe as Arabic and 'four foot ten, almost child-like'. Communication was not easy. Sebastian quickly discerned that the woman, Clarissa, is profoundly hard-of hearing and relies on lip reading whilst nonetheless articulating English well; Sebastian wondered if the woman has an intellectual disability. She presented him what looks like a ream of official paperwork: documents from the Department for Work and Pensions that show her maximum entitlement to disability benefits and NHS-headed letters showing that she needs a cochlear implant. Sebastian began to learn that the woman was being evicted on Tuesday by her live-in landlord. As a lodger, she has no ready means of contesting or delaying the eviction. She visited the Council housing offices for assistance that afternoon, Sebastian discovered, before being told that she should instead visit CCHP as the Council cannot help her.

Despite arguably being CCHP's most knowledgeable staff member, Sebastian did not know how to respond. The only housing advisor on site was in an uninterruptible meeting; and so was Sebastian's manager, Jonas. Sebastian interrupted anyway to be told that the woman would have to return on Tuesday for the drop-in between 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sebastian did not think this was a reasonable solution: the woman would have a critical medical appointment at 10:30 a.m. in a hospital one hour away that day; and drop-in is unpredictably busy, sometimes closing early if there is a shortage of advisors – as would be the case on Tuesday. Sebastian feared that this was a non-solution that would place her in grave peril. So Sebastian rejoined the woman with a list of housing solicitors' contact details in his hand, and they attempted to telephone each one without any positive response. This was the product of local authority 'cruelty', surmised Sebastian; and he felt profoundly unsupported by his employers, being left to his own devices to assist the woman without any debrief, aftercare or even the

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means to do so. 'She cried to me and I cried with her', Sebastian would later recall to me, continuing: 'I felt so helpless'.

Chapter 3

Moral authority, hierarchies of labour and the professional work of transformation

The business of ending homelessness is a fragile line of professional work. Within the organisations I worked in across Castlebury and Axlow more widely, two types of labour – paid and voluntary – coexisted uneasily. These organisations contained a normative division of labour in which paid workers typically construed their unpaid counterparts as below them in organisational hierarchies, claiming authority over their exclusive domain of work and over the definition of those boundaries in the first place. At the heart of these claims was that paid workers possessed a privileged perspective and capacity to help their homeless constituents that morally positioned them, in their role as the agents of their organisation, as their guardians. Not infrequently, waged colleagues saw their unpaid counterparts as a challenge to their right to claim this role as guardian of 'the homeless', emerging from what workers perceived as some volunteers' apparent disagreement with the hierarchical division of labour and the moral justification for it.

Paying close attention to how volunteers were 'problematised' as such, this chapter unpacks ethnographically the 'jurisdictional boundaries' (Evans 2021:989; see also Boyer 2008) between paid workers and volunteers in Castlebury's homeless industry, supplemented by my own experiences seeking to gain access as a researcher-volunteer to a homeless assessment hub ('the Hub') in East Axlow in August 2018. It shows that paid workers' claims to know best are tightly bound up with how they view the purpose of their labour, the moral authority of their organisations and the trust that they seek to cultivate every day in their interactions with clients. Seen in this light, they seek to assert the legitimacy of their professional identity: as a distinct group of workers devoted to the public good by enacting a seemingly unique charter to end homelessness in an institutionalised context. Chapter 2 suggested that the impossibility of this charter engendered – and was situated within – a fraught economy of blame and outrage. It showed how workers' will to care engendered a

sense of conflict and detachment between themselves and other organisations that claim to pursue the public good. This chapter extends this analysis from the vantage point of *intra*organisational relations, focussing on how workers positioned themselves within their workplaces as 'above' volunteers. It offers examples of the ways in which workers commonly construed volunteers as a vehicle of blame.

I draw on ethnographic accounts of the everyday relations between paid and unpaid labour in settings of the public good (e.g., Muehlebach 2012) that show that this construction of the professional paid worker and the unprofessional volunteer is often profoundly unstable and recursively defined. This instability of professional identity played out in my fieldwork in particular. Professionalism is typically defined by the enactment of expertise and is premised on the standardisation of practices and codes of conduct, corporate forms of accreditation, an adherence to a coherent body of technical knowledge and membership of overarching corporate associations (Hull 2020). Yet across the English homeless industry, none of these features evenly apply nor could they neatly point to what makes paid workers different from volunteers. In Castlebury, workers come 'as they are' with a heterogeneous set of qualifications and CVs (and the majority of my colleagues, including some managerial ones, were new to the industry as I was); the induction training provided is in-house and largely informal; there is a pronounced lack of unionisation or of an umbrella organisation for workers; and the labour contracts are typically fixed- and short-term, limiting the possibility of career longevity and progression. Exchange of workers and knowledge across the industry is somewhat rare in Castlebury. Altogether, this resembles the 'deskilling' and casualisation in the UK social care sector more generally (see Hayes 2017).

In the absence of these 'conventional' hallmarks of professional legitimacy, paid workers – on behalf of their homeless charities – claim moral authority over their labour jurisdiction by pointing to the distinct relations of trust that they seek to cultivate with their clients; and they view their agency as singularly capable of transforming their clients from 'homeless' to 'housed'. For them, volunteers posed a potential obstacle to forging such trusting relations. As I will show, workers' claims to professional authority derive not from technical expertise but instead on their claims of relational and moral expertise, and this is what can make their legitimacy fraught from the perspective of volunteers. This demonstrates workers' awareness that the status of '"professional" is always in the making' (Hull 2020:11). Hull's insight emerges from her review of the anthropology of professionals, which has, for example, demonstrated the fragility of the expert models contained in the blueprints of

international development policy, seeing them not as an easy enactment of 'hierarchies of knowledge' (Mosse 2005:4) but instead as complex relational accomplishments (Mosse 2011:11).

At the same time, this chapter presents a contrasting case study to those of professional health care (Hull 2020) or development expertise (Mosse 2011). In her landmark study, Tania Li (2007:4) examines how development planners in Indonesia's Sulawesi Highlands enacted the expert role of trustees, 'a position defined by the claim to know how others should live, to know what is best for them, to know what they need'. She suggests that trustees' interventions to improve such a target population – through the 'diagnoses' of problems and 'prescription' of solutions – rely on the practice of 'rendering technical' (ibid.: Ch. 4); and that it is through rendering technical that the boundaries between trustees and their beneficiaries are also drawn in the first place (ibid.:7). Using computational models and mapping exercises among other technologies, these planners selectively deployed various forms of agricultural science and economic ideals (such as biodiversity, sustainability, financial and agricultural productivity) to design, and then implement, specific technical interventions – for example, the distribution of pesticides and fertiliser and re-zoning land use. The stated purpose of these programmes was to improve villagers' purportedly deficient practices that, the planners presumed, were harming the landscape and inhibiting their potential in the process.

Instead of deriving their legitimacy from the diagnosis of their beneficiaries' supposed deficiencies as technical problems requiring technical solutions, this chapter shows how paid workers in the homeless industry presume the role of trustees by rendering their beneficiaries in *moral* terms. My colleagues' interventions, and claims to guardianship, do not draw on an equivalent repertoire of knowledge to the development planners in Sulawesi. Instead, they draw on an embodied sensibility for empathy, an experiential (rather than technical) technology; it is highly personalised and affective rather than computational or rational. The locus of Sanctuary workers' interventions is not the context or infrastructure in which their beneficiaries exist. It is precisely the inner selves of their beneficiaries: their charter is to develop a rapport with them in order to reconfigure their intentions, coaxing them to accept workers' care.

For paid workers, volunteers sat in a profoundly ambiguous grey area in this schema between trustee and beneficiary, making the 'unruly feelings' (see Giudici 2022) that they

sometimes attributed to volunteers a particularly insightful vantage point from which to unpack their own moral claims to trusteeship. The need to carve out the boundaries between workers and volunteers is heightened and made complicated by the fact that, unlike in the case of technical expertise, there are no immediately apparent barriers to doing the same work that paid workers did: cultivating relationships. Thus, paid workers purposefully sought to constrain volunteers' inclination to cultivate such relationships, constructing it as an improper practice of care and situating themselves as the experts policing the hierarchical boundaries of such practices. I argue, then, that their work of carving out their professional domain is *all* about managing relationships – those with their beneficiaries and with volunteers – relying significantly less on technical pretext than in the case of the development programmes that Li describes. I first demonstrate this by reflecting on my attempts to access the Hub as an especially ambiguous researcher-volunteer before attending to the flipside of the paid staff-volunteer relationship in my role as a newly recruited support worker in the Sanctuary in winter 2019/20.

The Hub

The East Axlow Hub functions similarly to CCHP's HEDI [the advice service] discussed in the preceding chapter. It is a state-funded project operated by advice staff who seek to assemble a pathway out of homelessness by assessing a client's eligibility for various schemes of assistance; this requires biographical work, obtaining and sifting through client documentation and advocating to different councils and other charities. There are a few interesting features that set the Hub apart from the HEDI, however. First, it is by design not a drop-in: it is a reception centre for outreach workers to drive 'newly verified' rough sleepers, that is to say, those who they encounter on their biweekly tours of East Axlow that have not previously been detected by another outreach worker. Second, clients can 'bed down' in the Hub, since it is open 24/7; and, in fact, it is a condition of clients' stay there that they spend the nights in the Hub and adhere to an abstinence approach. Third, the Hub's charter is for clients to need to stay for only 72 hours (although this time limit was virtually never met in reality, I found). The objective of the Hub, ultimately, is to provide its clients with a 'single service offer' [SSO] at the end of this putative 72-hour spell. This comprises shelter

accommodation, prospective LA assistance, private sector housing and national or international 'reconnection'.[38]

In August 2018, I visited the Hub where I was designated to serve as a volunteer for a site induction. Its advice workers seemed supportive of my research interests; they concurred that the Hub was 'fascinating' and 'relevant'. They recalled cases in which they advocated on behalf of clients to their councils of 'local connection', seeking to persuade these councils to accept their legal duty to house Hub clients under the Housing Acts. They bemoaned the conduct of particular councils, noting the intensity of their 'gatekeeping'. They also recounted the 'reconnections' they had undertaken. One had stood out. Sally, the advice worker leading my site induction, had accompanied a client with 'learning disabilities', 'possibly on the autism spectrum and had schizophrenia', by train back to his native Perth in Scotland. She had delivered him back to his family, who embraced him warmly, she told me, and who asked him 'where have you been?' Sally concluded proudly and relieved: 'It was a reconnection in every sense of the word'.

To conclude my site induction, Sally and I went through some boilerplate volunteer paperwork. One memo in the bundle caught her eye, and she read it out. 'I've been told you can't conduct your fieldwork here. You can't record observational data. You can only do contextual research'. The abruptness of this message made me uneasy, particularly since she had already indicated support for my presence as both a researcher and a volunteer. I asked Sally to clarify what was meant by 'contextual research'. She responded that she was rather puzzled herself: she did not know. I attempted to give an account of myself to Sally, telling her that I would anonymise all names and places and do my utmost to ensure that no one could be identified. She followed up by telling me that it was not her decision, it had come from a manager in 'head office' named Richard. Sally attempted in part to justify it before trailing off: 'I understand. We have to take care of clients… I'll get you in touch with Richard.' I was partly appeased by this; perhaps I could seek clarification from him and give an account of myself. Sally agreed. I decided not to commence volunteering at the Hub for the time being given this ambiguity; months passed before Richard and I had an email exchange, after a mutual contact prompted a response from him on my behalf.

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[38] This is a common industry euphemism for the controversial practice of sponsoring beneficiaries' travel 'back' to their 'place of origin' (read as their last settled accommodation), to a locality where friends and family reside or otherwise to their 'country of origin'. In cases such as the Hub, reconnection may represent the only 'offer' of assistance, depending on frontline workers' reading of a beneficiary's biography.

Apologising for the 'misunderstanding', Richard had responded to me that it was 'important that our clients can have full trust in us as an organisation, which means they must fully understand staff and volunteer roles, what will happen to anything they tell us, and what they can expect from us', continuing that my proposed role would be potentially 'confusing' to clients and risk their trust in the Hub as a service and 'in other volunteers'. I found it difficult to reconcile this explanation with my own perception of my labour, summarised below. I had felt somewhat summarily 'problematised'. With a hint of naivety, I took Richard's response quite personally, since it implied to me that I posed harm and that he knew better than me, even though I had already met Sally and her colleagues and received their consent. So I responded that I understood the nature and purpose of volunteer boundaries and that my fieldwork contained a host of safeguards precisely to avoid the issues he anticipated. In short, I was still a bit puzzled: what did he mean by the euphemism of 'contextual research'?

Some weeks passed before, by chance, I bumped into Richard at an Axlow-wide homeless research forum. I introduced myself to him in person for the first time and asked if he would be willing to discuss my research access. He was affable and obliging. He suggested that he and I talk over a much-needed coffee nearby, which he purchased for me. It was an opportunity finally, I thought, to give an 'accurate' account of myself and to elicit a justification from him. He readily offered one:

> […] what we need to focus on is boundaries. If you did fieldwork in [the Hub] in the way you proposed – collecting observational data by shadowing – it would be unclear to clients who you are and this would undermine their trust in us. Because you would be in contact with clients, but also privy to conversations about them in the office but also observing what goes on in [the Hub] as well.

> This is elevated by the fact that it's a really quick turnaround in [the Hub], we've only just gotten to know them and so it's really vital that we build that rapport. Because we're offering them an SSO – which isn't exactly like a take it or leave it offer – but it needs them to trust us and cooperate.

I responded that I understood this; but I retorted that it did not explain why volunteers *are* allowed in the Hub where surely they could equally use their own initiative to keep a written record of their observations. Richard responded that whilst that is true, volunteers at the Hub are subject to the Hub's organisational hierarchy and sign a code of conduct where they

undertake to maintain the confidentiality of what goes on. From the Hub's perspective, they can be trusted in the role. And hence, their presence can be assumed by everyone present in the Hub as enhancing rather than undermining the trust of clients at such a 'crucial time' in their homelessness pathway. Although our meeting did not result in my obtaining access to the Hub, Richard's explanation helped me relent, and I thanked him for his time.

Performing guardianship

Richard's performance of guardianship sought to defend the relational boundaries in the Hub in light of the ambiguity that I proposed in my own role. His claims to know best were enacted and premised on his anticipation of clients' loss of trust in the organisation (in the interactions in which I might have participated), deciding that this would not be in clients' interests. He alludes to the possibility that I might stymie the kinds of success story that Sally was first describing above; this is particularly heightened because of the pressurised environment in which clients need to accept the single service offers proposed to them – some of which, such as 'reconnections', are eminently controversial – or risk renewed homelessness. Although he anticipates the fragility of the legitimacy of such single service offers, he views worker-client rapport as the crucial means to secure clients' consent to such offers. If I were to inhabit the Hub, it was expected that I would accept the organisation's legitimacy as the final authority of these questions with Richard positioning himself as the definitive, collective voice of the organisation. This instance of 'gatekeeping' reveals that the organisation's agency to determine the arrangement of its relationships is hierarchically distributed: that Sally was not well-placed to rule on my presence; that she should – and did – defer to Richard, even though neither the justification for the decision nor its meaning was sufficiently communicated to her. All told, Richard sought to sustain – and ensure the continued legitimacy of – official interpretations of the Hub's work, viewing these as indispensable to its ability to enrol clients (Mosse 2005:Ch. 7). For him, this involved regulating the kinds of social interaction that could take place in the Hub and maintaining the right to do so.

What threads together the Hub, the Sanctuary and Noah, this chapter shows, is that they position their workers – in their role as institutional agents – as the 'righteous and rightful' (Bornstein and Sharma 2016) recipients of their beneficiaries' trust, deriving moral authority as such in opposition to volunteers. These intra-institutional struggles over who is legitimately entitled to beneficiaries' trust play out as a microcosm of a political dynamic

similar to that which Bornstein and Sharma (2016:77) find in India's public sphere, where state actors, various NGOs, business groups and grassroots activists 'posture themselves as defenders of rights and keepers of the public interest as they push their agendas and stake out distinctive positions'. Righteous and rightful politics takes place in an interactive and performative manner that exhibits increasingly recursive logics as each actor claims 'comparative advantage' over the other (ibid.:86). In the case of my study, this similarly played out within each of these three sites, both contributing to and legitimising paid workers' capacity to claim moral precedence in organisational hierarchies and the right to map out these hierarchies in the first place.

In the following section, I present how in-house training sessions in Castlebury communicated to volunteers the moral boundaries of the professional domain of paid workers, demanding volunteers' deference. These were attempts to construct and reiterate the 'jurisdictional boundaries' (Evans 2021:989) of paid work in contrast to that performed by their unpaid counterparts, enshrining Sanctuary and Noah as righteous and rightfully positioned to represent its beneficiaries' interests and to regulate the possible range of relationships. These pedagogical performances seek to enshrine this form of moral authority in the very process of enacting it, glossing volunteers as institutionally extrinsic.

'Noah is here for you'

May 2019. Noah's most experienced volunteers filed into the St Mark's training room on an uncharacteristically sunny Saturday morning in May. During a shift leaders' meeting some months earlier, Kev had asked Noah's senior volunteers if they wanted bespoke mental health training, tailored to the context of volunteering in the Noah shelter. There was unanimous agreement among them. Even though volunteers ordinarily underwent a rigorous in-house induction, they felt ill-equipped to deal with situations where guests exhibited mental distress. Kev was enthusiastic about this opportunity to impart his knowledge and thus help develop Noah's volunteers. Castlebury Borough Council already provided quarterly Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training for which any local resident or volunteer could register: it was a two-day course accredited by MHFA England, a commonly recognised body. In fact, Kev himself convened many of these courses in Castlebury – he was a licensed MHFA trainer. Because of this, he decided against subcontracting such a vital element of volunteer development to the Council. He told me that he would condense the pre-existing MHFA course for volunteers, omit what he saw as the 'irrelevant' bits and tailor the morning's

training so that it more adequately addressed dual diagnosis than the official version. After all, Kev reasoned to me, why send volunteers elsewhere when he could offer more useful training in-house? He took seriously the duty he perceived as inhering in his role as manager and the experience derived from his career and personal experience of homelessness and the drug and alcohol scene.

The morning was replete with role play. For one exercise, training participants paired up. One volunteer would play the role of a guest in the midst of a 'mental health crisis': hyperventilating, teary, despondent. The other volunteer would attempt to reassure the guest in the same way that they would be expected to do on an ordinary evening in the shelter. Then they reversed roles. Kev roamed the room, observing each pair's role play, before convening a plenary session.

Volunteers uniformly noted how useful the exercise had been. They felt quite overwhelmed 'in the moment' by witnessing (albeit staged) distress and assuming the role of the person responsible for alleviating it. Many remarked that they simply 'did not know what to say or do' to comfort the suffering guest. Indeed, some volunteers in the room expressed a personal, caring desire to embrace the person playing the guest role and to reassure them that 'I'm here for you'.

Kev was unequivocal in response. 'Do not say: I'm here for you. Say: *Noah is here for you.*'

Noah, the organisational entity, is positioned here as the legitimate guardian of its guests in contradistinction to the volunteers as individual, personal subjects. In a similar context in Northern Italy, volunteers were passionately exhorted to do the opposite: *not* to be 'de-responsibilized' by professional organisations. They were told that they ought to *love*, to *feel pain*, to intimately relate to those who are suffering – that this is what signifies the proper practice of care (Muehlebach 2011:59-60). It is precisely what Kev constructed as *improper*. He had intentionally tailored the course to make it relevant not just to his reading of the homelessness context ('substance misuse', 'mental illness' and so on). Crucially, Kev sought to transmit norms specific to Noah: its *locally* proper practice of care. He assumed a paternalistic role in two interrelated senses by deciding to convene an in-house training rather than encouraging volunteers to join the widely recognised MHFA training. In the first sense, it afforded him the opportunity to use his extensive familiarity and experience in the homelessness and drug rehabilitation sectors to discriminate between what was necessary

knowledge for volunteers and what was not – a selective process, which relied on him knowing best from past experience.

In the second sense, it was performative: it set the scene where his attested track record of caring for mental illness and substance misuse produces the effect of elevating Noah as the moral authority on these issues. It signals that Kev is the figure responsible for educating Noah's volunteers about how to care for those whom he regularly called 'societal deviants', because he knows best in a practical *and,* perhaps more importantly, moral sense. In the same move, he reminds volunteers that it is Noah, not them, that is legitimately responsible for guests' care. This carries an important assumption that volunteers are enjoined to accept. Noah should be trusted as an organisation, it knows best and can be assumed to have the moral faculties necessary to alleviate the suffering of the distressed guest in the role play. Noah is enshrined as the legitimate representative of guests' interests. For Kev, volunteers' care for Noah guests should only ever be enacted in their role as agents of Noah, never in a personal capacity separate from the organisation. In fact, he suggests that volunteers should largely 'disengage' from guests.

> Kev: Don't get over-emotional: getting sad or sucked in. Don't allow yourself to keep secrets […] you might become someone's *special friend*. [...] That will cause harm to the guest. Don't signpost clients [to other services] such as the Jobcentre or a nice place they could rent on the private sector. Only management are allowed to do that. Report things you may be told by guests to management as soon as possible. […] Some things may be unknown to you [...].

> Sara: Confidential information collected from the admission process is only revealed [by management] to shift leaders and other volunteers if there's a risk to the guest or others.

> Kev: *Everything goes through the hierarchy.*

In practice, accepting that Noah is the legitimate representative of the interests of guests requires volunteers to assume a position within a hierarchical division of labour. Within this hierarchy, staff reserve the exclusive right to provide advice to guests. This is due to the presumption that they are uniquely skilled to guide beneficiaries. It also signals that staff hold better knowledge than volunteers about guests' personal proclivities and life histories, which is ordinarily concealed from volunteers in the interests of confidentiality – the interests of upholding a guest's privacy and best interests, of which Noah's staff are believed to be best

placed to judge. Volunteers' active role within this is to relay any information gathered back to Kev and Sara – not to use their own judgment to conceal certain pieces of information from Noah staff or to respond to it themselves. There is an assumed risk: agency exerted by volunteers in this context may lead to unpredictable consequences, given the necessarily partial information they have and upon which they will be basing their actions. Deviating from this division of labour would undermine Noah's efforts to care for a guest, Kev's guidance suggests. In fact, he warns that it will harm these guests.

Kev and Sara's guidance exemplifies a commonplace approach to volunteer-guest 'boundaries' in the homeless industry that extends well beyond Noah. Elle, delivering a volunteer training session for her shelter – the Sanctuary (which consciously positioned its ethos in contradistinction to Noah) – echoed these remarks strongly herself:

> 'Guests have been let down their whole lives. Don't make promises. Don't tell them something if it may not happen.' Elle then continued, warning against arranging to meet for coffee with a guest: '[They're] excited, thrilled. But what if you've had something [then] come up?'

She proceeded with constructive suggestions to be made if a guest requests money from a volunteer:

> 'Ask: why do you need the money? [...] Signpost them to the CCHP office.'

Ellie's performance at the makeshift pulpit signals – and defines – the locally proper boundaries of labour in the Sanctuary. She implies that it is not legitimate for volunteers to assume responsibility for certain tasks that are the exclusive preserve of 'the CCHP office', a euphemism for the organisation's paid workers. Making coffee appointments and loaning money is the day-to-day staple of support workers' labour. Her instructions foreshadow the possibility that volunteers are unreliable compared to paid workers: she indicates that volunteers' acts of care might only reinforce the cyclical nature of guests' abandonment. Implicit in this guidance – that volunteers should instead rely on CCHP staff in the office and encourage guests to do the same – is that CCHP is less likely than volunteers to disappoint guests in this way. The implication is that volunteers are not really 'part' of CCHP in the same way that workers are, if at all. Ellie's authoritative instruction is animated by a resolutely felt anxiety. Left unsupervised, she feared that volunteers' well-meaning interventions might yield a fatal unintended consequence: of diminishing a guest's trust in the whole organisation and thus inhibiting the organisation's ability to offer support. Her

perspective is characteristic of other Sanctuary staff, who observed to me that they wished that volunteers would 'stay in their own lane' It is also characteristic of a wider ethos in the homeless industry. In another night shelter volunteer induction I observed in a neighbouring locality, the night shelter manager celebrated that the shelter was staffed predominantly by unpaid volunteers like themselves. However, the manager continued, 'we *pay* our shift leaders, because of the good work they do', indicating the existence of a labour hierarchy of value.

Such forms of what Muehlebach (2012:127-131) calls 'boundary work' are a common feature of volunteer training sessions. She demonstrates how such hierarchies are not always construed by volunteers as affording them protection from the burdens of the enterprise. For example, Muehlebach observed how volunteers sometimes contested similar hierarchical divisions of labour because they felt that it devalued their own expertise. She describes how, in one session, a suitably skilled volunteer – a paediatrician volunteering in a hospital – describes how she felt 'humiliated' by her paid counterparts (the hospital's doctors and nurses) noting that they made her feel like an 'unskilled worker' (ibid.:129). The trainer struggled to formulate a response, now having to backtrack on his earlier claims: that 'there is no hierarchy' (ibid.:129); that volunteer labour was precisely valued – and certainly not substitutable – because it was both animated by love from the heart and addressed 'the needs of the soul' (ibid.:130). This, Muehlebach (2012:130) argues, shows how such divisions of labour are a 'fragile achievement' which are arguably more easily engendered by a common feeling of inhabiting a national historical moment (as was the case in her field site) – a feeling of shared membership in an imagined community (Anderson 1983) that, I argue, did not neatly apply in Castlebury. This sets the scene for similar forms of conflict between paid staff and experienced volunteers in the Sanctuary during winter 2019/2020, foreshadowing how paid workers (such as myself) had viewed the labour of some such volunteers as inimical to the organisational enterprise of ending homelessness.

In the next section, I demonstrate that Sanctuary support workers' central charter was precisely to manufacture trust with guests. This was because support workers understood that trust *in them* specifically (in contrast to volunteers) is fundamental to the moral labour of transforming a 'homeless person' to a 'housed person'. As will be seen, this demanded ethical deference to the organisational hierarchy on the part of volunteers. Paid staff viewed volunteers' lack of ethical deference as an improper attempt at replicating their labour and as imperilling the transformative potential of their labour in the process.

Manufacturing trust: friction and competition

7:00 a.m. on a cold, foggy weekday morning in January 2020. Claire and I arrived for our morning shift at St. Saviour's Church. One of the two Sanctuary support workers, Claire jokingly referred to herself as one of the 'cuddly peeps' – this quickly became a popular term among Sanctuary staff to describe the role. I was Claire's colleague, the second 'cuddly peep'. This was a newly conceived role in the CCHP Sanctuary which we were selected to pilot by Elle and her manager Martha – it was our job to befriend guests. Claire and I were tasked with developing rapport with Sanctuary guests, most notably by taking them out for coffees and breakfasts at nearby cafes. Our working hours purposefully commenced at the daily closure time of the Sanctuary: it was our job to siphon exiting guests away from the Sanctuary shelter for one hour in a holding pattern. Since guests were expected to depart the Sanctuary by 7:30 a.m. every morning, this was ample opportunity – Martha, Claire, Elle and I believed – to bring them back into the warmth indoors with a hot drink to soften the blow of what could be the subsequent brutal awakening.

Our friendly nomenclature belied the purposefulness of our affability: developing rapport with Sanctuary guests represented a wider attempt to facilitate casework rather than actual friendships. By seizing guests' time in the early morning, Claire and I endeavoured to hang on to them until the office opened – at which point we would invite them to return with us to the CCHP main office so that they could meet with the housing advisors, potentially for the first time. This was not overly ambitious: the CCHP office was a 12-minute walk from St. Saviour's and we as 'cuddly peeps' would strategically select cafes that were *en route* so that we were already close to our destination. Sometimes we announced these intentions up front before departing to get coffee, other times it was spontaneously suggested at 8:45 a.m. – this largely depended on our judgment of the robustness (or fragility) of guests' 'engagement'. Our 'cuddliness' was distinguished from the other role in the CCHP Sanctuary – that of 'shift leader'. Shift leaders supervised the nightly operation of the shelter and were in charge of enforcing guest discipline. Our Sanctuary colleagues referred to Claire and me as the 'good cops' because we intentionally distanced ourselves in view of guests from all the other workers, who were the shift leaders. In contrast to them, Claire and I were seldom burdened with the responsibility to lead the shelter. Although this role was her first support work gig on Claire's CV (this was similarly the case for me and also the shift leaders in this chapter),

inhabiting the role seemed second nature for her – an experienced nanny with a gentle, nurturing habitus.[39]

Claire and I sought to position ourselves in such a way as to cultivate guests' trust. And by trusting us, we hoped that guests would 'trust CCHP' and engage with its housing advisors. This was a crucial task since we were considered to be working with 'the most entrenched rough sleepers in Castlebury', according to Elle. She and Martha believed that 'entrenched rough sleepers' remained so due to a certain cussedness, a distrust of homelessness charities such as CCHP. Evaluation of the Sanctuary's performance last year was overwhelmingly positive, Martha and Elle asserted, since it had succeeded in sheltering a multitude of this group of 'entrenched homeless'. Over the course of that year, the Sanctuary had fallen short of getting as many of them as possible to access housing advice at the main office by its closing time at the end of the morning. So this year, Martha and Elle sought to surpass last year's number of Sanctuary guest advice visits, although they did not communicate to Claire and I what was last year's record nor what this year's ostensible 'target' was. As it turned out, no such quantifiable expectations ever applied to us two 'cuddly peeps'; we were never told that we had any 'key performance indicators' to attain, nor were we required to keep a record of our interactions with guests. Martha and Elle simply told Claire and me that they aspired to turn 'guests' of the Sanctuary into long-term trusting 'clients' of the CCHP housing advice service, since this is what constitutes the beginning of their 'pathway out of homelessness'.

Ideally, then, our labour as 'cuddly peeps' would initiate such a transformation in Sanctuary clients – a brief that Claire and I purposefully embraced. This aligns usefully with Sanchez's (2020) analytic proposition that satisfaction from the labour process derives primarily from one's feeling of effecting a change in the world. In his fieldwork among waste collectors in Jharkhand, India, he found that the meaning that they derived from their work was inadequately captured by prevailing sociological notions of making a new product for the first time from constituent parts (creation), enacting a learned embodied capacity for the work process (skill) or seeing each worked-on object as a discrete accomplishment in itself (task). Instead, Sanchez presents an analytic framework that foregrounds the primary importance of the *transformative* capacity of labour: the satisfaction of taking a pre-made object as a 'puzzle' that can be imaginatively disassembled and re-invented, transforming it and its value

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[39] For Elle, too, her post as Sanctuary manager represented her first in the industry when she joined in September 2018

in the process. For him, this 'affective state' (Sanchez 2020:73) accounts for why precarious workers, for example, might derive satisfaction despite alienating labour conditions, such as low pay and zero-hours contracts. Representing a similarly casualised role in which Claire and I had the flexibility to decide how, which guests and on what days to develop a rapport, Sanchez anticipates what might have been so appealing about being a 'cuddly peep'.[40] His framework directs attention to how the role was primarily animated by a desire to 'see one's work and actions effecting change' (ibid.:89) in which its object was to transform the inner substance of individual guests with a future-oriented goal in mind. Becoming a client represents the beginning of a putative wider transformation towards ending one's homelessness, the culmination of which is widely vaunted as becoming a new kind of person (see Moving on: interlude). To this end, it requires a form of imaginative relationship building – an attempt at 'cuddly' inducement and getting to know guests for the first time – akin to tinkering (Mol et al. 2010 cited in Sanchez 2020:79). The role exists to realise such potential value maximally in those who are 'most entrenched' and, as will be seen, 'it is when the transformative process stalls that expressions of *frustration become most apparent* [not least in] work that is directed at more long-term ends' (Sanchez 2020:77-78, emphasis added). This frustration was heightened by the contradictory nature of our labour and an institutional context which conditioned our ability actually to effect such transformations.

As 'cuddly peeps', we thus identified 'targets' at the beginning of each week: shelter guests who had not yet visited the CCHP office or who required follow-up meetings to review the progress of their casework. At Martha's urging, one of our perennial targets was a guest named Liam, someone who Martha herself had formerly striven to entice into a committed casework relationship with disproportionately limited success. Since the shelter opened in November 2019, Claire and I too had failed to entice him into the CCHP office for 9 a.m. We had succeeded on several occasions in meeting Liam for breakfast but often by 8:15 – 8:30 a.m. he would politely give an excuse and depart the cafe. This deeply frustrated Claire and me: we began to wonder if Liam was just opaque or being deliberately disingenuous in some way. We both felt that Liam would often make ostensibly distressing appeals to us in the mornings for help just before closing time at the Sanctuary: that he was variously 'desperate to get help' with his housing or his consumption of alcohol and heroin,

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[40] Sanctuary support workers – similarly to other Sanctuary staff – were on de facto zero-hour contracts since they were also required to fill in shelter volunteer shortages at short notice. No written contract was provided; and there were no stated entitlements to sick pay or holiday pay. The fixed term was limited to the end of January 2020, with the possibility of renewal until April 2020.

or to arrange medical assistance for what he called his 'shot' mental health. Liam would also ask the same of shift leaders such as Archie, who – behind closed doors – persistently urged us to 'target' Liam. But once the cafe pleasantries had concluded and there was the unspoken expectation to depart for the office, he would always leave to 'sort himself out' – a common euphemism for arranging a fix (Lenhard 2017) – as the following message exchange describes:

> Claire: We lost Liam on route up here
>
> Archie: Liam has said all this stuff to me as well […] as in he asked me to come to things with him i.e., office which I have said yes of course but he changes his mind in the morning. He seemed genuinely interested in finding housing - 'moving on' as he said - and getting work
>
> Claire: He did come for breakfast with us [...] the day he had spoken to you but he disappeared afterwards
>
> Archie: Yes I thought that might happen

This cat-and-mouse game of support work exemplifies the experiences of many who work in the homeless industry; it is often felt as deeply disheartening. For Claire and me, our hopes of transforming Liam entailed a tragic 'cruel optimism' (Berlant 2011). The 'cuddly peep' role incited us to construct an affective fantasy in which Claire and I would enjoy a sort of warm conviviality with would-be clients – personal disclosure, reciprocity, trust – hopefully inducing them to accompany us to the CCHP office. Our pursuit of this fantasy – which seemed only to generate a perennial impasse here – always disappointed us. Liam was held to be the cause of this disappointment; Claire and I felt as if he was in some way to blame by not following through with the expectation of visiting the office. We both struggled to reconcile what we viewed as Liam's pleas for our assistance with his habit of evading 'engagement' with us and, as shown below, both Claire and I took this personally. Similar frontline workers' frustrations at so-called 'non-engagers' extend beyond homeless charities. Koch (2021:254-255) describes how English benefits' officials classified different clients based on their demonstrable 'willingness to be helped', which risks aligning with prevailing images of the deserving aid recipient and, particularly, a liberal moral imperative that claimants should take responsibility for their own care before expecting it from the state. Despite her interlocutors' general disavowal of these exclusionary premises, Koch finds that they typically only helped those (e.g., with emergency grants) who had demonstrably tried to

help themselves, for example, by attempting to access work, food banks and the local public housing needs-based bidding service.

Although the precise forms of conditionality and incentives in the Sanctuary differ from those in Koch's fieldsite, a willingness to be helped is a hardwired but fraught feature of successful impression management (Goffman 1959) across these sites. In the Sanctuary, as will be seen towards the end of this chapter, a lack of following through with the expectation to access the CCHP office for casework runs the risk of being excluded from the shelter. The need for its guests, then, to resort to a script that indexes their willingness to engage appears heightened – whether they intend to 'engage' or to feign engagement as Claire and I sometimes suspected – because this is ultimately linked to their continued access to the Sanctuary. In particular, Liam's appeals for help often resembled the format of confessions: what Claire, Archie and I viewed as a desire to open up his inner self to us in the hope of eliciting a similarly intimate response. In her ethnographic research of US drug talking-therapy services, Summerson Carr (2011) suggests that this can represent a particular kind of speech-act – what she calls 'flipping the script' – that responds to a conversational context in the pursuit of an interactive goal. Having sporadically interacted with CCHP, its Sanctuary, the local drug and alcohol commissioned service and further organisations still over the past five years, it is likely that Liam was operating with a reasonable 'metalinguistic awareness' (Carr 2011:193) that anticipated what Claire and I 'wanted to hear' (Carr 2011:190) and the consequences of saying so, given that our Janus-faced role unevenly comprised both care and exclusion. At the same time, Liam's apparent disengagement alludes to an unrealistic expectation on the part of the 'cuddly peep' enterprise, which demands guests' abstinence by default from the period between the shelter closing (7:30 a.m.) and the end of an introductory meeting with a CCHP caseworker (typically 10 a.m.).[41] So these expectations, perversely, demanded *not caring* for oneself. Lenhard (2017), for example, has suggested that arranging a dose of heroin was commonly framed by heroin injectors in East London as an act of care for the substance and for oneself. Extending beyond Liam or drug consumption to more general situations where there might be competing demands on Sanctuary guests' time alongside the expectation to engage, 'the need to engage' arguably entails a form of titration that invites guests to balance the need to perform a willingness to engage as far (or as little) as it does not risk their continued residence in the shelter; to play what they might perceive as

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[41] This is because support work clients, from rapport building sessions until commencing a casework meeting in the office, were in the presence of a worker, entailing the expectation of abstinence from alcohol and other substance during that time

their part without going too far. In short, the evocative objective of the role – to effect a transformation in guests – struggles against its own rule-based context which limits its 'effective application' (Sanchez 2020:82), generating feelings of profound frustration.

The charter of the cuddly peep role – to cultivate personalised forms of trust in order to transform a guest – decontextualises the guest-support worker relationship from these game-like rules of service provision, constructing the rapport-building breakfasts as a symmetric form of sociality between equals. As such, it seemed to take limited notice of the profound asymmetry of such interactions, evacuating the fact that it was an (un)written condition of continued access written in by the Sanctuary itself as an institution. Elle and Martha were the role's authors; Claire and I were its pioneers. As this chapter progresses, it becomes clear that Claire and I operated with an assumption that 'disengagement' necessarily implies mistrust, presuming that trust and mistrust were antithetical to each other and thus leaving limited space to account for guests' ambivalence, even though the support worker role itself was deeply ambivalent.[42] By framing trust as a kind of personalised zero-sum game – as will be seen, an indicator of the effectiveness of our labour – it represented a 'moral currency' inasmuch as it was a possible object for worker acquisition rather than a characteristic of relationships (Corsín Jiménez 2011:192). As the following section shows, this acquisitive conception of trust meant that Sanctuary staff members construed comparable attempts by volunteers to build rapport as an illegitimate form of moral competition, an apparent claim to be able to care *better*. It situates myself within a wider 'we' – that is, Sanctuary staff members – as constructed by forms of exclusive staff meetings, shelter debriefs and WhatsApp group conversations, drawing on my labour in the Sanctuary support work role during winter 2019/20.

Seeing like a staff member

Late one January afternoon, Elle received an unexpected phone call about Liam. It was from Joaquin, a skilled Sanctuary volunteer who also had years of experience volunteering in Noah and was an accredited chef. As Elle put it:

> [Joaquin] has said he has formed a relationship with [Liam] and now [Liam] will only work with him and not Simon, [Claire] or anyone else [from CCHP]. [Liam] wants [Joaquin] to accompany him to appointments and stuff.

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[42] As Mühlfried (2018:7) suggests in his review of the anthropology of mistrust, the (erroneous) view that trust implies the absence of mistrust and vice versa is commonplace, even historically in sociological studies.

In response, Claire observed that Liam had been 'quite keen to work with us' earlier that week and that he had come with us for a 'rapport-building' breakfast. But, Claire noted, 'he's backed off again though'. Claire, Archie and I suspected that Liam's recent and apparent disengagement from us was related to the new relationship that he had reportedly developed with Joaquin. Claire expressed feeling 'quite cross with Joaquin about it, he's generally quite a nice helpful guy but that does feel like a stab in the back a bit'. Her response to the news of the phone call was markedly more measured than mine. I was exasperated. I told Elle that I had felt 'personally undercut' and did not expect this of Joaquin, who 'I believed I had a good rapport with, if not Liam'. Elle sought immediately to reassure me and Claire: 'Please take no notice. What he's said is irrelevant because it is against volunteer rules anyway. Don't take it as such. I get why it would annoy you in that way.' I mused that perhaps Joaquin 'wants to do better than [CCHP] / professionals'. Elle and Claire were inclined to agree. Elle reassured us that she had reiterated to Joaquin the following points: all volunteers need to adhere to the guidance that they were given in training; CCHP took seriously its duty to 'safeguard all volunteers' and so 'all work with clients must be with CCHP staff so it can be monitored properly'. In the meantime, Elle wondered, during a meeting of paid Sanctuary staff, whether we might want to keep a closer 'eye' on Joaquin to ensure that he did not have such seemingly improper interactions with guests; and this was met with a murmur of agreement.

Joaquin later gave a written account of himself to Elle by email. He seemed contrite. 'I completely understand the rules', he acknowledged, continuing:

> Liam has realised he needs to get things sorted and asked me yesterday if I could possibly go to the doctor's with him, not attend the appointment but just wait with him as he wants someone he trusts to go with him and there's nobody else who he feels comfortable with [...].

> Obviously I explained straight away it's not something we can really do as volunteers it's the job of a support worker or someone from CCHP... I said go to the office today and they will help .. that's why I was ringing .. His response was I don't want to go alone can you come with me to the office [...] unfortunately said no we are not allowed too [sic] either ...

> Which his response was it's ok I'll just top myself [attempt suicide] instead...

Joaquin concluded deferentially: 'I was ringing to explain […] so you guys can get on it [...] he knows I have relayed the information to you guys and is ok with it'.

It remains rare for a CCHP volunteer to intervene in such a sustained manner with a guest as Joaquin did by advocating on Liam's behalf to Elle and considering accompanying Liam to the GP. This is because staff members and managers unanimously viewed such relationships as a serious contravention of the pre-existing hierarchical division of labour in the Castlebury homeless industry. In the first instance, it reveals that Liam had developed a relationship with Joaquin in which he felt comfortable to confide in Joaquin. This was alarming to us: Sanctuary staff members ordinarily expected volunteers, similarly to Kev's training recommendations in Noah, to be vigilant against such 'special' relationships in which there was disclosure and trust that went beyond being polite and cordial. An oft-repeated mantra during volunteer trainings was to be 'friendly, but not friends' with guests. What was particularly affective to us about the relationship that Joaquin and Liam had forged was that it seemed that Liam trusted Joaquin *more* than he trusted Claire, Archie or me. In a sense, our colleagues felt that it conveyed a personal distrust of Claire and me; and that Joaquin was in a way complicit with this by appearing to cultivate an 'alternative' caring relationship with Liam in the shelter. To this extent, it was not hyperbolic to call it a kind of 'betrayal'. Whilst Elle had directed us as staff members to recognise that we could not expect 'compliance' from guests (and even then, we seemed unanimously disappointed that Liam had not fulfilled an implicit expectation to accompany Claire and me to the office given the time shared and breakfasts 'gifted' during rapport building), we expected volunteers to facilitate (as we did) the cultivation of trusting professional relations and the fulfilment of guests' expectations therein; or at least not to undermine it. In other words, Joaquin's 'rule-breach' represented a vehicle of blame through which Claire and I understood our own seeming inability to transform Liam and the frustrations that followed. This explanation was readily reiterated to us by our colleagues as a means of consolation, implying that Joaquin had unduly 'acquired' Liam's trust at our expense.

Despite its seeming seriousness, we Sanctuary staff members unanimously expressed satisfaction at Joaquin's apologetic response and the justification he offered during a weekly meeting, believing that he did exhibit the necessary belief in the hierarchical division of labour and that he did not in fact intend to 'supersede' or duplicate the organisation's enterprise. In other words, we were content that Joaquin did in fact 'trust' us. He appeared to recognise the legitimacy of our jurisdictional domain – that it was 'the job of a support worker or someone from CCHP' – to accompany Liam to appointments; he was indeed uncomfortable even (or especially) to accompany Liam to the CCHP office, he said. The

phone call appeared to be a prompt for staff members to do this 'job'. It was intended as a reversion of the duty back to CCHP that Liam's distressed suggestion that he will 'just top [him]self' had the effect of imposing upon Joaquin.

So Joaquin was allowed to continue volunteering. Sanctuary shift leaders continued to recount the litany of – and bemoan – Joaquin's rule-breaches during staff meetings and debriefs. He repeatedly attended the Sanctuary to volunteer without first signing up for shifts on the online volunteer portal, they remarked. Joaquin had also been giving certain guests preferential treatment, they worried: he had cooked a personal meal for Liam at Liam's request and had also donated phone chargers and towels that he had spare at home to other guests. There were also concerns that he had the phone numbers of some Sanctuary guests. This all deeply unsettled shelter staff, not least because it had taken place without their prior notification but also because it exhibited for them a 'freakish', 'dodgy' or otherwise 'uncomfortable' preoccupation with specific guests.

One final contravention of volunteer-guest boundaries sounded the death knell of Joaquin's service at the Sanctuary. It was one of the first nights of the 'roaming' night shelter in February 2020, where the Sanctuary was no longer hosted in St Saviour's for the whole week but in a rotating series of seven ecclesiastical spaces. This year, the space formerly inhabited by Noah was being used for the first time. CCHP had a keen aspiration to continue being allowed by the Noah trustees to use the space beyond the winter: the Sanctuary staff were ever-careful to ensure that they appeared to be good caretakers of the former Noah centre. Given it was the first night and there was uncertainty about the working order of the shower cubicles, Elle recommended that guests should not use the showers that evening. Sanctuary staff concurred and found this fair: after all, they recalled, the Sanctuary had been hosted in St. Saviour's for over two months – it did not have any shower facilities itself. The volunteers that evening were informed of this rule by Archie in advance of the shift starting; this included Joaquin, who formerly volunteered regularly in Noah before its abrupt closure. However, as Archie recalled in a debrief the following day, Joaquin gave permission for a guest to access the showers that evening. This blindsided Archie and left him really 'pissed off'. He felt that Joaquin made Sanctuary staff 'look like dicks' in order to facilitate his being 'pally with everyone'. In sum, Archie was suggesting that Joaquin had harmed the reputation of staff members as a whole, thereby sowing the seeds for mistrust and thus possibly imperilling our performance of the role.

In Archie's view, which was validated by colleagues on the staff group chat, Joaquin exhibited a flagrant lack of regard for their jurisdictional domain. Sanctuary staff, and paid workers in the homeless industry more generally, are defined by their exclusive (discretionary) capacity to make certain decisions about how to allocate resources (e.g., towels and phone chargers), to formulate and enforce shelter rules and to have the phone numbers of guests in a 'professional' capacity. It is not that Joaquin engaged in acts of care that were generally deserving of reprimand; but that he had delivered care in a way that was *ultra vires* by the Sanctuary's standards. This was particularly transgressive because it undermined the legitimacy of Sanctuary staff to make these rules and enforce them: it alluded to a certain unreasonableness, for instance, behind the staff's prohibition against accessing the showers that evening. And in so doing, Joaquin was regarded as cultivating 'pally' relationships at the expense of the Sanctuary staff, who felt that they were being made to look unreasonably strict. This indicates the fragility of the message that Elle (and also Kev) communicated in the training sessions earlier, that paid staff members merited their reputed trustworthiness; and further that, by recruiting us 'cuddly peeps', it already had an adequate outlet to develop these kinds of caring relations on such a one-to-one basis.

Joaquin was believed to be exercising authority in a sense. This was especially troublesome for Archie as it was done in a way that did not appreciate the palpably tragic background constraints that Sanctuary staff faced (Chapter 2). In this case, these stemmed from the need for staff to be diligent with their stewardship of the former Noah venue or else risk losing access to it in the future. Furthermore, Joaquin's permissiveness often struck Sanctuary staff as 'naive' and as perhaps exposing him to manipulation by guests due to his supposed inexperience and lack of insight into the guests with whom he was developing attachments. Acting uninhibited by these constraints, Joaquin, albeit unintentionally, began to carve a space as a competing – and more generous – patron in the Sanctuary. Indeed, Elle had mused that perhaps his previous position as a Noah volunteer informed his belief that there was not necessarily a problem with allowing a guest to use its showers; or rather, he believed that he had the capacity to permit it given his familiarity with, and former connection to, the place. This alludes to a certain critical stance that the Sanctuary assumed in relation to Noah when the latter was operating (Chapter 5). In any case, Joaquin's acts of care subverted the pre-existing hierarchical division of labour in the Sanctuary; to which he was previously considered by staff to have given his consent and which he was assumed to have recognised as legitimate.

His position became untenable. Elle emailed Joaquin the following morning, notifying him that he was no longer entitled to volunteer at the Sanctuary. In a weekly staff meeting, Sanctuary staff murmured unanimous agreement with this and agreed that they would refuse entry to him if he did ever visit to volunteer in the future. Shortly thereafter, Elle instructed church leaders of the other shelter venues to do the same. She had told Joaquin that he could meet with her to discuss this dismissal if he wanted – an opportunity perhaps for Joaquin to exhibit contriteness and reaffirm his belief in the legitimacy of the division of labour in the Sanctuary once more. He did not respond to Elle, we were told, and has not returned as a Sanctuary volunteer since then.

The need to obey redux

Joaquin's taking the ethical initiative in the role of volunteer is not novel. Many volunteers found it difficult to accept Sanctuary staff's legitimacy to govern the shelter, since it required volunteers to rely on and believe in staff members' authority even if doing so conflicted with volunteers' own sense of justice. This was especially the case for Marcus. Another hard-working, eager volunteer at the Sanctuary, I found Marcus to be particularly charismatic. Moreover, he would occasionally observe to me that his motivation to volunteer stemmed from his own past experiences 'on the streets'. Now, as Edwina, a Sanctuary shift leader, recalled in a debrief:

> Marcus STILL questioning/undermining shift leader […] thinks everything is open to negotiation. I am getting close to asking him to leave and not come back.

The enforcement of guest exclusions generated the most friction between Marcus and Sanctuary shift leaders. To reiterate, although the Sanctuary was 'open-access' (i.e., any person could arrive on a given evening without prior arrangement to sleep in the shelter), continued admission to the shelter was conditional on guests' fulfilment of CCHP's expectations incumbent on them. A crucial expectation was that guests sought housing advice as soon as possible from the staff in the CCHP main office if they had not done so already. If a guest is judged by Sanctuary staff to have failed to do so within a reasonable time, a letter would ordinarily be issued. It served as a kind of ultimatum to the guest: attend the office by a specified date, otherwise you will not be admitted to the Sanctuary after that date, thus resembling the single service offers in the Hub in East Axlow described earlier.

In December 2019, exclusion letters were issued wholesale to a group of Sanctuary guests, collectively referred to as 'the Romanians' by CCHP staff, a racialised categorisation

unpacked further below. Many of this cohort had acceded to the request made in the letter and were permitted to continue staying at the Sanctuary. For those who had not, the deadline to attend the CCHP office had now passed. It was the first night to enforce these exclusions; Edwina was shift-leading, Marcus was among the volunteers. Edwina later recounted of that shift in a debrief meeting of staff:

> Marcus was saying how horrible CCHP are […] that we aren't doing what the organisation should be doing […] he basically was just shouting at me and telling me to stop talking as I was explaining that it's not my organisation […] the procedures are there for a reason.

Marcus had then told Edwina to 'stick it', she told us, before hastily departing with the parting words: 'if you guys are going to let a person stay in the cold, I won't'. The mood in the room unanimously expressed concern at what Edwina described as 'EastEnders'-style histrionics on Marcus' part.[43] Elle consoled Edwina, telling her that she should not have to endure such opposition 'from volunteers'. Elle regretted that Marcus did not appreciate that the exclusions had 'come from higher up' than us and was 'part of a much bigger piece of work going on behind the scenes than he is aware of.' Elle reassured all of us once more: if volunteers such as Marcus dissented, 'same answer as always, [tell them to] speak to Elle'.

Shortly thereafter, Elle contacted Marcus by phone. In a later staff debrief, Elle explained that she had impressed upon him the need 'to respect shift leader decisions and if he has issues, he needs to raise them after the fact'. Elle had also reiterated to Marcus that shift leaders 'have an extremely difficult job and that in the chaos of the moment, [they] won't have the capacity to have a lengthy discussion about the situation or give their reasons behind their decision'. At the end of the phone call, Marcus apologised to Elle, she reported. They both agreed to overlook his dissent as an instance of misplaced 'passion', Elle recounted. He was allowed to continue volunteering in the Sanctuary.

It was clear that Marcus found the exclusions ethically intolerable, to the extent that he refused to remain part of the Sanctuary personnel who were enforcing them that night. He disagreed about the validity of the 'reason' for the exclusions, something which Edwina mentioned but did not elaborate that evening. Elle's reassurance indicated that Sanctuary staff members were not required to give an account of themselves to volunteers: the position of shift leader demands volunteer compliance and should not be challenged in the moment.

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[43] EastEnders is a soap opera broadcast in the UK, well-known for specialising in melodramatic tropes.

Sanctuary workers, myself included, expected volunteers' compliance with such decisions because they were backed by the authority of CCHP as an organisation. It was precisely CCHP's organisational character that Marcus took aim at that evening. His parting words to Edwina were not addressed in the singular 'you' but to 'you guys'. It was not that Marcus had a 'personal' problem with Edwina *per se* – it was that Edwina was seen as an agent of CCHP in her willingness to enforce the exclusions through her own deference to hierarchy. Indeed, Elle invited us to deflect blame onto her: in this sense, even shift leaders were relieved of the moral responsibility for unpopular decisions such as exclusions. Elle had offered us – as staff members – the option of claiming that even we were too low in the hierarchy to be privy to the justification for such decisions ourselves. By distancing themselves from CCHP, just as Edwina had done, Sanctuary staff might be able to salvage some legitimacy in a personal capacity: it was hoped that volunteers would sympathise with the 'tragic' constraints that shift leaders face as paid employees (see Chapter 2), a burden volunteers are widely perceived not to carry. And hence, Elle expected that volunteers might respect the decisions that they find difficult to accept.

The legitimacy of the exclusion of 'the Romanians' did not solely rely on this form of staff de-responsibilisation, however: it also relied on the fact that, as staff members, Elle never even provided us with a justification. Indeed, all that was ever communicated in staff meetings was that it had 'come from higher up'; and no-one in attendance dissented or queried the basis of it, including me. I learned much later from Elle's manager that determining guests' local connection was a key condition of central and local government support:

> We didn't get local authority objection to setting up a night shelter […] whereas in other boroughs, you wouldn't be allowed. They would have resisted you doing that. And then when they saw that we were making a difference and we were not attracting people out of [Castlebury], coming in, or to a minimal effect, I could evidence that that wasn't really the case, because we evidenced, we recorded who had a local connection. And those that came out of [Castlebury] were likely to be people from other countries that had no connection to anywhere anyway.

In the case of those from 'other countries', CCHP occupied in effect a buffer role common to other state-funded homeless and advice organisations observed in the UK, both 'within' and 'outside' of active collusion with the hostile environment at the same time (DeVerteuil 2017;

Dobson and Turnbull 2022; Chapter 2). The performance of this role, as Dobson and Turnbull (2022) note, varies depending on the locality and precise institutional arrangements. Unlike the highly publicised instances of collusion between rough sleeper services (e.g., in the City of Westminster) and the Home Office Immigration Compliance and Enforcement department (ICE), CCHP was not required by their funding contracts to input client data onto a centrally accessible database shared with the Home Office as was the case in central London (Dobson and Turnbull 2022:31) or possibly the case with SHIH. CCHP's role, it seems, was more ambivalent. The casework objective with 'the Romanians' was to impel – or compel – them to apply for (pre-)settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme in order to 'regularise' their status in the UK, an attempt to yield a positive casework outcome that simultaneously insulates CCHP from the hazards of rendering services to clients who may later come within the purview of ICE. In effect, these exigencies trickled down hierarchically to the extent that even Sanctuary shift leaders, on this occasion, were not privy to the details or had them explained by Elle, who later observed that this was a decision that itself descended from her manager. In sum, this points to a vertical cascade which obliquely extended upwards towards the state (Ferguson and Gupta 2002).

Conclusion

The Sanctuary, Noah and the Hub were all preoccupied intensely with the task of performing trusteeship without explicitly articulating the reasons why they were necessarily more deserving of such a positionality. Their efforts were closely linked to and legitimised by their assertions that they had a privileged moral outlook, a certain comparative advantage. In the everyday context, it occasionally led to rather alienating defences of their legitimacy in contradistinction to those lower down in an organisational hierarchy whose deference is required, particularly in the case of conditionality requirements incumbent on beneficiaries.

These organisations sought to assert legitimacy. The trusteeship they exercised was both sponsored by, and deeply mirrors the fraught legitimate basis of, the state. It reproduced a hierarchical division of labour which constructs the organisation as a vertically encompassing entity (Ferguson and Gupta 2002) and it partook in 'righteous and rightful' (Bornstein and Sharma 2016) forms of boundary making and policing. Yet, these efforts to exert moral authority and define proper practices of care were predicated precisely on unique claims to care for clients/guests – as a homeless charity, not a state agency – to remediate homeless suffering (Chapter 2). In doing so, frontline workers seek to embody their

institutions, both 'participat[ing] in the construction of the [homeless] subject for whom and for which they speak' (Hilton et al 2013:62) and claiming exclusivity over their right to care for their beneficiaries in the everyday setting.

The role of performing trusteeship in the homeless industry places pressure and stress on everyday agents of the public good to an unsustainable extent. Ultimately, the everyday legitimacy of these organisations' respective projects of the public good rests on institutional actors' own moral performances. It also reveals how patron/client relations arise. In the indeterminacy of the homeless industry's legitimacy – of its claims to know best – the onus is on institutional actors to personalise their care and as such to act as patrons for their clients. In the following chapter, I take a closer look at patron/client relations that are generated, and implied, by trusteeship. It tracks back in time to when the Noah Community night shelter used to operate, offering an extended account of its self-styled boss, Kev, and the Community to which he dedicated himself.

A Noah welcome: interlude

My enrolment in Noah, September 2018. After ringing the intercom, I smiled to the security camera. Lydia, one of Noah's longest serving volunteers opened the front door, asking me what I am here for. 'To see Kev', I responded, and Lydia let me in at once. The entrance opened into an expansive atrium, flooded with sunlight, the ceiling as high as the tall pyramidal roof; it served as the Noah common area. The building had a distinct and simple colour scheme: white for the walls and hot magenta for the doors. A faux-mahogany table almost as long as the common area occupied the centre stage, with approximately 20 matching chairs lining up either side; this, I would shortly learn, was the 'Great Table'. To the far side on my left was a tiny kitchen with a serving window; to my right, a series of cupboards which hosted an array of tall fridges. Straight ahead of me was a row of 3 doors, each opening onto separate guest dorm rooms, measuring 4x4m. Each room contained 4 double-bunk beds. There was barely any furniture in the common area apart from the Great Table, only two side tables and two chairs either side of them. A mezzanine floor perched over the guest dorms, creating a second storey. From above, Kev greeted me and then descended, giving me a warm hug. Then the welcome tour commenced: a mixture of recitation and improvisation.

'This is only for dinner and activities', Kev said, pointing to the Great Table. No reading newspapers, no devices and no 'rolling fags' either. 'Our guests, those who have addiction – social deviants – 99% of them haven't sat at a dinner table before; it's about belonging', he continued, indicating that belonging is crucial in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. 'These days, society is trying to put you into boxes – "gay", "straight" – and women eventually go off with daddies: they've never felt like they've belonged', he diagnosed, suggesting that attachment to drugs or indeed sugar daddies is a misplaced but inevitable pursuit of 'vicarious belonging' that he sought to correct by providing a 'spiritual home'. He then presented Noah's solution. 'So we insist that everyone eats together on the table', referring to the home-cooked meal served up nightly by the volunteers; he digressed by complaining about how volunteers sometimes served special meals for 'picky guests' upon request (most recently, beans on toast, six nights on the trot for Francis). He joked about the CCTV cameras – perched in the corner of the common area, in the back smoking area and in the upstairs offices – observing

that they're necessary and that he could access them remotely on his phone if alerted to do so while on-call, which he always was.

Leading me to the kitchen, he reminded me that Noah has a 'foods for moods' policy. 'You can't recover if you eat like shit', Kev noted, suggesting that Noah's purpose was 'recovery'. 'Only volunteers and staff can enter – for boundaries'. 'We keep the food the same for everyone because it's good food! Not pre-packaged, pre-made shit; no white bread', possibly alluding to the beans-on-toast affair. 'Coca-Cola is only good for cleaning drains and the bottles for planters in the garden', he declared sagely.

On the notice board outside the kitchen: a cleaning rota exclusively containing guests' names. Volunteers and staff do *not* clean, Kev stressed. 'We want guests to feel part of the family; if we keep wiping their arses, they're going to walk through the door and cock their leg up. Men will feel powerless and so they have to feel powerful again through other means', he observed. 'We don't have our own cleaner. We have a toilet cleaning system for cloths and we disinfect handles once every couple of days. Colds do *not* spread in this shelter. They do everywhere else, but not here, because we take such good care', he proudly signalled – and indeed, the showers and toilets *are* clean I noticed. 'No cross contamination', he shot with a smile.

Later we headed up to Kev's office which was at the very end of the second storey: it contained a somewhat oversized desk that was dotted with gifts and warm memorabilia from former guests and volunteers; opposite – and quite beneath – the desk was a comfortable sofa. At the far side of the office from the mezzanine side was another door: a locked passage to CCHP's half of the building – the top half in fact, where its most senior staff worked – this was the only Noah-CCHP bridge. I mentioned how I had been interested in working at other organisations alongside Noah, and he warned me that it's a 'cut-throat industry' which does not necessarily 'care about the wellbeing of their clients'. He gestured to how it has to do with 'government contract malarkey'; and although he admitted in passing that Noah receives Housing Benefit (at half the going rate for such providers, he emphasised), he did not view it as the same as 'getting in bed with the devil', calling to my attention that there are 'bullies in the sector preying off vulnerable people'. 'We're not like that', he asserted. At the same time, he joked that I might serve as a useful 'spy' for him about what goes on across the industry and even within Noah, which I laughed off. After Kev and I spoke about what I had hoped to 'get out' of working in Noah, he closed with a few passing pieces of volunteering advice to

me, catered specifically to Noah: 'they're *my* guests', he stated, emphasising that he was personally invested in their care in a way that other people and organisations might not be. 'They're not goldfish in a bowl', he stressed, and that no-one is 'entitled to their narrative' without building 'trust' and 'striking a relationship' first.

We closed shortly after, when Kev explained a few of the basic rules of the shelter. Each night, the shelter is staffed exclusively by volunteers and they welcome guests in from 6:30 p.m. onwards until 7:45 p.m., the curfew. 'And once they're in, they're in', he observed, asserting that guests cannot come or go during the night. Past the curfew, if a guest has not had a later arrival time pre-approved with Kev or his deputy, the most senior volunteer (the designated shift leader) must use their discretion (to bar the guest for the night, generally) and to consult Kev by phone if necessary. In any case, guests cannot arrive intoxicated or bring illicit substances; volunteers must deny entry if they suspect this, a presumably tricky task. Kev showed me the 'piss tests' he sometimes demanded that guests take if he did suspect drug consumption. Lights out is 11 p.m. apart from New Year's Eve. Breakfast is served at 7:00 a.m. Guests must emerge out of their rooms by 7:15 a.m. and certainly no later than when Kev arrives for the day – the times vary, but it's rarely later than 8:00 a.m. except on Wednesdays, his day off – otherwise he would wake them up himself, he jokingly noted. 'Turfing out' time – when guests are required to leave for the day – is 9:00 a.m.

He took me through a few documents, such as the volunteer agreement, before signing me up for my first volunteer shifts.

Chapter 4

Of bosses and men: 'state failure', patronage and the ethos of Noah

On a Monday morning in May 2019, Kev gathered me and his staff members together in his office to view a CCTV recording of events that unfolded on the front lawn of St Mark's church grounds the preceding evening. It made for difficult viewing. A police car emerged into the car park before two officers seemed to unload a stumbling man onto the grass that the church hall overlooks. It appeared that the officers had attempted to place the man in the recovery position but struggled to do so because, at the same time, they were negotiating his loose trousers. They then left, leaving the man resting on the ground alone. Shortly thereafter, a volunteer together with Reg – the earliest of Noah's guests that evening – arrived in anticipation of the 6:30 p.m. opening. Upon finding the man, they alerted the emergency services. Paramedics arrived after the call and, eventually, carried the man away in an ambulance.

As the recording played, Kev gave a commentary. It was a 'cowardly' act, Kev said: a contrived, depraved attempt by the officers to discard 'rubbish' onto 'my doorstep' instead of assuming responsibility themselves, he sighed. For him, the spectacle seemed to represent the excesses of state failure. He was outraged – as the others in the room also were – by the flagrant abandonment of the figure on the grass. Yet his outrage did not stem solely from the seeming inhumanity of the emergency responders. He inferred that their conduct towards the stranger was calculated and intentional. Kev ventured that the man was a homeless person who had come within the gaze of the police, most likely in a prominent public space in Castlebury town centre. He believed that the stranger was purposely relocated to the grounds of St Mark's Church by the state officials because it was a locally known space for 'homeless people' out of plain sight, conveniently inhabited by the Church, CCHP and Noah who might intervene. His analysis was met with a murmur of agreement in the room. Kev then ventured aloud a possible response to the incident, hoping to translate the outrage into tangible action. He saw value in the recording, considering it a valuable 'bargaining tool' for use with the local police commander. Kev observed that he had been on 'good terms' with the previous

commander, but he was yet to be introduced to the present incumbent: the 'new guvnor'.[44] His confidantes in the room seemed quietly disturbed by the suggestion, gently advising Kev against that course of action.

The incident resonated with other instances of state failure that Kev intently publicised to Noah guests and volunteers in training sessions:

> September 2018. Kev delivered a PowerPoint presentation in which he beamed the rough sleeping locations that he had frequented as an outreach worker in Castlebury between 2012 and 2014 and offered his recollections.
>
>> Whitebridge Post Office: How do you think the Council tried to solve this? A fence, so that the public won't be able to see it!
>>
>> Residents' Car Park 1: A wooden wall. It got burnt down soon enough and posed a risk to the residents above.
>>
>> Residents' Car Park 2: You can guess now! They boarded it up!
>>
>> NCP Car Park: I went to Town Hall about this immediately, bluffed my way through to the head of housing and told them about this and [asked] what they could do. I was told that there were in fact no homeless people there and it was just people there for the night life!
>>
>> Local Allotment: Both died. One overdosed in a flat and had their body dumped. No one wants a dead corpse in their flat as it's incriminating. The other was a recovering alcoholic who had half a beer over Christmas, took a bath, had a fit and died.

These images enabled Kev to reassert the moral legitimacy of his authority by demonstrating that he is more caring than the police or the Council. At the same time, his stated desire to bargain with the local police force suggests that he personalised his authority, taking the police's misconduct as an affront to him personally and to Noah in the same move. This indicates a kind of conflation between Kev and the shelter: he identified with, and claimed possession in his own right of, Noah as a space. As will be seen, Noah was founded by Kev and Andrew with the express intention of being positioned morally in opposition to the state.

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[44] 'Guvnor' – short for governor – is a generally approving term to refer to an institutional and/or familial patriarch; it often connotes a higher rank than 'boss', although the lines are not necessarily so clear cut out of context.

This quasi-activist orientation was palpable amongst its guests; one of whom (a former educator) – drawing on Marx – observed to me that 'Noah is praxical, even revolutionary', referring to how it was a home-making project that devotedly sought to put these political critiques into practice.

This chapter depicts Kev's role as the boss and patron of Noah as a home-making institution. As an organisational configuration, Noah was strikingly centralised. As shelter manager, Kev maintained the right to recruit and exclude both guests and volunteers at his discretion. He convened what were known as the weekly Community meetings; he is the primary author of the shelter's rules; he maintained a remote ability to view real-time CCTV on his mobile phone (leading to occasional, muted quips from volunteers that 'big brother' was watching), and he exerted a key influence on its various disciplinary norms as well as the legitimate ability to waive them on a case-by-case basis. In his words – which were sometimes echoed approvingly by guests – he was 'the boss'. His managerial style and the regime that he operated in Noah stood in stark contrast to that of Elle in the Sanctuary and – as we will see in Chapter 5 – were in fact viewed critically by Elle and other Sanctuary staff members as lacking legitimacy. At the same time, his claims to authority rely on a similar kind of moral – rather than technical – expertise to those seen in the Sanctuary in Chapter 3. Unlike the case of the Sanctuary, however, Kev's claims were explicitly divinely inspired, inhering in him personally (rather than in the role of shelter manager) and relied on his performances of masculinity and charisma.[45] In short, its aesthetic dimensions – as well as Noah as an institution – were rather like night and day compared to the case of Elle and the Sanctuary.

Kev's repertoire of authority, as will be seen, adds further ethnographic texture to what Michelutti et al. (2018) term 'the art of bossing'. The 'figure' of the boss, Michelutti et al. note (2018:3), frames when individual men-as-men play the leading role in a 'relational mode of power', emphasising that it is 'the product of hard quotidian work' (ibid.:10) that can take profoundly dramaturgical forms. Focussing on Kev's work as a boss highlights how Noah is a bounded territory in which he sought to enact and legitimise such 'personal sovereignty' (ibid.). As this chapter will show, this framing captures how the quality of one's residence in Noah relies centrally on one's relationship with Kev. Taking seriously his claims of being a boss, too, brings into view the performative aspects of his attempts to secure legitimacy within Noah, of which his critiques of the state above are one example. As a boss,

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[45] Although, given that he was the first and only Noah manager, this distinction is somewhat moot.

a vital part of Kev's authority was precisely the 'seductive' nature of his authority (ibid.:25-26), selectively deploying humour, humiliation, eviction and promise. This exposed him to the possibility of being derided as much as obeyed. As such, Kev's bossism also captures his ability to draw a following (or not) by playing on – and suspending – one's disbelief, particularly in cases where his repertoire seemed internally inconsistent.

At the same time, however, Kev's exercise of authority lacks a key implement that Michelutti et al. (2018:13) identify in the boss's toolkit: a propensity for outright physical violence. His style of bossism, in contrast to the *goondas* that largely concern Michelutti et al., relies more on the enactment – and institutionalisation of – charisma. Focussing on Kev's charisma brings into view its 'embodiment' and the extent to which he conjures a 'liminal sense of community […] established by companionship and joint dependence on a vision and a visionary leader' (Feuchtwang 2008:92), as we will see in Community meetings. It shows how Kev asserts authority in his own personalised right and how he seeks to cultivate intimate bonds with a group of followers, hinting to how his deployment of charisma is 'naturally unstable' (Weber 1978:1114) when he cannot accommodate its excesses and contradictions. All told, what bossism and charisma also emphasise is a key feature of Kev's authority and how his (almost entirely male) guests relate to him 'as men': his institutionalisation of masculinity.

A patriarchal figure, Kev's authority largely hinged on his distinct 'display [of] masculine prowess' (Michelutti et al. 2018:7). Emphasising the thoroughly masculine character of Kev's enactments of charisma brings into view how the Community that Kev cultivated was itself a 'collective practice' of a kind of 'exemplary masculinity' (Connell 1990:87). For Raewyn Connell (1990:86), 'exemplary masculinity' is an inherently contradictory ideal-type, a fraught identity which can never be embodied exactly by men but that engenders particular ways of being over others. Her life-history (ibid.) of a disciplined, go-getting Australian competitive 'iron man' – Steve – has striking resonances with the idioms of exemplary masculinity that Kev enshrined. She contrasts Steve's regimented pursuits of sporting success (for example, early starts and endurance training to the point of sheer exhaustion) with his forlorn recognition that he cannot partake in 'what his peer group defines as thoroughly masculine behaviour: going wild, showing off, drunk driving, getting into fights, defending his own prestige' (Connell 1990:86). Nonetheless, Steve's ideals of 'toughness', 'winning', and of 'triumph […] over oneself' earned him the role of 'hero' in the eyes of his sporting peers, Connell (1990:88-89) notes, which Steve responded to by leading

and 'look[ing] after them'. Evoking similar muscular and heroic tropes, Kev's authority and inspiration to care for his guests, as will be seen, draws on his self-presentation as a person who was formerly homeless – an experience he characterises as the pursuit of victory over evil. Not a coincidence, personal fitness plays a key role in Kev's narration of his 'recovery' from homelessness and in the way he sought to care for several of his guests. In the process, his charismatic authority unstably evoked and endorsed similar ideals to Steve's pursuits of success, styling Kev as a kind of relatable but strong paternal figure who empathises with – and even loves – his guests.

Framing Kev as a boss, then, importantly captures the aesthetic dimensions of his authority. Yet to provide a fuller depiction of *why* he might be construed as legitimate, we also need to attend to the character and types of social relation that he cultivates with his guests. These take the form of patron-client relations. For Kev, the state had created the conditions of moral necessity for Noah's enterprise. Moreover, Kev often cites a lack of family as a main cause of his guests' homelessness, seeking to offer what he believes they lost out on. Put together, he constructs a meta-narrative, resembling Boissevain's (1966:30) explanation for the persistence of the Sicilian mafiosi, which serves a 'need for protection that neither the State nor the family is able to provide'. He positions Noah as a response to this need. In his attempts to embody Noah – as its sole spokesperson, convenor, gate-keeper and rule-maker – he personally conferred specific benefits to guests by exercising his influence and allocating resources in an informal and dyadic manner, entailing a reciprocal expectation of compliance. These elements align with James Scott's classic formulation of clientelism (1972:8), which usefully frames how Kev's relationship with his guests are noticeably asymmetrical and also stem from inequality in the first place. Indeed, Kev's authority seems to stem from – and to invite – a kind of filial piety and sense of kinship, a common feature of patron-client relations as observed, for example, in the Turkish bureaucracy (Alexander 2002:118).

One's tenure in Noah, as will be seen, relies ideally on an ethics of interdependence that Kev promulgates. Framing the Community as the mission of the enterprise, Kev once pitched Noah during a fundraiser in this way:

> We watch each other's backs […] when we start to tell the truth, we reveal our brokenness. We don't control our own destiny [as individuals…] our power comes from the Community [and] love is the answer […] and I'm not interested in people

finding work! That's not even on my agenda [...] We want a Community where every member has the opportunity to change in a really significant way. Reg, at the back, could be doing a million things today but he has that real servant heart, coming to spread that real Noah message of love.

This chapter attends to how this shared moral world is enacted in the shelter's everyday relations and the extent to which Kev placed himself as its boss. It speaks to a similar convergence of institutionalised hierarchy, telos of personal transformation and a communal ethics of interdependence that China Scherz (2014) finds in Mercy House, a Catholic children's home in Central Uganda. At Mercy House, Scherz notes that relations of dependency represented the means to become a socially valued person. These were actively sought after by the Catholic sisters staffing the project, its beneficiaries and their parents, since dependency, for them, indexed love and the possibility of being an agent of God, setting the scene for forms of mutual aid taking root among beneficiaries in turn (Scherz 2014:90-91). The relevance of Christian inspiration in the establishment of Noah will be briefly drawn out in the following section. In the meantime, and from a case closer to home, Koch (2018) suggests that the values embraced by the English working classes do not necessarily resonate with the liberal democratic model of personhood. Her interlocutors on the Park End estate did not measure a person's value by recourse to ideals of independence or autonomy; instead, a locally valued person was precisely someone who was embedded in local networks of kinship and interdependence. This is also how Kev constructed the promise of the Noah Community: as a space in which one can flourish through becoming part of the flow of Noah's social relations. Yet as will be seen, this Community is a particularly asymmetric social space where guests depend on Kev as a patriarchal figure and where he exhibits reliance on them to maintain his reputation. Kev's personal charisma was a product – and producer – of this Community, pitched as his subject of care and primary audience. Moreover, unlike the cases of Mercy House or Park End, the hierarchies in Noah remained rather fixed due to Kev's everyday enactment of bossism and the peculiarities of the Noah institutional context.

The following section discusses how Kev's position within Noah – as its founding boss – and Noah's origin story are tightly bound up with each other.

Conditions of possibility, affordances of authority

Since Kev was Noah's founding manager, a biography of Noah – focussing particularly on its establishment – reveals the emergence of the role that Kev inhabited. Its founding Chair,

Reverend Andrew Williams, laid the intellectual groundwork. In a meeting inside his parish church – St Mark's – in October 2018, Andrew vividly reanimated to me his renewed sense of vocation that emerged after the closure of Castlebury's Rainbow Project in 2008, which had led to the creation of what he called the 'garden people' perching on St Mark's church grounds. 'It was reliant on government money', he regretted to me. As a drug rehabilitation facility, Andrew observed that Rainbow's therapy of choice – methadone – was the 'displacement of one deathly drug with another slightly less one'. The garden people were his 'introduction to people living on the edge', he noted, observing that he would come to officiate the funerals of many of the seventy garden people that he counted die in Castlebury. In 2009, Andrew took a sabbatical year during which he rediscovered the Celtic church in Ireland and re-examined St Luke's gospel. He returned, he told me, with a renewed sense of how 'God is on the side of the widow, the orphan, the alien and stranger', who were 'the most vulnerable' and 'most important in society'. In particular, he noted how the image of St Luke inspired him to recognise the proper meaning of 'professionalism', which for him meant that 'you make a vow, a vocational vow' of 'compassion for your neighbour'. He contrasted this with what he viewed as the mainstream sense that had 'clipped the wings' off of the term: 'to work legally, bureaucratically'. His visits to Ireland also led him to reflect on the legacies of the English Reformation:

> [The Reformation] allowed us to explore faith and individual freedom but without care and oversight […] The Church encouraged people to think for themselves, but what about for the community? Before the Reformation, 90% of charities were centrally organised by churches. In 1530, there were 850 monasteries; in 1540, none.

The Reformation, inspired by 'greed', led to the 'growth of individualism', he told me. The result was a 'vacuum of social care', he called it, in which the only concession was the almshouses, 'legislated by the state'. 'We lost our sense of hospitality' then, he regretfully told me, reminding me that the monasteries had hosted 'centres of hospitality' – a tradition, he emphasised, stretching as far back as year 200 AD – places of 'care for those in hard times'. Speaking of what church towers used to signify in pre-Reformation England, he once told a volunteer training session: 'Hey folks, if you come here, here's a place of safety and sanctuary'.

'Homeless people are the most vulnerable group in twenty-first century Britain […] and if you're single, you can't [even] access the housing market', Andrew observed, before

venturing his response to it. Everyone sitting 'around a table' is 'a human leveller'. Listening to Christ, he told me, reminds him of the commandment to 'share bread and wine'. 'Why is Oxford and Cambridge so influential? The depth of collegiate connection around shared meals'. These are the reasons he cited for convening the Great Feast for the garden people every Wednesday in St Mark's church. It was 'more than chance or accident', he observed – a 'God-given vocation, God's business, not our own'. This was the prototype for Noah, which he described as 'putting hospitality back on the map'.

Andrew combined his vision with a successful fundraising operation that led to the opening of the Noah Community night shelter in December 2013. Noah's birth relied on the construction of a network of stakeholders. For one, the Council planning department supported it, permitting the application despite local residents' concerns of anti-social behaviour during a consultation; and the Council Housing Benefit department activated a regulatory exemption for the shelter to enable it to receive Housing Benefit at higher-than-market rents (approximately £180 per week bed space). Even though Andrew offered his church's premises as the site for Noah, it required extensive renovations to transform half of it into a purpose-built night shelter: this was funded by a class of individual philanthropic seed donors called 'Solomons' who had donated £250,000 (and would go on to pledge £900,000 by September 2018). It also relied on the support of CCHP's directors, who served as key start-up consultants for the project. Andrew's vision strategically dovetailed with CCHP's own. For one, it aligned with a historic CCHP aspiration to have an early accommodation offering for non-priority homeless persons who came to their housing advice service. This gap in the market was particularly acute since the closure of the Rainbow Project. Moreover, the renovations to the church hall included the construction of purpose-built offices for CCHP in the remaining half of the building, completed in a second phase in December 2016. CCHP became Noah's tenants, shoring up Noah's financial position and enabling Noah to secure a mortgage on the church hall.

Andrew and the CCHP directors teamed up to recruit the Noah shelter manager. By now, Kev had accrued experience on the Castlebury circuit, first in the Rainbow Project before its closure and then, shortly after, as CCHP outreach worker for a fixed term which elapsed shortly before the Noah manager vacancy arose. Eminently qualified, he got the job: he was tasked with transposing Andrew's vision into everyday reality. At this point, Kev became the frontline pioneer of the project, succeeding Andrew. This enabled Kev to direct the course of recruitment for his support staff and volunteers, entrusted to run the operations

of the shelter by Andrew (who somewhat retreated from the everyday life of Noah once Kev was in post).[46] It was a new kind of venture for both Kev and Andrew, neither of whom had founded an accommodation facility. In practice, this afforded Kev a noticeable degree of personal sovereignty, since he could – and did – operate the shelter on his own terms given that the configuration was so tight-knit, centralised and hierarchical. This local centralisation of governance was mirrored in the composition of the Noah trustee board; its membership derived largely from supporters of Andrew's vision and his church congregation. From an organisational perspective, then, the checks and balances on Kev stemmed almost solely from the relationship that he had with Andrew, who Kev referred to, sometimes with his tongue-in-cheek, as 'the guvnor'. In private, Kev occasionally expressed subtle disapproval of what he viewed as Andrew's seeming weakness at the helm of the organisation, even though Andrew's increasing distance from shelter operations over time arguably enabled Kev to consolidate power.

Sketching a brief portrait of Kev demonstrates what he brought to the role: his 'heart', as he put it. Kev frequently drew what he believed to be parallels between his early life and those of his clients. He recounted to me that he had grown up on a public housing project in a notorious part of Axlow during the 1970s, before becoming homeless at the age of 16 as well as having various run ins 'on road' with police officers. He also described himself as an 'addict', placing significant emphasis on how the experience informs his perspective. 'If you have never *been* addicted – if you don't *understand* addiction – you just wouldn't know', he observed to me, continuing that the meaning of the term comes from the Latin '*addictus*': 'I surrender […] to surrender your will'. He called this will a 'demonic force that wants to keep you in bondage' and that he was in 'the warzone'. What turned his life around, he observed, was 'coming to faith', which felt like 'the road to Damascus'. Since then, he noted, he has been devoted to 'love' – by working in drug and alcohol services 'for the past 30 years' – even though 'love was a word you couldn't say [in the industry] back then'. A further key component to his 'recovery', he told me, was 'the gym'. Kev's devotion to fitness was palpable: his office doubled up as a personal fitness studio, and, indeed, his Facebook photos often show the extent of his biceps and a large tattoo of Noah's logo on one of his bulging deltoids.

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[46] Between September 2018 and July 2019, Andrew visited about five times a month, staying about thirty minutes per visit.

Although Kev's Christian ethos dovetails with Andrew's principles – Kev often approvingly cited Andrew's reading of history and viewed Noah as the bulwark of care against an individualist society – Kev adapted its enactment depending on the context. For example, he deftly interweaved religious imagery and Bible verses during church fundraisers. At the same time, he was often highly critical of Christian institutions writ large in the same breath, glossing them as 'the churches' who he charged as 'keeping [homeless] people in the same place as [they] found them, right at the bottom' so that supplicants can 'doff their caps and say thank you very much for the scraps off your table'. Moreover – and perhaps counter-intuitively – he reiterated in volunteer training sessions that the main table was *not* for the reading the Bible and that 'preaching and prayers' were *not* allowed. Indeed, when Andrew attended Community meetings with a Biblical message on hand to distribute, Kev would often turn to me with a sigh, later observing that he did not appreciate what he called Andrew's 'churchiness'. At the same time, he often suggested that 'God is at the heart of what we do' – 'Kingdom Work', he repeatedly called it – and that this is what made Noah the 'best night shelter in the country'. Kev infused Noah as an institution with a certain 'ambient' Christianity (Engelke 2012), and he asserted his exclusive right to control the ambience.

Leveraging both autonomy and interdependence, Kev's ability to enrol supporters arose, then, at the confluence of these various threads. Being the trustee of Andrew's vision afforded Kev a template and a purpose-built building to construct a Community as his managerial domain. A recipient of Housing Benefit, the state furnished Noah a flow of funding per resident (despite Andrew and Kev's misgivings) without any regulatory requirements. In the other direction, this funding model perversely engendered guests' dependence on the state to ensure eligibility for Housing Benefit. By extension, Noah's reliance on guests' Housing Benefit financially disincentivised guests who might have wished to engage in remunerative labour – since this would expose them to the risk of elevated rent liability for Noah to the extent that it would have become unviable – engendering a dependence on Noah itself. A partner organisation of CCHP, a flow of pre-screened guests arrived at Noah's doorstep, avoiding the need to seek recruits of his own accord. Moreover, its lease with CCHP furnished Noah with a further key flow of revenue which came with no conditions of Noah's service provision. 'Downstream', too, the YMCA depended on Noah to hold its prospective residents in a holding pattern; Kev played the role of screening guests' viability for such move-on accommodation whilst resident. A skilled – if not contradictory – orator, he creatively enacted religious, therapeutic and masculine

personas in a bid to appeal to a diverse group of volunteers and donors, church-based and otherwise. Noah's operating model – and by extension, Kev's role – depended on these stakeholders and the opposite similarly applied.

These affordances – in a space between church, state and other NGOs – invested Kev with the possibility of becoming the boss of Noah who could cultivate such a Community. They largely contributed to reasserting the boundedness of Noah as an institutional kind and Kev as the sole authority on its roles, rules and membership. Kev's authority was precisely characterised by his ability to draw such institutional boundaries, define its content and to grant himself and others the exception. Such ability resided in Kev as the boss – and it was bound up with his charisma – setting Noah apart from the Sanctuary as an institutional configuration. The following section illustrates that the relationships that he cultivated with his guests were the locus through which his authority was enacted, contested and legitimised. These relationships were dyadic and variously consisted of humiliation, speculation and making the exception; and, for Kev's followers, such bonds remained legitimate for as long as personalised reciprocity was a possibility.

Kev, the 'cult leader'?

Kev's epithets are innumerable: some honorific, others less so, depending on who you asked. At the helm of Noah, he embraced one among many.

> Kev ascended the stairs, leading me to his office. En route, each staff member's desk chair was labelled, emblems of their workplace banter. Sammy's seat, for instance, was playfully inscribed 'The first rude word [that comes to mind]'.

> The manager's chair – 'Kev 'The Boss' Johnson' – announced his authority. Welcoming me to his office, he hummed 'I'm the boss and I don't give a toss'.

An archetypal *boss* – and the only one so-named in Castlebury's homeless industry, albeit only by his supporters – Kev was a skilled entertainer in Noah; his performances sought to demand others' respect (Michelutti et al. 2018:2). Every Tuesday morning, Noah's guests and staff gathered on the Great Table to observe the weekly Community Meeting. The Meeting's purpose was to assemble the Noah 'family' and to nurture a sense of togetherness: in Kev's words, to cultivate a 'sense of community' that he believes 'societal deviants' such as his guests necessarily lacked, 'growing up in broken homes'. In the Meeting, Kev always played the leading role.

A ritual, Community Meetings adhered largely to a well-worn 'choreography of deference' (Piliavsky 2021:xxxii). Charisma and pedagogy combined with dramaturgy, tedium and the uncanny:

> 8:30am. Ten guests, five staff members and I were seated around the Great Table.

> Kev opened with notices. Noah would be visited by a group of students from Castlebury Grammar School later today, he warmly announced. He asked the Community if any guests would be willing to enlist in last-minute cleaning duties to spruce up the common area for the dignitaries. He also asked if any of the guests would be willing to stay behind to share their homeless journey with the students. 'Nothing like learning about it from experience', he reminded the crowd.

> He segued into the main act of the meeting.

>> 'A clean, tidy building leads to a mind that is clean and tidy', he announced gleefully, recognising guests' diligent fulfilment of their allocated cleaning duties. 'But', he continued, 'two dorms smell funky – please open a window!'

> He concluded the housekeeping notices with a sobering note of caution:

>> 'The same person always doing the cleaning will lead to resentment. We're a community; don't take advantage of one person's kindness. This is a family that we haven't had for a while. It's not for paid staff to interject in your family. If you see something that is not being done, you should jump in. Your time is the most valuable gift you can give – more than gold, silver, other malarkey. Take joy in what you're doing.'

> Interlude – assorted reminders about shelter regulations followed:

>> 'Don't go to the front door unless you've been told to. Guests are not allowed into the kitchen unless you are on pot wash or you have asked a shift leader. When you are cleaning, beware of trip hazards you are creating. If you are mopping, you must put out a yellow sign.'

> Kev shared some penultimate reflections for the Community:

>> It's alright to be vulnerable; it is human nature that we cry over something said 10 years ago; we hold onto the pain.

The floor opened for shelter guests to make any contributions to the meeting.

> Gerald raised his hand and was invited by Kev to speak. He ventured a suggestion: if guests may be given a reprieve from the 7:00 a.m. wake-up time once a week, such as on Saturday or Sunday.

> Kev responded that he would suggest this to staff. But he reminded Gerald that a later wake-up time would represent a 'privilege for good housekeeping' and that it would be 'dependent on the community functioning well'. Kev also observed that staff 'are not paid to do more than 7 a.m. – 9 a.m. on weekends', so any delay in the wake-up time would be necessarily limited.

> Habib was next called upon by Kev. He asked if the guest allocated to wash the dinner dishes on a given evening may be aided by a second guest so that they can share the labour together; Habib noted that he struggles to complete the chore by himself.

> Kev responded that this has been piloted in the past: it tends to lead to 'messing about' in the kitchen. He said that he would reflect on Habib's proposal.

The crowd's suggestions now aired, Kev offered a 'grateful' of his before inviting guests' 'gratefuls':

> I was homeless myself; you can choose to see things differently. Thousands of people are gasping for air, their last breath of life!

'Thank you, Community', Kev concluded.

These performances presented Kev as the sole moral authority in Noah: in them, he exclusively conferred moral instruction on shelter guests, publicly evaluating the cleanliness of the building and perhaps insensitively reprimanding guests for the hygiene of their living quarters. By making positive, universal statements about what it means to be human, he promulgated his own, authoritative anthropology. Only Kev co-ordinated guest labour and made last-minute demands on guests' time. He presented himself as the sole rule-maker, adjudicating guests' requests for deviations from the shelter norm. Kev exclusively chaired the proceedings. His addresses to guests – and especially his closing thanks – nearly resemble a primordial scene of interpellation (Althusser 1971) in which he constitutes guests as his

subjects and demands *his* Community to recognise him as leader. Indeed, it is this type of reading that leads many staff members in CCHP – and even others in Castlebury who have only heard rumours of Kev – to hold him in contempt, eschewing his naming as 'the boss' in favour of a more derisive epithet: 'the cult leader'.

Characterising Kev as a 'cult leader', however, overstates Kev's singular power and it suggests that the political configuration of Noah is a zero-sum game between Kev's authority and guests' dependence.[47] Rather than viewing Noah as such a 'cult' which elevates Kev at its centre, conceptualising the Community as a political and 'moral laboratory' (Mattingly 2014) sets a more nuanced analytic backdrop for the relations of *inter*dependence in which Kev plays a key role. The 'metaphoric realm' (Mattingly 2014:16) of the laboratory illustrates how Noah was, in fact, a site of experimentation and a space of unknown possibility; it denotes the necessarily inchoate, fluctuating forms of becoming and action that it engenders, in which new performances and relations may emerge. This analytic recognises that the guests, staff and volunteers in Noah all shared a common role: participating in – and reflecting on – an experimental process rather than exclusively being dependents or depended-upon. At the same time, the trope of the laboratory does not dissolve the existence of hierarchy in Noah. Despite the evident asymmetry, it signals the integral interdependence of each actor: each person in the Community had equal potential to be a political/moral affordance to another person's life projects and to the collective becoming of the Community as a whole.

The introduction of new and unknown figures into the shelter particularly illustrates the experimental nature of the Community. In one meeting in early January 2019, Kev announced that two new guests might be admitted to the night shelter that day, inviting current guests to recall their own 'first days'. He reminded guests that it might be 'intimidating' for new recruits to 'enter a new group of people who already know each other'. The atmosphere 'might be a bit off', he warned.

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Monday evening, 11 p.m.. Tsvetelina sat in the common area of the shelter after 'lights out'. She is a new arrival in Noah, having stayed at the Sanctuary shelter for the last few months. Her English is limited and guests have awkwardly observed her

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[47] Kev was aware of such critiques and reflected on them; the following chapter explores the interactivity of such epithets and situates them within the competitive landscape of the industry.

seeming eccentricity. She keeps herself to herself, it seemed, and was engrossed by her dated laptop and sought solace in frequent cigarette breaks.

The lead volunteer tonight – Angela – is a seasoned veteran and was bemused by Tsvetelina's resistance to retire to her dorm for the night. Angela is known by guests and even Kev for her abrupt vocal delivery to guests and volunteers alike.

Angela approached the solitary Tsvetelina, telling her to 'go to her dorm'. She also informed Tsvetelina that she could no longer retreat to the back garden for the evening for a cigarette for 'it is against the rules'.

It was a scene of stuttering, manifest misapprehension and scoffed laughter from both sides. Angela debriefed me after Tsvetelina had complied, telling me how 'exasperated' she was by Tsvetelina. Angela remarked to me that she would be recording the incident in 'the book' and informing Kev about it the following morning. Tsvetelina was plainly noisy and 'rude', she told me. I feared Angela was characteristically insensitive in her approach. I kept these reservations to myself. Angela departed, as normal, the following morning in advance of the weekly Community Meeting after a typical private debrief with Kev.

Tuesday morning, 8:30 a.m. Noah assembled around the Great Table for the weekly Community Meeting. Kev began with the business of the day: scheduled visitors to the shelter, enlisting willing guests to contribute to last-minute labour. He adorned his usual costume: denim jeans, a button-down shirt and tie, a zip-up hoody. As usual, he was smart and casual, assuming the centre stage, standing upright.

He then reiterated the shelter's rules. 'Lights out is there for a reason', he addressed the Community.

Tsvetelina sat uncomfortably and appeared mildly agitated. She muttered under her breath in her native language: Bulgarian. Kev continued his rendition of the rules; guests should not exit for cigarettes in the back garden during the night, he reminded us. But he paused each time Tsvetelina seemed to make a sound.

'This is stupid', she finally announced.

Kev was taken aback and then directed his gaze at Tsvetelina front and centre.

'Really? Because the person I'm talking about is *you*'.

'Shit shelter, stupid rules', she volleyed.

'If it is so shit, why don't you leave?', he parried.

Tsvetelina did so, retiring from the meeting for a cigarette. It was her first – and last – Community Meeting.

This remains the only instance of open confrontation in a Community Meeting that I observed during ten months in Noah. It is striking that Tsvetelina was so singled out by Kev, whereas for Ann in the Sanctuary (in Chapter 2) as well as its other staff members, she was well-liked. This is one indicator of the profound divergence between Noah and the Sanctuary as institutional kinds.

After the spectacle, several guests recalled to me how 'crazy' Tsvetelina was during her brief stay in Noah, implying some sort of mental pathology. Further still, Kev observed to me that this is what can happen when he takes a 'chance' by admitting former Sanctuary guests. No one remarked, to me at least, that the confrontation was an excessive display of authority on Kev's part.

Although the venture of welcoming Tsvetelina into the Community was abortive, it was nonetheless productive. Kev embraced the opportunity to reassert his care for the Community by confronting Tsvetelina's seeming defiance of the rules, which he told me that he wrote with the 'common good of the Community' in mind. Further still, he made an example out of Tsvetelina in an unusually stark manner. His improvised performance – and exclusion of Tsvetelina – served to warn and deter prospective rule-breakers. Tsvetelina and her seeming misbehaviour, then, was an affordance for Kev to reprise his performance of 'boss' in a visceral, momentous way, even if his decision to admit Tsvetelina in the first place might have indicated his fallibility in discerning suitable Noah residents. Tsvetelina played as integral a role as Kev did in this performance. Kev was dependent on Tsvetelina to be able to affirm to me later on upon reflection of the episode: 'I am the gatekeeper', a figure who has the responsibility – and power – to admit *and* exclude. Kev's legitimacy and existence as shelter manager depend centrally on an influx of guests – and the occasional folk devil – to demonstrate his responsibility for, and stewardship of, the Community. It also depended on Angela's deference to him and her judgment that this merited such whistleblowing – a

generally unusual move.[48] His performances necessitated and created a subject of care: his guests, who serve as his primary audience. His display of 'strength' over Tsvetelina seemed legitimate precisely because it showed his dedication to (the rest of) the Community.

Ironing out dissent

Kev's dependence on guests extended beyond the symbolic and performative exigency to constitute an audience and to attest care for the Community. Noah's longevity – and by extension, Kev's role – relied financially on guests in two ways. Guests generate revenue for the night shelter on an individual basis: Noah invoices Castlebury local authority per guest for Housing Benefit. In addition, guests' contribution to the everyday functioning of the shelter – cooking, cleaning and volunteering – represents labour that, if unfulfilled, would have necessitated Noah paid staff members' working overtime to fill the gap. The continuation of Kev's role relied on – and was a product of – an uncanny convergence of the state's recourse to homeless accommodation providers alongside guests' and volunteers' own labour of social reproduction.

A key source of Noah's rental revenue was an adjoining flat to St. Saviour's church hall, which had previously accommodated the church caretaker before the shelter's founding. Known as Dorm 6, it was separate to the main cohort of shelter residents in the main building since it was an unstaffed flat-share of four guests. Residence in Dorm 6 was not subject to the usual disciplinary rhythms of the shelter (e.g., wake up and departure times, curfews) and was accompanied with the privileged status of 'guest-volunteer': there was an expectation – almost always embraced – that Dorm 6 residents contribute a significant amount of their time as lead volunteers.

In May 2019, a vacancy arose in Dorm 6 for the first time in over 2 years. It had to be filled quickly: empty beds in Noah attracted critique from the Noah Board of Trustees, who see it as incurring a financial loss. Kev's status of gatekeeper included his discretionary powers to upgrade guests' tenure from the main cohort to Dorm 6. For this vacancy, Kev ultimately selected Fred – a guest who was widely considered by others to be a poor fit. Fred had been viewed by long-standing guests such as Reg and Phil as failing to contribute to the Community, by habitually returning late past the nightly curfew and leaving his cleaning

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[48] Nevertheless, Angela was known by Noah guests and even Kev for being particularly severe. Enforcement of the rule prohibiting smoking in the rear garden after 'lights out' was highly variable, in practice depending more on the bedtime, and smoking status, of the supervising volunteer than anything else.

obligations unfulfilled. Phil and Reg's palpable anger and sense of betrayal signalled a failed promise on Kev's part: he had promised them and Fred residence of the flat-share at the same time, even though only one person could receive it. Tensions rose in the Shelter to the extent that Kev called an Emergency Community Meeting on a Friday morning at 9am. Arriving into work that morning, lifting off his motorcycle helmet as he emerged through the doors, he loudly announced that 'certain people have been disagreeing with my decisions behind my back' and that 'I am going to be ironing them out today'. At the meeting, he curtly addressed the ongoing unrest by stating that management 'know something that you [the guests assembled] did not' and that if they wanted to know the details of the agreement struck between the Shelter and the new flat-share resident, they were welcome to 'come to my office'.

Fred, meanwhile, was bemused by the tensions, but he seemed to conceal the nature of the 'agreement' from the other guests. He later disclosed to me that it was a pragmatic move on Kev's part, since he had been working in the Hare and Duck pub in Castlebury and was working long evening shifts that extended past the curfew for the dorms. As the amount of his welfare benefits was in flux due to his changeable income from employment, it was no longer financially viable for him – or Noah – to stay in the main dorms, since Housing Benefit would not pay the required £180 per week for a worker. Instead, Fred noted, Kev made a fixed-rate arrangement with him, whereby he would only be required to pay a fraction of his salary for the rent. In the same move, Kev created another vacancy in the main shelter – Fred's former dorm bed. He had used his discretion to maximise the rental revenue in Noah and to minimise the effects for Fred of the 'benefit trap' described earlier; but this was necessarily concealed.

This move did not ultimately imperil Kev's legitimacy among those guests whose expectations had gone unfulfilled. They seemed to accept the need for confidentiality and embraced the further opportunities that Kev had speculated might come their way. Reg, for example, proudly remarked to me that Kev had nominated him to train as a personal fitness trainer and had also enrolled him into a construction course, suggesting that Kev had used his 'connections' to facilitate these ventures. Those promises did, largely, come true. Further still, Kev embraced Reg as a future volunteer for the shelter, inducting him as one in June 2019 – a highly unusual move for guests of the main shelter cohort. In the end, Kev indicated to Reg that he would endeavour to 'pull some strings' with an attractive future accommodation option: CCHP's Pathway Project. This, too, was fulfilled, with Kev taking

credit for the move as a broker (even though his Pathway Project counterparts actively disavow his influence in the decision or any of the kind). In return, Kev relied on Reg's reliable and affable presence during Sunday morning church fundraisers, where Reg was presented as a Noah success story.

A virtuous circuit of trust and reciprocity endured between Reg and Kev, resembling the relations of interdependence Kev forged with Dorm 6 guests, on whom he particularly relied and to whom he offered rent 'kickbacks' for their momentous acts of volunteer labour in the shelter at times of volunteer shortage. For Reg, at least for a time, the care that Kev demonstrated towards him had compensated for the previous failed promise of Dorm 6 residency.

Noah's guests, then, conferred on Kev the social recognition, labour and monetary flows that sustained his patronage role – they are an affordance and resource that enabled his caring endeavours. In the same vein, many (but definitely not all) guests embraced the hierarchical relationship with Kev, which in return afforded them material benefits and, as will be seen, local forms of status and exemptions from the strictures of shelter life. In other words, Kev's patronage was not seen by them as inimical to their pursuits for a better life. Instead, it promised an avenue for his following to secure what Koch calls 'bread and butter', the fulfilment of their 'daily needs' in the context of local relations of exchange (2016:284). In Noah, 'bread and butter politics' captures how Kev's authority was bound up with guests' perception of his enduring commitment to relational forms of care and support over time (see Koch 2016:289), a key strategy that he enacted to maintain a following. Kev's promise of such bread and butter here consisted of Reg's status as a volunteer, referral to training courses and future accommodation.

In a similar vein, Kev's performances in the Community Meetings and speculative promises indexed a form of authority which was moral because it was seemingly efficacious (Piliavsky and Sbriccoli 2016). Even when speculative promises were not fulfilled and their failure was left unexplained, this did not immediately imperil Kev's authority: guests largely appreciated the necessity of discretion for as long as they continued to exist in an interdependent relationship with Kev, because such a relationship yielded the continued possibility of future benefit. This interdependence played out according to a local ethics of masculinity, in which (male) guests often recognised the fairness of Kev's authority, as the following ethnographic extract demonstrates.

Monday morning. The usual routine: Kev arrived at Noah and acquainted himself with the previous evening's events. He caught up with a few guests over cigarettes and received a debrief from the night-shift volunteers; he consulted the shelter logbook.

Sunday evening, Kev gathered, had been pleasantly uneventful. Yet later on Monday morning, he invited me into his office, bemused. He asked me: were you there on the Sunday evening shift? I was not, I replied.

He pondered, informing me that he heard rumours that a volunteer that evening had been 'talking badly' about him. But, he sighed, he did not know the identity of that volunteer.

The afternoon arrived; most of the guests have been 'turfed out' of the shelter by now. The only ones who remained were those who Kev gives special dispensation to stay behind, sparing them from the bleak, rainy weather outside.

Reg, Mark and Phil passed the time playing cards. Fastening his motorcycle apparel in advance of his departure for the day, Kev reassured them that they could stay longer since Sammy and I were still staffing the building. Before Kev left, he asked Phil in passing if he knew anything behind the rumours.

Phil responded positively. He informed Kev that over Sunday dinner, a volunteer had loudly announced that 'Kev can't run the shelter' and boastfully ventured that he could do a better job than him. Kev noded solemnly to Phil, signalling gratitude – it confirmed his suspicions.

Phil graciously brushed off Kev's thanks. It was only 'fair' that Kev knew, he noted: for Phil, such criticisms should only be addressed to Kev's 'face', otherwise the critic is not a 'proper man'. In any case, Phil observed to Kev, 'you've been good to me'.

Kev followed up with a final question: who was it?

'Joel', Phil responded.

'[Is he] Doris?', Kev asked leeringly. [Doris is Cockney rhyming slang for Doris Day, referring to a person who is gay].

Reg agreed.

Kev had not obliged Phil to divulge information about the errant volunteer. Indeed, Kev was not necessarily sure if Phil was within earshot of Joel's announcement in the first place: there would not have necessarily been any adverse consequences for Phil if he had merely feigned ignorance. Phil had not divulged the information to Kev inspired by fear, which has been often suggested as being a crucial affordance for the manufacture of consent in modern regimes of governance (for such analyses of the state, see Kelly and Shah 2006; Taussig 1984) – Phil volunteered the information freely and he believed it would have been unfair to Kev if he did not. In this case, Phil had knowledge of sensitive and hitherto concealed information that Kev did not (rather than the other way around). Phil's gift of information did not represent an attempt to compel Kev to give him something in return; in fact, it was Kev who offhandedly asked for information from a position of seemingly challenged authority.

Phil enabled Kev to salvage his seemingly beleaguered legitimacy as shelter manager by giving him the information necessary to confront Joel for insubordination if Kev wished to do so – and this was only fair from Phil's perspective. Phil's embrace of Kev's authority was not based on Kev's performance as a virtuous 'moral exemplar': it was based on the *efficacy* of Kev's authority (cf. Piliavsky and Sbriccoli 2016). He did not remark that it was fair to tell Kev about Joel because Kev was a 'good' person whose character was being slandered. It was fair because Kev had been good *to him* in a way Joel had not. In the same move, Phil reaffirms the feebleness of Joel's authoritarian credentials, implying that Joel's critique of Kev behind Kev's back was a case of cowardice. Phil and Kev discredited Joel's masculinity and thus his Community credentials along the predictable lines of 'to be a man' is 'not [to] be a gay', in the words of iron man Steve quoted in Connell's (1990:94) work. Shortly afterwards, Joel's volunteer role was terminated by Kev.

The expulsion of seemingly defiant figures from the Noah Community plays out the effectiveness of Kev's authority, as embraced by guests like Reg. As Phil implied, the legitimacy of Kev's authority is founded on his apparent ability to 'get things done' for his clients (Piliavsky and Sbriccoli 2016:376). Kev, then, secured guests' bread and butter in conventional ways for a shelter manager, such as endorsing one's continued tenure at Noah. As we will see below, however, he also supported some guests' daily endeavours in sometimes erratic ways that contradicted the general regulations for the shelter which he publicly promulgated.

A night out on the town

In June 2019, the Champions' League final aired.[49] It was to be an 'all-English' final this year, between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur – and so it was hotly anticipated. As an ardent Liverpool supporter, this was a truly monumental occasion for shelter guest Mark. He proudly sported his Liverpool gear: he always adorned himself with the whole kit and was even replete with a hat and slippers emblazoned with the Team's crest. He was a former season ticket holder. The other guests and staff in Noah teasingly dubbed him Mr. Anfield.[50] Mark prized this moniker.

Kick-off time, however, coincided with Noah's curfew of 8pm. This was the latest time that guests could be admitted to the shelter without being declined. Mark – and his dorm-mate Phil, a brave Arsenal fan – would require special authorisation from Kev to arrive later to the shelter. Kev did not often withhold such dispensation if the justification sounded reasonable to him (for instance, if one was employed or undertaking a programme of study).

Mark and Phil knew this and agonised aloud with me about what they might do. They were forthright to me about their aspirations for the night: they wanted to reprise their former roles at the Goose pub in Castlebury, watching the 'big game' on the equally big screen and savouring a well-earned pint or two (depending on the Reds' prospects). Both had confided to me and Kev that they used to be 'on the sauce, back in the day', referring to a history of alcohol dependence. But Kev had also been satisfied of their abstinence for as long as they had joined Noah five months ago.[51] They could ask Kev for approval, they said, and risk rejection. Or they might just not return to the shelter that night, they considered.

The morning before the contest, Mark came up to me and gleefully announced that Kev had 'okayed' their late arrival and had even embraced the nature of their plans to the fullest extent: a night out on the town. Thoroughly surprised by Kev's approval, I congratulated Mark. Mark was relieved; but he requested that I do not tell the other guests or staff about this special allowance, since it might inspire 'jealousy' or otherwise reflect badly on Kev.

Kev justified his decision to me shortly afterwards in a debrief, not least because I would be the lone volunteer that evening who would give effect to his special dispensation

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[49] The Champions' League is an elite football competition in which high-ranking European teams compete.
[50] The name of Liverpool Football Club's stadium.
[51] This makes Mark and Phil some of Noah's most long-standing guests among that shelter cohort.

(by admitting them well beyond the curfew and possibly after having consumed alcohol). He recognised that giving special dispensation for guests to go to a pub was a direct breach of the curfew rule, which he had put in place to ensure that guests did not partake in night-time revelry. He also noted that Noah, of course, did not encourage alcohol consumption: it had an abstinence ethos. Further still, he observed on numerous occasions that 'addiction' was an enduring ontological state: one did not cease being an 'addict' even if one has been abstinent for a long period of time – relapse was an ever-present possibility. Yet, he confided, Mark and Phil 'deserve to let their hair down' for one night.

Even though this seemed incompatible with the disciplinary norms of the shelter – which Kev authored – he stressed to me that he was interested in enforcing 'equity, *not* equality'. This ethic, he continued, is partly inspired by his appropriation of the psychological theory of the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky 1978). For Kev, this theory implied that 'different addicts' had 'different abilities': some former drinkers would be unable to be present 'anywhere near alcohol', whereas others might be able to consume it and not necessarily relapse. Kev's role in the zone of proximal development as a 'more knowledgeable other', he suggested, was to discern Mark and Phil's development out of addiction by evaluating their capacity to drink without relapse or not. He was satisfied, he stated to me, that it would be ultimately positive for their personal development as former addicts.

Kev's application of this theory dovetailed with his authority insofar as it informed how he made exceptions to the rule. In turn, his inclination to make the exception for Mark and Phil endorsed their pursuits of an enjoyable night out in Castlebury at no expense to their tenure in Noah: their bread and butter. Arriving at 10:30 p.m. after the other guests had retired to their dorms, Mark and Phil warmly embraced me, thanking me for admitting them so late. They quietly retreated to their dorm shortly after, delicately tiptoeing up the stairs.

They were rightly merry: Liverpool had won the Champions League.

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Kev's support for Mark and Phil's night out contained a tacit proviso that they embraced: to refrain from divulging to others the nature of the authorisation. This was a key dimension of Kev's authority: his dependence on certain guests and volunteers to maintain secrecy.

These relations of interdependence entailed seemingly contradictory ethical responsibilities, which guests such as Reg took seriously. Reg recalled to me that one morning Kev knocked on his dorm and entered. It was an incriminating scene Kev witnessed, Reg wryly observed. He and Will had the dorm to themselves the previous night and had sneaked in several cans of beer to unwind before bed. The morning after, they were particularly bleary-eyed, beer cans visibly strewn across the dorm. At Kev's entry, Reg and Will feared the worst, he noted. Then, Reg told me animatedly: 'he did nothing!' In fact, Reg continued, Kev told Reg and Will not to tell anyone about both the rule breach and especially not about Kev's discretion to look the other way.

Although Noah was not an evangelical space, to reiterate, it was still variously designated as sacred by Kev and Andrew. For Andrew, Noah was a place where guests would 'break bread' together on the 'Great Table', strongly alluding to the scene of the Last Supper. Moreover, Andrew often likened the shelter to 'the Holy of Holies', a Biblical spatial realm from the Old Testament in which God is believed to reside. For Kev, meanwhile, there was 'zero tolerance' against bringing 'substances' – and this included alcohol – 'onto the premises'. This dovetailed with the sacredness of Noah that Andrew expounded. However, it relies more on the notion of Noah as a disciplinary territory: a spatially delineated site where authority, regulation and belonging enmesh together. In other words, both Kev and Andrew's spatio-moral ideologies of alcohol were broadly aligned. Be it Andrew's oft-stated adage of 'love the man, not the can' or Kev's attested 'zero tolerance' approach, the possession of alcohol in Noah was categorically profane. For these reasons, Kev's decision to make such an exception would have been somewhat reputationally awkward if it became more widely known: it contradicted the disciplinary norms that he promulgated and was therefore potentially fraught for his legitimacy.

After a typical balmy afternoon out in Castlebury replete with camaraderie and beer, I asked Reg how he negotiated the contradictions of Kev's discipline. Reg explained to me the logics and justification for the responsibility that he embraced in relation to Kev. His responsibility was not, in fact, to abide by the shelter's rules on abstinence *per se*. Instead, it was 'not to take the piss' as Reg put it. This implied an injunction against stretching the rules *too far* – to a '*bait*' extent, Reg told me – such as readily discernible intoxication or another obvious rule breach.[52] This also entailed 'being honest to Kev', he said. So long as he tells Kev whenever he had been drinking, this does not attract adverse consequences, he observed,

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[52] Bait refers to something that becomes unhelpfully blatant, obvious or exposed.

even if it is not an infrequent occurrence. What does 'take the piss' is if Kev 'catches you' when you 'haven't owned up', Reg explained: it would cast a doubt on one's sincerity, which he indicates that Kev valued – not blind compliance. Reg continued, it would not be 'right' to hide information about one's drinking from Kev, since he deserved to be told 'man-to-man'. Reg, then, believed that concealment from Kev would not easily align with his own ethics of masculinity, which demands him to be direct and sincere. By suggesting that masculinity is about *not* avoiding confrontation, Reg evokes a memorable phrase uttered by Stewart, one of Katherine Smith's (2012:173) interlocutors in a working-class neighbourhood of North Manchester, who said that 'as a man in a fight, you don't back out'. As Smith (2012:175) suggests, to avoid confrontation is commonly construed in her setting as being a 'coward' or a 'lesser person'. This appears to similarly inform Reg's willingness to admit rule-breaches to Kev despite – or precisely due to – the fact that he is the boss. (It equally applied in the way that Phil and Kev had construed Joel earlier.) In fact, Kev's supposed insistence on honesty seems to enshrine a notion of the good guest as the man who 'bravely' admits his errors to Kev, rather than 'cowardly' breaching rules behind his back.

Reg's explanation illuminates why Kev may not have summarily evicted him and Will on the morning after the night before: they did not have the opportunity to 'own up' to their impromptu session before Kev abruptly entered. And, in any case, it was not a readily discernible rule-breach since there were no other witnesses. Reg's continued longevity in the shelter – and resultant embrace as a volunteer after being accommodated in the Pathway Project – suggests that he negotiated his relationship with Kev well.

Kev's use of discretion – by making exceptions to the publicised rule – demanded Reg's own discretion. If Reg were to reveal to other guests, volunteers or staff the nature of the responsibilities he owed to Kev which arise from Kev's patronage, Reg risked harming Kev's legitimacy. Reg recognised that the injunction of honesty might be seen as incompatible with Kev's general rule of abstinence, since he nonetheless insisted on giving the illusion of abstinence to others in order to conceal the exception he had been granted by Kev as far as possible. He – and Phil – were variously aware that this might unhelpfully demonstrate to others Kev's partiality towards them. It indexes the seemingly contradictory, even erratic nature of Kev's stewardship: both he and Phil were surprised by the extent to which Kev made allowances for them beyond the attested norm.

The perceived need for – and activation of – guests' discretion in these cases demonstrate one key dimension of Kev's authority: an inversion of what Appadurai (1990:101 cited by Carswell and De Neve 2020:499-500) calls 'coercive subordination'. Coercive subordination has been usefully deployed by Carswell and De Neve (2020) to refer to the ways in which lower-caste supplicants in India enact a 'model of pleading' (Cody 2009:364) by emphasising their structural subservience at the same time that they appeal to the moral superiority of those above them in the caste hierarchy. In a manner akin to 'begging', 'subordination is performed in order to force the dominant to show kindness and compassion and to respond to the pleas of supplicants' (Carswell and De Neve 2020:499). Although the structural positions in Noah appear reversed – Kev being the boss, Reg and Kev being his clients – Kev seemed to operate with an understanding that the excesses of his personalised discretion might weaken his authority if it became more widely known. His pleas for secrecy – such as to Reg and Phil for the football exception or alcohol consumption – were not unusual; and he would not infrequently warn me, too, to not 'fuck this up' when he insistently briefed me before meetings with Andrew. It speaks to a fear of losing confidence in his management from Andrew or the Board of Trustees, of losing rapport with guests, having volunteers walk out on him or otherwise alienating other stakeholders. Kev's requests for secrecy, then, indexed this vulnerability and fear of adverse attention that his confidantes had the plausible capacity to activate. Rather than a neat attempt at subordinating his dependents, he performed abject need from which he demanded confidentiality, all the while occupying a position of influence and maintaining his authority as gatekeeper.

Disillusionment and the limits of care

Despite the interdependence between Kev and his clients, the responsibilities he owed to them are contingent and asymmetrical since he maintained the exclusive role of gatekeeper to determine who accesses the shelter. Having departed Noah and successfully graduated to the Pathway Project, Reg returned to the doorstep of Noah in unexpected and distressing circumstances in October 2019. He had fled his accommodation in the Pathway Project after facing threats of violence from his flatmate's associates. Following the theft of a bicycle, they had chased Reg through the centre of Castlebury, reportedly with weapons in tow, to punish him for reporting the theft. Reg had reported this incident to the police, fearing for his life. His residence in Castlebury was now untenable: Reg knew that 'snitching' could carry grave consequences.

Relying on Kev's previous attestations of care and their relationship of interdependence, Reg resorted to Noah as his immediate recourse for assistance, presenting himself there one evening. He had anticipated a welcome and momentary respite, given his renewed homelessness. As he recounted to me later on, this was not forthcoming. He had attempted several calls and text messages to Kev on his personal mobile, Reg told me, but he received no response. Upon attending the shelter, the shift leaders on duty 'did not care', he said. He asked them to call Kev, hoping that this might gain him access – consulting Kev out of hours is normal protocol for shift leaders in Noah. It is unclear what Kev had instructed the shift leaders to do in response to Reg's renewed claims for assistance; but its effects were clear to Reg. He was informed by the shift leaders that he was not authorised to enter the shelter. Frustrated, Reg camped out at the doorstep at Noah for the night. Later that week, I visited Noah by chance. Sammy, a confidante of Kev, informed me of his side of the story. Reg had 'made a fool of himself' and had been 'causing trouble', he told me, by arriving to Noah unannounced that evening. Kev, Reg told me, has not returned his calls or requests for assistance since then either. Reg's encounter at the gates of Noah reflected a renewal of his status as an 'outsider': it resembles how other – lesser known – supplicants have been declined access, as will be seen at the beginning of Chapter 6.

Recalling Kev's claims of the Noah Community being a 'family' and the intimate relations of interdependence once forged with Kev, Reg expressed to me his sense of betrayal: 'it's all utter bullshit, Simon'. Shortly after, Reg was propelled to the 'end' of the circuit, a private sector flatshare operated by New Beginnings, depicted in more detail in the following Interlude.

This sense of abandonment resonated with other guests' reflections. By March 2020, Noah had been defunct for several months. No detailed explanation was ever publicly provided. Its main cohort of guests had been largely resettled by now; all of its staff members were abruptly made redundant. Only Chris, Phil and Angus remained, residing in Dorm 6 – the adjoining flat to the former Noah shelter. They were awaiting resettlement to accommodation pastures new, most likely CCHP's Pathway Project. Until then, they were the remnants of Kev's clientele, bereft of their former patron.

It was Chris' last night in Dorm 6: he was due to move into a new flat-share in the Pathway the next morning. As I describe more fully in the Epilogue, it was also my last night in Castlebury: COVID-19 had demanded the abrupt end of my fieldwork. I counted down my

final hours supervising the CCHP Sanctuary night shelter that evening, which was now being held in the former Noah building with the permission of the Noah Board of Trustees. It was midnight; the Sanctuary fell quiet.

Our paths crossed one final time in wistful circumstances as we both retreated to the shared smoking area in the courtyard. Chris asked me for a comparative assessment of CCHP and Noah, as he was embarking on the same transition between organisations that I had done in my fieldwork. He hadn't heard from Kev for a while, he told me. He was curious, asking me: 'is one *better* than the other?' Kev, by now, had disappeared from the social life of the Castlebury homeless circuit without explanation; a few wholly unfounded rumours at this point had even smouldered that he was detained at 'her Majesty's pleasure' for his allegedly irregular conduct in Noah.

Chris' disillusionment was clear – he had told me that he had been led to believe that Noah was better than the other organisations; that it was 'special'. But, he resolved, 'they were all the same', telling me that they were all, ultimately, 'a business'. The Castlebury circuit, he observed, was 'a game', devoid of the sincere care that he had thought characterised Noah.

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Both Reg and Chris lamented the abrupt termination of the intimate, reciprocal relations of care that they once shared with Kev, viewing this as amounting to a personal failure on his part to live up to his claims of community and the seemingly enduring commitment that these entailed. Kev had emphatically attested his commitment and care to the Noah Community, seeking to distinguish himself from an uncaring state. Kev's apparent failure to be responsive to – and remain a part of – his clients' collective endeavours and networks of assistance had instead demonstrated that he too was the 'antithesis' of a locally valued person. Kev was uncaring, Reg suggested; he was part of an extractive 'game' - a manager of a 'business' – Chris surmised. Kev, then, engendered feelings of betrayal similar to those evoked in Koch's case of the Park End estate, where local independent politicians had generated the expectation that they would be 'different' before facing accusations of being '"crooks" who had turned out to be "no better than the rest"' (Koch 2016:290) in their seeming disappearance from the flow of estate life. By withdrawing from the relationship with Reg and Chris in what appeared to be an abrupt and opaque manner, Kev's attestations of moral authority – his previous seeming embrace and efficacy to secure his clients' everyday needs – seemed now

to reproduce his critiques of the state. Reg and Chris seemed to perceive that Kev no longer acted in accordance with the same ethics of interdependence that he had promulgated and played a key role in defining. In doing so, the legitimacy of his patronage seemingly dissolved in their eyes.

Conclusion: the myth of state withdrawal or an unhomely home?

Kev's style of speculative promises – of care and of discipline – dovetailed Noah's founding charter to redress the absence of care engendered by the British state since the Reformation. His and Noah's rendition of the will to care retains many characteristics that define the industry writ large, even if it takes some of its spectacular features to seemingly unusual lengths. For one, he interpreted – and cultivated – his role as the guardian of his beneficiaries in a world of state abandonment. However, he relied precisely on the local authority for higher-than-market rates of Housing Benefit and for permission to operate the shelter in the first place. These hint at a similar 'intertwinement' that scholars of the Mafia observe in Italy (Michelutti et al. 2018:15-16). Kev's rhetoric – that he exists to fill the shortage of care engendered by the state – dissipates upon closer examination. The relations between Noah/Kev on the one hand and the state on the other are similarly 'symbiotic' as in the case of Italian and South Asian analyses of the Mafia (Michelutti et al. 2018:13). The police – as one arm of the state – relied on Noah as a space of concealment. Kev subtly acknowledged this compact by seeking to speak to the police commander – who he called 'the guvnor', a term that recognises the authority of a superior – in order to negotiate it. Noah does not reflect or respond to straightforward case of state withdrawal. Instead, the state was a rhetorical, financial and political affordance for Kev's legitimacy, especially in his performances that seek to deny this. And similarly, in the opposite direction, Noah's pursuits contribute to the operation of the wider 'single homeless pathway', assembled by CCHP under contract by the local authority in those very terms.

Moreover, Noah strongly – and perhaps uniquely for some – evoked the uncanny. Yael Navaro's (2012:181-184) close unpicking of Freud's notion of the uncanny is useful here. She attends to how Freud's formulation treads a fine line between familiarity and homeliness on the one hand and the 'unexpected, [that which] does not fit, or [which] jars' (ibid.183) on the other. Kev's authority, it seems, to some extent emerged from his ability to evoke familiarity at the same time as he could prompt the unexpected. What is arresting in this case is the ability of a 'boss' to evoke the uncanny so strikingly as a key affordance for

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his authority – weaving it within a wider charismatic repertoire – and constructing a home on this basis. The uncanny also drives home a central paradox in the status of Noah's beneficiaries: as guests, but part of a family; as Kev's clients, but part of a Community. This points, in some sense, to the fictive and unstable nature of such belonging, a feeling all too readily articulated once Kev/Noah's fragile promises dissolved in the eyes of guests such as Reg and Chris.

New Beginnings? Interlude

This interlude picks up several days after Reg had unsuccessfully attempted to reprise his role as a Noah guest in the preceding chapter; it describes when I first met with Reg after his flight from Castlebury.

United in Hope, a late afternoon in October 2019. The day at the drop-in drew to a slow close. An unexpected visitor arrived shortly before closing time: Reg. Just before his arrival, I had received a text from CCHP Pathway support worker, Michael: 'You are about to receive a surprise visit at UIH. Hope you don't mind [me] letting him know you're there and he should connect with you'. Michael, it should be noted, was not actually Reg's allocated support worker; he took on the role on an emergency basis given the gravity of the situation – this assumption was faced with opposition from Michael's managers, who viewed it as an undue diversion of Michael's duties and scarce time. I quickly realised the necessity of Reg's visit after a warm embrace and cigarette debrief. After being declined access to Noah, I learned that Michael arranged for Reg to stay in a multi-occupancy backpackers' hostel in Holmsey; it was conveniently located several miles away from the site of the violence and only a five minute walk from UIH.

Michael, Reg's interim Pathway Project support worker, reasoned that there was now only one move-on option available to Reg beyond Castlebury: a New Beginnings flatshare in Holmsey. I agreed with Michael's assessment and offered to arrange the move. Reg was bullish – it represents, in effect, a sudden propulsion to 'the end' of the homeless pathway.

Turnaround was swift. The viewing of the flat-share and the signing of the tenancy agreement all took place within the space of a few hours the following day. The property was one of New Beginnings' most recent acquisitions. It was empty, apart from one young woman who remained in situ – a residual tenant of the former landlord. She was reminded, tersely, by the New Beginnings' Housing Officer at our viewing – Michaela – that she should have vacated already. Often dressed in a blazer, Michaela was renowned among CCHP caseworkers for being notoriously unreachable. Her time, she suggested, was indeed stretched. Beyond viewings and tenancy signings, Michaela spent the majority of her working day in various County Courts, presumably for eviction proceedings or rent recovery hearings. As Reg's prospective Housing Officer, Michaela would, in the words of the tenancy paperwork,

assume responsibility for 'helping' him 'settle in' to the new home, as well as resolving any maintenance, utilities, payment and 'anti-social behaviour' issues that arise.

Michael breathed a sigh of relief that Reg had successfully escaped the threats to his life in Castlebury. He released funds at once from the Pathway's budget for Reg to purchase a duvet, pillows, bedding and a week's groceries – a celebratory golden handshake not ordinarily extended to outgoing Pathway tenants.

Reg and I celebrated the first evening of the New Beginnings tenancy with beer and pizza. He remarked to me how 'chuffed' he is about the place; that he could see himself there 'for a while'. 'I've made it', he declared. He observed that fleeing Castlebury had the unintended consequence of placing him in a nicer home altogether, this room was 'bigger' and the flat was in a more 'central' location. Even better, he reminded me, that he had no fellow flatmates (aside from the evictée).

'But', he continued, 'I need to give it a blitz'.

In the weeks that followed, Reg invested labour to ensure the cleanliness of his home: he weeded the garden, polished the kitchen tiles, wiped all the surfaces and swept the entire property – even the vacant rooms. He would remark proudly to me that visitors to the property observed how well-kept it was. As new flatmates arrived, he would inform me that they did not care as much as he did about keeping it tidy – dishes began to mount as did the kitchen refuse.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Not long after he moved in, Reg received rent arrears notifications from Zeta Housing, one of New Beginnings' linked entities which dealt with tenancy management and debt retrieval. A survey of his Universal Credit account revealed that the correct amount of housing costs was not being disbursed from the DWP to New Beginnings. Although he had followed the correct procedure for informing Universal Credit of the new tenancy, an error during a routine rent verification appointment in the Jobcentre seemed to have taken place: his entitlement for the full rent eligibility was not logged. New Beginnings rents are uniformly set at the maximum one-bedroom rate of UC housing costs in any given area, for which over-35s are eligible (even though the tenancies are only for a room in shared accommodation). Under-35s are only eligible for a lower level of rent from the DWP: the Shared Accommodation Rate. Although Reg was not yet over-35, his status as a former resident of eligible supported

accommodation for homeless persons (Noah and the Pathway) entitled him to the over-35 rate. For whatever reason, this was not logged on the Universal Credit database as it should have done.

This was resolved six months later: Michael reprised his role as Reg's interim support worker to write a letter to Universal Credit that swiftly rectified the bureaucratic error. The rent arrears were paid in full through a substantial back-payment that the DWP subsequently issued to New Beginnings.

<div align="center">✳✳✳</div>

In autumn 2020, I lost contact with Reg. His phone no longer accepted calls: it went straight to answer machine. I asked Will and Hal – former Noah guests who maintained a close relationship with Reg – if they had heard from him recently. They told me no. Worried, they suggested that I visit him.

<div align="center">✳✳✳</div>

A sobering chill pervaded the November evening. I had not dressed warmly enough, shivering.

I knocked the door nervously, unsure what news would greet me. A tall young lad – who I later know as Pav – opened the door. I asked for Reg. He responded by asking if I am Reg's friend, which I confirm. He smiled: 'Say nothing bro, he'll be back in 10 minutes.' I am relieved by this information and I wait.

After what seemed like forever, a dense bundle of fabric approached me – hoody, fleece, down jacket. He assumed a weighed-down gait before standing shoulders back, head up.

Reg recognises me after an estranged moment of surprise.

'Si!' he shouted incredulously. He greeted me effusively and hugs me into his warmth, briefly pecking my jaw. I noticed that Reg has grown an estimable, cosy beard.

'I cannot believe it mate; what are you doing here? I'm in a bad way, Si – you gotta help me', Reg declared. He welcomed me in at once. We needed to enter his room through the garden door – his main door is bolted shut.

The garden concrete was thickly coated in patches of unknown effluent; it now served as an overflow area for refuse.

The entrance of his room from the garden side was shrouded by a worn beige fabric that only partly occluded the window. Straw-coloured liquid in bulbous bottles populated the space, unpredictably stowed away in artificial crevasses. I tried not to knock one over as Reg and I negotiated the floor, suffocated by refuse. The lighting was dim, the walls sullen brown with only one detail: a large, seeping white spray-paint emblem, inscribed 'Pav'. Pav was accompanied by Mitch in Reg's room, 'sound boys', Reg assured me. We bumped fists before Mitch and Pav resume their conversation in Spanish, seemingly oblivious to Reg's agitation, to the bottles, to the freezing cold.

His home was radically reconfigured from its former self that I remember. The double bed served as a barricade for the main door; that door was now impaled with heavy-duty 4-inch screw bolts in any case. A broken LCD 24-inch television occupied the centre-stage: Reg quipped to me that he had broken it in a fit of anger.

Reg then made a phone call in haste – a new partner, he told me; but he was 'done with her', he noted. Reg alternated between longing and rage at the phone. It slipped from his tense hands by accident and became slightly scuffed from the impact on the floor. Reg retrieved the phone, and, frustrated, smashed it against a dark wooden desk, repeatedly. Mitch and Pav smirked, half-interested.

We bypassed the usual pleasantries. Reg instructed me with angry authority in his voice to 'look around'. 'Look at the state I'm in, Si', he scolded himself. This was not a trap: I recognised that Reg wanted me to recognise a descent. He called my attention front-and-centre to the bottles of straw-coloured liquid. I felt awkward – I did not want to collude in his self-denigration – it overwhelmed me.

'I'm pissing in bottles, Si', he announced.

He had resorted to securing the door himself, Reg reminded me, after the lock had broken from an attempted forced entry. Since the toilet was upstairs, he noted, his route was now 'a trek'. Michaela – his housing officer – continued to neglect to fix the lock, he observed. Her neglect, Reg surmised, is the reason behind the bottles.

Reg introduced me to Mitch and Pav as the 'fella I was telling you about, from Noah, he works with the homeless'. They seemed uninterested by Reg and talk over him, to each other, in Spanish. Reg raised his voice: 'Listen you cunts, I was telling you about Si'. Reg continued, recounting a memory of his when I refused entry to a guest who had surpassed the

curfew. He recited it fondly even though he knew that the guest was, in fact, one of our mutual friends. This did not diminish the story's entertainment value; it seemed only to heighten it. Reg concluded with pride: 'you were strict Si, fair play'.

The story flowed into Reg lowering the timbre of his voice.

'Help me, Si', he asked.

I cannot remember what I responded to Reg; part of it was that I did not know what 'help' he wanted. If it was money, he would say; but he remarked it was not money. Was it drinking? I had never claimed sobriety myself nor advocated for abstinence for him nor anyone else, he should know.

I stayed long enough to catch up with Reg alone, after Mitch and Pav departed. Reg checked his post and opened a letter from Property 2 Ltd (part of New Beginnings' operations); he seemed infuriated – and a bit uneasy – to learn that room inspections will take place in two days' time. 'They do nothing and then they want to check my room? Well I'll just tell them I had no choice but to bolt it shut; I had fellas coming into my room in the night and still they never fixed the lock', he reasoned. Reg had reminded me earlier whilst with Mitch and Pav about how he had been brutally 'rushed' just outside his room by 'a group of boys' who were his flatmates' associates. (He had previously mentioned tensions with his flatmates, who were 'wrong 'uns' he told me; they had variously played loud music past the early hours, disposed rubbish in the garden and discarded used condoms out into the garden, he noted). Mitch and Pav verified the account, disaffectedly regretting that there was nothing they could do about the violence.

Reg told me that those 'boys' who were causing disorder and who were part of various criminality are 'Michaela's friends'. She was always 'on the phone' to them, he observed, and had knowingly deposited them in the property at a discounted rent, he claimed. 'She's running the place for drug dealers, Si', he affirmed. 'She tells them everything', he said, even showing them screenshots of messages of his to her. On those rare occasions where Michaela did acknowledge Reg's complaints about their conduct, they would 'blitz' the flat at once at her request, he told me. This was collusion, Reg was indicating.

Unhelpfully, I played devil's advocate: 'what about if they [New Beginnings] say what you've done is a fire hazard?' 'Cunts', he responded. He reiterated that it should not be his responsibility to secure his room because Michaela is in fact at fault. I agreed.

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Reg stressed to me that if New Beginnings does not keep 'their side' of the agreement, then neither should he. The gas and electricity supply has been cut off numerous times, he reminded me; bailiffs even arrived for a utility debt relating to the previous occupiers one day, he noted. Since the gas and electricity in the property was paid by a top-up meter and Michaela did not respond to his or his flatmate's phone calls, Reg opted to top it up himself to maintain the habitability of the home. He has now accumulated an ample stack of receipts for reimbursement; he planned to use it as a form of leverage if New Beginnings 'talk shit'. He also observed to me that he recently found about the disorienting array of entities operating in New Beginnings' enterprise by doing a Companies House search – Property 2 Ltd, Zeta Housing Ltd and so on. 'It's a scam, Si', he resolved – this was further leverage, he suggested.

Reg started to yawn. I give Reg Will and Hal's phone numbers – and mine; he had lost these contacts after his previous phone had broken. It was a relief to know that our worst fears – whatever they were – had not materialised. I departed soon after, bereft.

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A few months later, Reg called me. He told me that he had called Michaela once more, telling her that there was, again, no electricity in the property. 'It doesn't matter anyway, you're being evicted', Michaela reportedly volleyed back to him. Reg asked me how he might move out of the New Beginnings property to a self-contained private flat, such as a Gumtree listing. I responded that he would have to receive some documentary proof issued by New Beginnings that the tenancy – and hence his rent liability – was terminated; that phone call, I suggested, might not be sufficient if New Beginnings sought him for rent after the move in a worst case scenario.

Several weeks later, such proof arrived: a Section 21 notice that informed Reg that he is required to vacate the property on November 12th 2021 – just over two years since the start of the tenancy.

Chapter 5

'A spy in their camp': competing home-making styles and conflicts in the will to care

On a bright June evening in 2019, Sara – the deputy manager of the Noah night shelter – called me in advance of an evening shift I was scheduled to lead to inform me that a new volunteer named Hazel would be joining me. New volunteers are ordinarily a source of anxiety for Noah staff members. How would they perform? Would they comply with the countless rules of the place? Would they ultimately turn out to be a good volunteer? Nonetheless, Sara seemed assured, advising me that Hazel is a seasoned veteran of the circuit.

Such anxieties appeared, in the end, unwarranted once I met Hazel. On an evening when available volunteers were scarce, her appearance was serendipitous. Hazel seemed to strike an effortless balance, to me, between camaraderie, self-confidence and restraint. An uncommon achievement in Noah, she also seemed noticeably popular with guests and fellow volunteers.

In the cramped and sweltering shelter kitchen, Hazel dutifully prepared a 'Mexican' chicken lasagne under my jaded culinary tutelage over the next two hours. We each recounted our respective careers in the homelessness industry and our inspiration for getting involved. Hers was easily more illustrious than mine. She had enjoyed her formative experience of living on a kibbutz when she was in her early twenties; since then, she had served as the manager of two homeless day centres in Castlebury and Holmsey for the last 25 years. It was clear that Hazel was therefore no 'ordinary' volunteer. It remains unusual for someone of Hazel's seniority in the sector to 'lower' oneself to the rank of 'volunteer'. Seldom, if ever, do active staff members volunteer in the same industry in their spare time. Curious, I queried Hazel: what about had Noah piqued her interest? She responded enthusiastically. Since she was a Castlebury resident, the least she could do was 'help the

local community' and get involved – it was what animated her career, she reiterated, so she found it a no-brainer to volunteer at Noah. I relented despite receiving what I felt was an unsatisfactory answer.

She and I turned to the topic of my research. I told Hazel that I was nearing the end of my stint at Noah and was at that point seeking access to a 'casework' setting – an initial aspiration of my fieldwork. I regretted to her my inability to get access to CCHP's advice service, speculating that perhaps Kev's status did not hold the sway with CCHP that he suggested it did.

At once, Hazel offered me research access to the day centre in Holmsey that she formerly managed with her 'work husband' Mark, who remains in charge of United in Hope (UIH). It was a site, she reassured me, which fit the bill as a casework setting. She told me that, by chance, she would be there next Friday. Hazel was emphatic that all I needed to do was turn up: she would announce my prospective visit to all staff in their morning briefing and I could hence expect a warm welcome. I was ecstatic, if not somewhat perplexed by Hazel's ability to open such a door for me.

She departed that evening after wishing everyone a warm farewell. Angela, one of Noah's most longstanding senior volunteers, happened to walk past Hazel upon entering the shelter to assume responsibility for the overnight shift. Dumbfounded by someone she had not seen before, Angela greeted me with a leering question: who's the 'new girl'? I was unsure how to respond.

The following week, I travelled to UIH, which was hosted in a well-used Salvation Army hall. It was a bustling space: over 60 rough sleepers congregated there with perhaps an additional 20 volunteers frantically cooking, maintaining its hospitable atmosphere and providing housing and benefits advice for its 'service users'. I awkwardly introduced myself at its makeshift front desk and was soon welcomed warmly by Emily, its deputy manager who shared responsibility for the day centre with Mark. Hazel was deep in conversation with many of the service users there, canvassing their opinions on the night shelter in Holmsey that she managed the preceding winter.

After lunch, many of the service users subtly departed for the day. Hazel took me aside, apologising for not greeting me earlier. She extended her own warm welcome to me and expressed her sincere hope that in UIH, I would be able to finally collect the kind of data

about housing and benefits advice that I had initially wanted from CCHP. I could only thank her so much for introducing me to Mark and Emily.

Hazel steered the conversation. In a quieter space away from Noah, she seemed forthrightly curious about Kev. She wondered: what kind of manager is he? She had attended a volunteer training session led by Kev in advance of starting her first shifts there, she told me. 'He was effing and blinding', she incredulously recalled. She noted that Kev's style of address was entirely 'inappropriate' for the audience, which consisted mostly of older, white middle-class retired ladies and, to her surprise, even some of his own guests. She observed that she was experienced with delivering such training sessions, noting that Kev's approach was 'unprofessional'. She asked me if this was 'the norm' for Kev, somewhat unsettling me. I attempted to be diplomatic, seeking not to take what I viewed as the bait. Feigning ignorance, I told Hazel that I was 'merely a volunteer' who did not know the inner machinations of Noah. I advised her to instead ask Sara, who had an arguably more informed perspective on Kev's leadership.

I countered Hazel's questioning with my own, asking her once more what had motivated her to commence volunteering in Noah. She responded that she has known of Kev for a long time, having worked together in the Rainbow Drug and Alcohol project for many years (albeit not too closely). What she had gathered of Kev in the present entirely aligned with what she knew of him back at the Rainbow Project, she told me. Hazel and Kev's paths then crossed again post-Rainbow. She had in fact applied for Kev's job role as Noah's first shelter manager when it was being founded in 2014, she revealed. She was shortlisted and due to be interviewed, she told me, but withdrew her application due to a family illness which meant she could not pursue her ambition at the time.

Our discussions were prematurely halted when Hazel's phone went off: she received an urgent phone call from Bill from Homes for Good.

Hazel unexpectedly resurfaced at the annual Noah Volunteer BBQ some weeks later. I appreciated her company, but I was somewhat confused. Surely she had better things to do than attend a sedate gathering on a cloudy Saturday afternoon? She brought a tray of brownies to the BBQ that she had baked herself – a keen gesture that was unmatched by all attending. She spent the afternoon catching up with Kev, sitting beside him and laughing at his jokes.

Taking a pause aside by herself, Hazel unwound with a rolled-up cigarette. I joined her and asked how she found the BBQ. She enjoyed it, she told me, before turning to me more intently and in a hushed tone. She confided that she was 'looking for dirt' on Kev.

After the BBQ, I spoke with Sara and confessed to her that I had told Hazel that she should seek her opinion on what Kev was like. Sara told me that she had indeed been subject to Hazel's scrutiny and that she in fact referred Hazel back to me, presuming that I was perhaps better placed to answer her questions because there was less at stake for me as an unpaid worker in Noah. Sara, playing the role of consummate professional, did not think it was her place to tell Hazel what she was curious to know. Sara and I both wondered why Hazel was trying to collect intelligence about Kev. Was it related to the newly conceived Chief Executive Director job in Noah that was being advertised? Or did she actively seek Kev's position? Sara and I were not entirely sure. We also could not entirely account for why Kev was not more suspicious.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Whereas the previous chapter detailed the interrelationship between the intricacies of Noah's home-making project and Kev's style of bossism, this chapter situates Noah's home-making project within a wider network of influential protagonists in Castlebury's homeless industry, focussing on how they morally evaluated the merits of each other's home-making styles. Hazel's critical interest in Kev was scarcely unique as will be seen. Her attempts to find 'dirt' on Kev indicated her perception that his stewardship of Noah fell short of how she would have operated the shelter; she suggests that she knew better than Kev, for example, on how to conduct volunteer training sessions, taking it as one example of what she implied were his improper home-making practices writ large. At the same time, her critiques are profoundly relational, stemming from both her own historical relationship with Kev as well as her observations of his relationship with guests and volunteers. Despite Hazel's kindness in personally facilitating my access to UIH, I could not help but feel uneasy at the coincidence of her generosity towards me and what I perceived as her efforts to 'extract' information from me. It felt somewhat as if I had become entangled in her attempts to seemingly compete with Kev. Similar dynamics of moral competition – of rival claims to be able to make a better home than the other – played out even more visibly in winter 2018/9 between Sanctuary staff members and Kev on behalf of their respective shelters, likewise embroiling me in what felt like a clash of loyalties.

Such dynamics echo the forms of moral positioning discussed in Chapter 3, although this chapter focuses largely on how they unfold 'horizontally' – on an interorganisational plane – between Kev in Noah and Elle and Ann in the Sanctuary. If Chapter 3 described how workers defended their moral authority in relation to volunteers, this chapter shows how Kev, Elle and Ann contended the legitimacy of their respective shelter's home-making projects in opposition to the other, reflected in their invariably negative moral evaluations of the other shelter's rules and founding intentions. In short, they discredited the other's will to care along institutional fault lines.

Explicitly staking oppositional claims to how a shelter should be run, these evaluations consciously posed Sanctuary and Noah as competitors of a kind. Studies of state-NGO relations in the UK have observed that public procurement tenders can engender an ambivalent competitive ethos among homelessness (Buckingham 2009; Pue 2021; Cloke et al. 2010:26, 27, 31; Ravenhill 2008) and advice organisations (Forbess and James 2017). For example, Heather Buckingham (2009) studied the introduction in 2006 of competitive tendering by Southampton City Council for its homeless service provision, examining how this affected contracted NGOs practices and interorganisational relationships. She finds that NGOs' efforts to adapt their services to suit the same tender specification and the heightened contractual need to evidence value-for-money engendered a kind of 'institutional isomorphism' (ibid.:245) in which these NGOs' standardised their practices and organisational personas to resemble other competitors. Given the reliance on local authority funding, one NGO manager observed to her that there was a 'them and us' orientation among organisations since 'the council has one pot of money' so 'everyone's fighting […] for themselves 'cause they need to keep their own jobs' (ibid.:247). This, a further manager joked, amplified the need for 'spying on other organisations' since the tendering process had led to competitors 'dream[ing] up really good ideas' in order to 'keep those secrets to themselves' (ibid.:248). Her respondents, then, strongly evoke an image of independent actors vying for the same limited good in a zero-sum game (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2002:114; see also Foster 1965:296-297) and seemingly enacting a Western ideal of 'the Market' as an entrepreneurial site (Carrier 1997 cited by Colloredo-Mansfeld 2002).

This chapter considers the following apparent contradiction: the Sanctuary and Noah were not in fact straightforwardly competing for the same resources in a similar manner to the Southampton case; at the same time, similar desires for 'spying' and interorganisational friction were plainly evident despite *not* being rival bidders. Indeed, particularly recalling the

discussion in the previous chapter about Noah's founding, the two shelters' respective functions in the wider Castlebury pathway dovetailed with each other's strategic aims, suggesting an image of mutually beneficial interdependence.

	Funding base	Shift personnel base	Target beneficiaries
Noah	*Per capita*: Housing Benefit from the local authority, supplemented by guests' service charges Additionally, private donations and ecumenical trusts	Volunteers, often individuals or groups personally approved by Kev	Abstinent guests (or those who Kev judges to have the potential to be abstinent); benefits claimants
Sanctuary	*Service contract flat rate*: Rough Sleeping Initiative funding from central government	Paid shift leaders, supplemented by volunteers from the 'local community', (solicited partly by the local voluntary association); minimal induction process; no pre-screening	'Active drug users' and 'entrenched rough sleepers' (often not benefits claimants)

Figure 9 - Table of Sanctuary and Noah differential funding, staffing and beneficiary bases

The significance of these differential arrangements reinforces the fact that Noah and the Sanctuary were never opponents in the same tenders or vying for the same finite sources of funding. Housing Benefit is not disbursed on the basis of a competitive tender; and the Sanctuary was by definition ineligible for Housing Benefit since it was not a form of purpose-built accommodation. Moreover, as a flow of funding, Housing Benefit itself is not fiscally 'restricted' at source: it subsidised the full amount of rent set by Noah for each resident, presuming residents' eligibility for welfare benefits in the first place. Conversely, the Rough Sleeping Initiative only covers the staffing costs and premises hosting fee of a seasonal night shelter, rendering Noah ineligible (setting aside the strongly held views of Kev and Andrew about state-sponsorship expressed in Chapter 4). At the same time, the RSI was

not a funding stream subject to cutbacks. Although it was subject to yearly contract renewals and the changeability of central government will – an insecure flow of funding – the RSI was in fact something of a windfall for CCHP when it was introduced in September 2018, a novel influx of funding that sat alongside its pre-existing contracts with the local authority for its advice service and the Pathway Project (rather than replacing these). In the concise words of a former CCHP colleague, then, 'we [Noah and CCHP] were [each] playing our own game'.

Instead of straightforwardly engendering competition, this uneven funding framework both reflected and amplified Noah and CCHP's purposefully *unique* brand personalities. Noah's personality relied in large part on Kev's charismatic stewardship, dovetailing his and Andrew's unabashed views that proper care is a personalised, devotional and thus necessarily anti-state praxis (see Chapter 4). As will be seen, this moral orientation informed Kev's strident critiques of CCHP's will to care. Frequently emphasising to me CCHP's supposed willingness to 'get into bed with the devil', Kev framed the Sanctuary's sponsorship by the state as the very antithesis of his home-making project. In the opposite direction, similarly dramatic evaluations of Noah – often offhandedly termed a 'cult' – played out on the CCHP/Sanctuary side. Kev's desire to distance himself from CCHP, the local authority and other homeless NGOs in Castlebury was palpable, observing to me that he purposefully declined invitations to local interorganisational forums. Beyond Kev, CCHP's proximity to the state engendered an awareness in Noah that the nature of Noah's work morally differed from its neighbours. I once asked Sara what distinguished the two organisations. She observed that CCHP were 'caseworkers' whereas Noah were 'lifeworkers', perceiving that CCHP resembled their own bureaucratic counterparts and funders whereas Noah was in the business of 'changing lives', as she put it. This was not entirely dissimilar to how Kate, a CCHP Pathway support worker, once put it – 'CCHP are the brains, Noah is the brawn' – spinning her organisation's more conventionally professional approach as a virtue. In each case, the casework/lifework and brains/brawn dichotomy expressed subtle praise for one's respective organisational style in relation to the other, reifying their respective fault lines.

Inspired by Bourdieu, the work of Monika Krause (2014:93) helps frame the kinds of distinctions crafted by CCHP and Noah as a case of 'reflexive position-taking' in such an intimate field of local homeless NGOs. In her landmark study of the international aid industry, she frames humanitarian agencies as inhabiting a 'shared social space' – a field of practice – in order to identify the underlying logics and grammars common across these agencies and the contested meanings of humanitarianism in the first place (Krause 2014:4).

Her argument draws attention to how the humanitarian field has evolved since its formation to become an *autonomous* domain of practice; a distinct enterprise with particular norms, forms of friction, organisational types, and ways of working. The humanitarian field is a setting in which aid agencies produce relief projects. This pursuit of the 'good project' is an industry charter that assumes a life of its own, essential for the endurance of the humanitarian field (ibid.). In the process, the logic of the humanitarian field is driven by this need to produce good projects, shaping the allocation of resources and types of relief in such a way that is determined neither by external interests nor by beneficiaries' needs and preferences (ibid). In the pursuit of good projects, 'humanitarian agencies orient themselves' towards – and consciously differentiate their enterprises from – each other; they set out their own stalls as to why their humanitarian relief projects are legitimate in comparison to the wider market of (Krause 2014:98).

In Castlebury, such attempts at differentiation seek to secure a particular kind of symbolic capital which Krause terms in the international aid setting 'humanitarian authority', the pursuit of field-specific legitimacy as an end in itself in aid contexts (ibid.:98). This draws attention to the consciously differentiated home-making styles that Kev, Ann and Elle enunciate in their moral evaluations of each other's shelters. On the one hand, their evaluations anticipate how their enterprises might be nominally comparable – as homeless organisations inhabiting the same field – as Chris ventured at the end of the previous chapter. On the other hand, the critical nature of these evaluations serves precisely to rebut any notion of equivalence, signalling the comparative advantage (Bornstein and Sharma 2016:86) of one's own will to care. These claims to humanitarian authority played out dialogically in a competitive symbolic field – staking out one's 'strategic emplacement' (Bourdieu 1984:244) – not in order to derive funding or resources *per se*. The ultimate objective, in the words of a former CCHP colleague, was consciously 'having clout' as a homeless charity itself.

Given the intimacy and boundedness of Castlebury's local homeless industry, workers' everyday pursuits of humanitarian authority were also tightly bound up with personal forms of alliance and antipathy. Despite CCHP and Noah staff inhabiting the same church hall, social relationships were always only confined to one's own half, separated by the party wall. Upon returning to St Mark's Church Hall in November 2019 to start work in the Sanctuary (having left Noah in July 2019), I was jokingly teased as being a 'traitor' on the Noah side by Sammy and celebrated by Kate as having been 'poached' by CCHP. Moreover, despite working 10 metres apart from each other, CCHP and Noah workers only interacted

with each other when a designated CCHP advice worker had to offer a prospective Noah candidate's case file to Kev or Sara. This dovetailed a general understanding of CCHP-Noah relations during my fieldwork. Succinctly articulated by Sebastian in retrospect as 'you [Noah] didn't like us [CCHP] and we didn't like you', this refers to how one's membership in CCHP or Noah carried the baggage of an historical feud between these organisations. This chapter also traces, then, the ways in which this interorganisational conflict reflected – and fed back into – CCHP and Noah's differential home-making styles. This feedback loop both reflected the dominant role of these protagonists' personalities and their divergent approaches to caring for their beneficiaries.

This chapter takes precisely these 'oppositions as an object of analysis' and seeks to 'explain the rhetorical positions [taken] with reference to the social space' – here, Castlebury's homeless industry – 'that makes them possible' (Krause 2014:93). It offers an extended engagement with Krause's insights that the enterprise of aid work relies on the production of 'good projects', a logic of practice in the humanitarian field whereby agencies strategically differentiate themselves from each other to attest to the unique added-value of their projects. At the same time, it diverges from Krause's study of the production of relief projects in the following respects. In such intimate fields as Castlebury's homeless industry, where the relationships between organisations are not just positional but also highly personalised, these oppositions and rhetorical positions also reflect – and amplify – various interpersonal tensions and organisational boundaries. Moreover, in the case of CCHP and Noah – cohabitants of the same church hall – these oppositions and rhetorical positions also map onto the spatial environment of the church grounds, configuring it as a space of contestation. This chapter then concludes with reflections on the limitations of these rhetorical contests in the eyes of two key types of stakeholder – volunteers and grant-making foundations – in order to highlight how the organisational brands cultivated by CCHP and Noah fail to garner legitimacy in the eyes of such intended audiences.

How Kev imagined CCHP and Tom

As meriting 'a spy in their camp'

October 2018. On a fresh autumn morning, Noah started to awaken. As the sole volunteer in charge, I woke up to turn on the lights of the repurposed church hall, lay out breakfast on the main table and to knock around the dorms to tell guests it was 7:00am, enforcing the shelter rule that it was the time to descend upon the dining area. The residual engine noise of Kev's

motorcycle in the car park could usually be heard from a distance. It was one sign for volunteers to ready themselves for his imminent arrival. In characteristically exuberant fashion, he unlocked the shelter doors and exclaimed that 'it's a wonderful morning'. His baritone voice, the rattle of his motorcycle apparel and the thud of his thick leather boots signalled his presence before many present (particularly I) had properly adjusted to the light.

Kev and I made it a habit to seclude ourselves upstairs in his office upon his arrival. In these meetings, it became routine for him to ask me – as a volunteer-cum-anthropologist – for my observations about the shelter. These meetings were also noticeably didactic. Kev enjoyed the opportunity to nurture a PhD student, proudly treating me as his 'apprentice': inviting me to follow him around and to attend meetings that other volunteers did not attend. Moreover, these impromptu, private morning sessions were opportunities for him to confide in me. He often shared his visceral discontent about volunteers, guests and even other shelter staff. I acceded to this role of apprentice/confidante keenly if not possibly with a tinge of naivety. Indeed, upon learning that I was due to interview one of the Noah trustees in the coming week, Kev became deeply concerned and emphatically reminded me that I was now part of his 'inner circle', implying that I should use my discretion to maintain the confidentiality of Kev's disclosures to me, It seemed like a demand for a kind of exclusive loyalty and a sign that I had 'earned [Noah's] trust', as he once described it.

At this early point of my career in Castlebury, I aspired to start volunteering in the Sanctuary – which had just commenced operations for winter 2018/2019 – alongside my service to Noah. However, I was now worried about the fact that my position within Kev's 'inner circle' demanded exclusivity of my volunteer labour as it did for everyone else within it. So one autumn morning 'debrief', I anxiously asked him if he would support my volunteering with the Sanctuary. Having been warned about being careful with what I say and to whom, I feared that mooting the idea of my volunteering elsewhere would sound the death knell of my tenure in Noah.

Yet Kev responded positively, dubbing me jokingly his 'spy in their camp'. Kev explained that in previous winters, other well-known volunteers within his 'inner circle', such as Alf and Vicky, were regularly invited to volunteer for the Sanctuary's precursor (the Churches Winter Night Shelter), formerly fulfilling the 'spy' role for him. But this year, he mused, they had not been extended such a welcome. He seemed to believe that those associated with him were purposefully being excluded from the Sanctuary this year without

an explanation.[53] He described that there was an indefensible hidden agenda behind that shelter: a calculated ploy on the part of the government to 'cleanse the streets just in time' for the annual rough sleeper count and on the part of CCHP to facilitate this in order to receive state funding. Kev then offered me the news that Martha had just married another manager in a neighbouring, state-funded homeless organisation (SHIH) – a suitable metaphor for how CCHP had 'gotten in bed with the enemy', as he put it. I put it to Kev that his perspective might be somewhat 'alienating' if such actors knew they were being critiqued in those terms. Defiant, Kev restated how his project was a godly one. 'Kingdom Work', he reiterated once more, so 'fuck them'. He viewed his shelter as one that extended warm hospitality to its guests and sought to reform them for the better; in direct contrast, he seemed to frame the Sanctuary as complicit in enacting a governmental containment measure.

In the same train of thought, Kev positioned himself as a 'man' in opposition to Tom, one of CCHP's most experienced managers and bid writers. After critiquing the Sanctuary's recent establishment, Kev recounted one particular method he personally enacted to protect the grounds of the church hall from trespassers. Turning up one night to the church car park in a 'black Land Rover', he was accompanied by several of his 'big guys' as he put it, stood resolutely cross-armed in front of the 4x4 in a bid to 'non-violently' evict several trespassers who had set up camp in the church car park and who Kev suspected were 'using'. For one, Kev viewed the proximity of drug consumption to Noah as a distraction for his guests who try to 'keep with the project' of abstinence, once describing them as 'the casualties of a spiritual war [and] our warriors on the battlefield'. Meanwhile, he characterised Tom as a 'pussy' for failing to contribute to these efforts and for attracting what Kev termed 'rubbish' to the church grounds. Kev confided in me that he had a fraught working relationship with Tom, who served as his former manager when Kev previously worked in CCHP. For example, Kev recalled one memory of a time when the two of them had a heated verbal argument in the open plan office in full view of other colleagues, arising out of a disagreement about how Microsoft Outlook operated, which Kev blamed Tom for provoking.

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[53] It is highly unlikely that Alf and Vicky were 'blacklisted' in precisely this manner. Volunteer recruitment in the Sanctuary was by self-enrolment in an online scheduling portal. Sanctuary staff did not, in my observations, 'pre-screen' volunteers (being registered as having attended a Sanctuary volunteer training session was the only requirement to access the scheduling portal). In the preceding years (when the Sanctuary's precursor operated), volunteer sign-up was by word-of-mouth rather than being digitised. Given the profound lack of operational information sharing between CCHP and Noah, it is likely Kev's explanation emerged from a lack of awareness of how the Sanctuary recruited volunteers and possibly from Alf and Vicky not being on CCHP's e-mailing list. In fact, I noticed that Elle did not know who Alf and Vicky even were; in the opposite direction, they did not know who Elle was.

In Krause's words (2014:115), 'human suffering may inherently produce a form of authority.' The suffering of beneficiaries is precisely at the heart of Kev's claims to care better than Tom or CCHP, justifying what Kev constructs as *his* humanitarian authority. For Kev, Noah's claims to humanitarian authority here emanate from his righteous character, rather than preceding it; and his critique of the Sanctuary is equally premised on Tom's supposedly weak character. His desire for 'a spy' indicate his belief that CCHP's Sanctuary is part of a chain of extraction from which rough sleeping is its primary resource. The fact that the Sanctuary's establishment coincided with what Kev viewed as the exclusion of his inner circle seemed to confirm to him that such a conspiracy was taking place away from view, confirming his indignation. Against this backdrop, he contrasts his home-making project as a more legitimate enterprise. At the same time, the role that suffering plays in Kev's narrative is not entirely straightforward. He does not seem to side uniformly with the ostensible sufferers that feature in his narratives, such as the 'users' in the car park (and possibly who he calls 'rubbish'). They sometimes seem to play the role of villain, the embodiment of what he had described as the 'demonic force' of addiction (Chapter 4). This contradiction, however, does not seem to detract from his claims of authority. Rather, it affords him the opportunity to reassert his care for his 'warriors', positioning him as their defender in contrast to Tom. The 'battlefield' that Kev refers to, then, is not solely spiritual – it is, in fact, also spatial.

As persona non grata to the Noah kitchen

For Kev, then, the Church Hall – as well as the car park and courtyard that encompassed it – possessed a particular moral significance. He viewed that space as Noah's territory and he positioned himself as its exclusive guardian, predicated significantly on his muscular (but avowedly non-violent) dedication to security and purity. His presumption of this role is particularly evident in the planning for a local interorganisational fair held in December 2018 inside St Mark's Church: Castlebury's annual Homeless Wellbeing Day. SHIH, the YMCA, CCHP, the local drug and alcohol service provider, local GPs, flu vaccinators, podiatrists, TB and HIV testers, cardiovascular physiologists – you name it – they would all be there, and so would Noah. Several weeks before the event, the local authority convened a meeting with these various stakeholders-cum-stallholders of the local industry (and more) to clarify various outstanding logistical issues, including: When would the event start and finish? Who would be preparing the 'hot lunch' that would be offered to visitors? Where? Who would be 'getting the word out' and how? Who would be signing visitors in at the door? What would the 'goodie bags' consist of and who might help pack them closer to the time? Noah had a seat at

the table in this planning meeting, not least because its Chair, Andrew, being the vicar of the Church, was keen to host such events. Kev had initially planned to attend, before deciding instead that it would be better for me to act as Noah's spokesperson to gain exposure to such forums. Feeling neither well-placed to represent the organisation nor intimately familiar with the church's facilities, I was somewhat unnerved by the challenge. Kev offered me a briefing that resembled a set of bargaining positions, consisting of two 'non-negotiables'. Anticipating a request during the meeting for the use of Noah's kitchen to prepare the lunch, the first stressed that *'only'* Noah staff and volunteers will be permitted to use Noah's kitchen. He justified this on the basis that Noah had a five-star food hygiene rating and so the admission of other workers and volunteers might precipitate a breach of 'food safety' since they might not be 'qualified' as food handlers. The second was that '*we* [Noah] are the security' for the event – that is, providing the personnel who would wear florescent tabards on the day – insisting that the other organisations 'cannot be trusted' to do so. Shortly after this briefing, Kev stood me down from having to go to the meeting – to my private relief – as Andrew and Sara were already going to attend.

In his briefing to me, Noah's *distinct* will to care – in relation to other organisations – was based on a series of corresponding 'symbolic distinctions' (Krause 2014:93). By viewing the presence of outside organisations in the Noah kitchen as a threat to its hygiene standards, Kev coded the remainder of Castlebury's homeless industry as polluting in contrast to his pursuits of a kind of purity (cf. Douglas 1966). This dovetails his belief that only Noah could and should maintain security over all of the church grounds; only Noah could maintain territorial purity. He strived for a kind of independence in which he maintained autonomy over what he mapped as his territory. Setting aside the specificities of Kev's eclecticism for the moment, this mirrors the positioning strategies of organisational actors in global humanitarianism. In her historical analysis of the emergence of *Médecins sans frontières* (MSF), Krause (2014:105) highlights that MSF aimed to 'represent humanitarianism in a purer form' when it originally broke off as a splinter group in 1971 (from the International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC]). MSF's justification for the break and their subsequent claims to authority relied on 'a critical […] analysis of other actors', 'insist[ing] on radical independence and prioritiz[ing] principles and purity' (ibid.). These claims partake in – and construct – wider intractable controversies about the ethical entanglements of humanitarian organisations working with other political actors to secure access to the casualties of war, such as the ICRC in Nazi Germany or MSF in the case of the Taliban in Afghanistan

(ibid.:117-118). On a more local scale dealing with an arguably different genre of humanitarianism, Kev's positioning of Noah seems to rely on a similarly critical construction of the field he operated within: one in which the only choices were *by definition* between 'purity'/independence (Noah) or 'selling out'/collaboration (CCHP and the others) (ibid.:121).

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

How does this field – and Noah – appear from the perspective of CCHP? Kev's stance rendered Noah 'unpopular' with its closest neighbours – a fact that Kev recognised with some pride – mirroring how 'radical purists' have been perceived in the humanitarian aid sector (Krause 2014:106). At the same time, the overarching 'grammar that produces [such] position-taking' (Krause 2014:112) remains largely the same on the other side of the church hall. Given the conflation in Castlebury's homeless industry between organisational brand personality and the personality of those who head these organisations, this grammar is highly personalised. CCHP workers unanimously cast Kev as 'crazy' and 'unpredictable'. As will be seen, these epithets are occasionally used by some secular humanitarian organisations to discredit those they view as religious (Krause 2014:119).[54] During my interview for the Sanctuary support work role in October 2019 – held on the CCHP side of the church hall – Martha asked me how my prior experiences qualified me for the job. I started my response by recounting my time at Noah. Martha then reassured me that I could speak plainly about the organisation with her. 'Don't worry, Jesus is over *there*!', she joked, pointing towards the Noah side of the wall. Sebastian, too, was critical of Kev for having what he called a 'god complex'. These were nods to the ethical distance mutually felt in CCHP-Noah relations and a possible jab at Noah as a place of unfreedom, a common perception that pervaded CCHP's employee hierarchy at all levels.

The following section shows how the Sanctuary – CCHP's flagship home-making project – positioned itself in contrast to Kev, and, by extension, Noah. Its workers sought to demonstrate their humanitarian authority by claiming that the Sanctuary had a purposefully different ethos from both Kev and Noah. They critically situated Noah in their own construction of the local field of Castlebury's homeless industry.

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[54] It is worth noting that Kev was the only paid worker I encountered during my research who would directly cite their Christian faith as a primary inspiration for their labour. With very few exceptions, in fact, my former paid colleagues variously self-identified as 'atheist' or as non-religious.

Through the looking glass: How CCHP imagined Noah and Kev

As a 'cunt'

When I was a volunteer in winter 2018/19, the stillness of the graveyard shifts that I shared with Ann inspired her to disclose some of her suspicions about Noah. One late evening, once it was established that the only observable phenomena through the glass doors of the church were itinerant urban foxes, Ann questioned me about what it was like volunteering in Noah, revealing that she had already gathered some partial information about the place. 'I heard that they're not allowed sugar or white starch, they're not allowed to leave once they arrive. Is that true? Sugar?!' I confessed that it was true. Before she was employed by CCHP, Ann was an academic nutritionist. She argued that the prohibition of white sugar in Noah had no scientific basis whatsoever, terming it 'a load of bollocks.' I tried to defend the rule, by suggesting that Noah nonetheless provided honey for guests to sweeten their hot drinks. This animated Ann further, observing that honey in fact resembled white sugar from a dietary perspective. Ann began to delve a bit deeper, wondering about the origins of these rules and trying to unearth their rationale, before recalling to me that she had heard about its rules and about Kev from a former Noah guest turned Sanctuary volunteer. Her source had reportedly told her that 'Kev is a massive cunt'.

Based on her observations of how Kev had evicted guests, she observed that she was 'inclined to agree', recounting to me one particular example. A current Sanctuary guest had been evicted from Noah: a 19 year old French-Polish orphaned man named Pawel, who reported being a divorcé and an army veteran with PTSD. When she asked Pawel why he had been evicted, he replied to her that it was because he had brought a TV and PS3 onto the premises to play in the shared dorm. Ann recounted this to me indignant and dumbstruck: she felt that it was unacceptable that, for that reason, Kev would evict Pawel from the homeless shelter. She found that and what she viewed as the unnecessary strictness of the institution under Kev's management 'appalling'. I was careful not to weigh in too heavily on the question of Kev's character. However, I felt obligated to counter her analysis with one of my own. I cautiously suggested that Kev took seriously his role as the 'boss' to the extent that other volunteers and guests commonly observed that 'Kev is Noah, and Noah is Kev'.

On a late night in December 2019, critical observations about Noah emerged once more. Elle, then on-call, had been called in urgently from home to deal with 'an incident'. A female guest named Rose, reportedly a young run-away, was repeatedly banging her head

against the bathroom walls, locking herself inside. Whilst Elle was trying to comfort her, Rose reasoned aloud through her exit strategies. Noah figured as a potential one. Elle dissuaded Rose, reminding her in a simple tone as if it were public knowledge: 'You don't want to go to Noah. Noah is strict'. Elle reiterated this to Rose, citing advice that Ann had given to Rose some days before: the Sanctuary was open-access during the night – one could come and go as they please, such as for a cigarette. This subtly alludes to the Sanctuary's no-questions-asked image of itself, indicating guests' tacit permission to catch a quick drink outside, for example, or to otherwise 'sort oneself out'. Such permissiveness was written into the Sanctuary's charter by Tom. He acted as one of the Sanctuary's earliest architects, having singlehandedly written the bid for its funding, secured the agreement with the Vineyard Church to host it and recruited Elle. For these reasons – and his reputation within CCHP for working the longest hours 'by far', not least filling in at short notice for Elle when needed – he had acquired an affectionate and partly deprecating nickname among CCHP colleagues: 'Saint Tom'.

One of the main objectives of Sanctuary volunteer training sessions is precisely to emphasise what makes it a distinctive project of home-making. Elle opened one such evening session in October 2018 with a 'history' of rough sleeping in Castlebury, observing that there had been a 'significant increase' and that Castlebury is now a 'high spike area'. 'Central government noticed', she continued, giving CCHP 'money for my job and [her] team' of shift leaders. Shortly after, she made a series of veiled but unmistakable references to Noah. In 'other shelters in Castlebury', she said, 'you're in by X o'clock [otherwise] you're out [for the night]'. She observed that this was not suitable for these 'entrenched rough sleepers' who can 'be put off by rigid rules' and instead 'enjoy freedom and flexibility', continuing that 'some guests are nocturnal' and so the Sanctuary's common area is a 'very popular hangout' throughout the night for guests to drop in and 'chat'. 'People on the streets are very isolated', she reiterated, and 'in their lives, perhaps since childhood, they have never been offered help'. There is a 'narrow window of tolerance' for them where they might accept the offer of the Sanctuary, she said. So she proudly emphasised that 'the Sanctuary is open-access' and welcomed guests 'dependent on alcohol', noting that it was what made it 'one of the only shelters in the country' to operate in this manner. She gestured to volunteers that because the Sanctuary 'needs' to target entrenched rough sleepers, 'no prayers' on the premises are allowed in order to 'access [as] wide [a] reach of the homeless community'. The Sanctuary guest turnout during the first four weeks of opening, she noted, was 'high' – it was

consistently operating at its capacity of thirty guests – proudly remarking that this was 'amazing'. At the same time, she regretted some of the Sanctuary's limitations. 'Our budget is so small', she stated in mitigation for the absence of shower facilities in the shelter venues and of a prepared breakfast.[55]

Compared to Noah, the Sanctuary's distinct will to care is predicated on a subtly different idea of the proper response to homeless suffering. The Sanctuary's charter, as Elle constructed it in the session, was to welcome as many guests as possible and to talk to them. For her, footfall was a sure sign of success. She pitched the Sanctuary as a kind of corrective to Noah, subtly suggesting that its rule-based regime had engendered a rise in rough sleeping, creating an opening for the Sanctuary. To this end, she stressed the Sanctuary's profession of *non*-faith, suggesting that any form of devotional discourse or practice in the shelter might be off-putting to guests. In other words, she constructed the Sanctuary as a legitimate home-making project because it endeavoured to cast the widest net possible – even if it was of a rudimentary nature – in comparison to Noah. For her, the proper response to homeless suffering was not so much to discipline or reform individuals, which is how she and others in CCHP construed Noah's project. Instead, Elle constructed the proper response to homeless suffering – and the Sanctuary's unique style of home-making – as the work of welcoming 'the homeless community' as a population writ large, 'as they are'. The Sanctuary's will to care, then, is an interactively constructed one which represents Noah's 'failings' as its very conditions of possibility.

The positional claims of the Sanctuary/CCHP to care better are premised on a set of evident symbolic distinctions. These claims hinge on the contrast of 'strictness' (Noah) on the one hand with 'freedom and flexibility' (the Sanctuary) on the other. This contrast fits into a similar grammar of the field as the one that Kev drew on – the binary between purity and pollution – albeit inverted. For Elle, government funding enabled the Sanctuary and is, in fact, a consequence of the rise of rough sleeping supposedly attributable to Noah's strictness. Elle makes no claims to purity in the way Kev did – she openly vocalised the fact that her post is funded by the government – and she indicates subtle approval of the government for recognising and responding to the problem of rough sleeping. That is, she valued such collaboration, what Kev implied was a deal 'with the devil'. Equally, she taps into a modern discourse of secularity that connotes religiosity as somewhat constraining or awkward – and this dovetails Martha's joke to me earlier. For these figures in CCHP, 'Jesus' and 'prayer'

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[55] These are both amenities that Noah boasted as a purpose-built shelter.

signify a kind of pollutant from which distancing is required. Meanwhile for Kev, Jesus and prayer were (unevenly) at the heart of Noah's *modus operandi*, guaranteeing and demanding the project's pursuits of purity.

Just as these distinctions animated Kev's description of Tom as a 'pussy', they also help make sense of Ann's suspicion that Kev is a 'cunt'. These epithets speak plainly to the divergence of these actors' pursuits of the good. Moreover, they are both evidently dialogical – they express the speaker's positionality within an interactive field of local homeless organisations – adding texture to Krause's central claim that the staking out of one's position in the humanitarian field is a reflexive enterprise that reacts to the positions staked out by others. For Kev (and everyone else within, or familiar with, CCHP), Tom was the standard-bearer of CCHP whose values were conflated with that of the organisation. For Ann (and everyone else within, or familiar with, Noah), Kev played that role. These leading men were cast as the embodiment of their respective organisations' will to care.

These critiques are profoundly interpersonal and anti-social at the same time. Kev's critiques of Tom were situated at the intersection of their personal history of being former colleagues. Ann's critiques of Kev stemmed at least partly from her sense of indignation on behalf of Pawel. Elle's critiques of Noah played out in her interactions with Rose, and also more subtly with volunteers at large. At the same time, the image of Noah that was being conjured and invoked in the Sanctuary was not based on its workers' interactions with Kev or with Noah – and vice versa with respect to Kev's image of the Sanctuary. It was 'anti-social'.[56] Neither Ann nor Elle, for example, had ever been introduced to Kev or invited to Noah for an introductory visit. Equally, Kev had neither been invited to the Sanctuary nor introduced to its staff. They all remarked to me that they had never spoken to 'the other', only ever seeing them from afar. Their critical stances towards one another seem to have both emerged from – and fed into – the distance that they cultivated. The main way that the Sanctuary accumulated fragmented knowledge about Noah was mediated through third parties such as me, and through other sporadic forms of gossip, often from people who had adverse experiences they wanted to share. It is worth reiterating that Kev himself also wanted such a spy precisely for this purpose. In that sense, these constructions of the other were 'mythological'. They served as symbolic representations with lives of their own that were mobilised to justify one's own humanitarian authority in the present.

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[56] Anti-social in the sense of erecting organisational boundaries and cutting off others from the flow of social relations, a nod to Mosse (2006).

Symbolic positioning alone is not enough

Noah and CCHP's distinct attempts to cultivate an authoritative humanitarian brand presuppose an audience. Their forms of reflexive position-taking anticipate that this audience will read the field using the same grammars that they have deployed in cultivating such a brand. Yet, just as workers within Noah and CCHP critiqued the other's humanitarian authority according to their own divergent standards of care, so too did their intended audiences along very different lines. This final section offers two examples of the limitations of CCHP and Noah's humanitarian authority in the eyes of two crucial kinds of stakeholder. The first concerns Noah's unsuccessful attempts in May 2019 to secure its single biggest grant yet – £50,000 – from one of the UK's leading charitable foundations: the Ace Foundation. The second concerns a dedicated Sanctuary volunteer's claims in March 2020 that CCHP's staff recruitment practices exhibited a degree of corruption. In both cases, the humanitarian authority that Noah and CCHP had respectively cultivated was discredited using alternative ideas about the proper way of undertaking the business of ending homelessness.

'Fixing their brokenness' is not an outcome or an objective

> The light flooded Noah on a Tuesday afternoon. Kev had asked me, Chris and Phil to stay behind to spruce up the place in preparation for a visit from 'someone from Ace'. To be even visited by Ace in the first place was an achievement. Leticia, Noah's fundraising officer, had succeeded for the first time in the organisation's history to reach the interview phase of the Ace application process. Besides giving Noah a vigorous tidy, however, there was no match-day planning. Earlier that morning, Leticia had called the shelter mobile desperately seeking a conversation with Kev to conjure up a strategy for the interview; but Kev, for whatever reason, declined to speak to her. Who would represent Noah at the interview? Where would it be held? What would Noah's pitch be? It would later appear that none of these questions was discussed in advance. After Chris, Phil and I had tidied Noah, Kev insisted at the eleventh hour that we attend the meeting – he wanted to 'put [us] in front of Ace' to show off the work of Noah – but he had not yet cleared that with the rest of the Noah delegation.

> Kev, Leticia and Andrew were later joined by Basil, one of Noah's senior trustees, in eager anticipation of Ace's visit. They didn't know the identity of the Ace assessor or

the assessor's precise time of arrival. I was on lookout in the car park, soon noticing an unfamiliar woman who seemed lost and a little bit peeved by the lack of signage: it was she. I acted as the impromptu greeter before re-entering the building to rejoin Chris and Phil. Kev frantically shooed us three upstairs to the mezzanine – to be 'on standby' – hiding out of view of the Great Table where the interview quickly commenced. Each of us upstairs had to work hard to stifle our breath, communicating to each other only by miming.

It was an uncomfortable meeting that lasted over an hour. The Ace assessor asked exacting questions of Noah that no one present could answer to her satisfaction. Even though securing the interview with the Ace Foundation was down to Leticia's hard work, none of the other Noah participants allowed her to get a word in edgeways; her sighs were audible at times. The assessor first asked what sets Noah apart, what more does the charity do 'beyond' the provision of accommodation? Kev interjected that he provides 'psychosocial interventions', reminding the assessor that the 'guests arrive at Noah so broken' because they 'didn't sit at a dinner table growing up' in the context where 'society is individualist'. She probed what Kev meant by 'psychosocial interventions'. He responded that it aimed to 'fix their brokenness'. She asked him if he was registered with a nationally accredited body as a psychological practitioner. He answered with a muted no.

Next, she turned to the 'data' that Noah collects to evidence the effectiveness of its interventions. Kev responded that she 'should take a look at the guest book', where several guests write messages of thanks or poignant reflections shortly before their (positive) departure from Noah. This did not seem to be the kind of data that she had in mind. She asked: does Noah use In-Form, the 'industry-standard' case management system? Kev responded with a muted no. 'So how do you measure outcomes?' Basil responded similarly to Kev, that 'fixing their brokenness' was the outcome and that it was 'immeasurable' by definition. She retorted that '"fixing their brokenness" is not an outcome – or even an objective', telling those present that they lacked 'indicators' for the work that they undertake.

Finally she probed Noah's 'governance'. Were the shift leaders' criminal records checked? Another no. She then asked about the management structure, and expressed

'concern' that Andrew, the Chair of the Trustees, was also the de facto Chief Executive and Treasurer, investing the most significant powers 'into one person'.

She informed those present that Ace would not be proceeding with the application at this time; but that Noah is welcome to re-apply in the next window if it has addressed these issues. Kev seemed irritated, informing her that he had assembled a group of volunteers and guests who have been waiting to talk to her, a last-ditch attempt to make her change her mind. She responded that her decision is final but that she is happy to meet them if he wanted. 'There's no point then; they waited all this time for nothing. I'll send them away', he rebuffed.

Once the assessor left, Kev and Basil called us three from upstairs down for a debrief. They suggested that the meeting was 'a success' because Ace was willing to consider their application again in the autumn round. A few weeks later, Leticia resigned from the fundraising role.

Is the recruitment dodge?

March 2020. COVID-19 emerged in the UK. The Prime Ministerial televised address had announced 'lockdown' yesterday. I was working my last night in Castlebury as shift leader and support worker for the CCHP Sanctuary – a late slot from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. It was midnight on the final night that guests would use that building as a night shelter for the foreseeable future; tomorrow, they would be 'decanted' into hotels for the unquantified remainder of the nation's enforced hibernation (see Epilogue).

The lights were off; it was especially quiet tonight. I idled in the common area of Noah, only illuminated by a soft glow from the faulty sensor lights of the church grounds.

In the sombre peace, Caitlyn – the Sanctuary volunteer this historic shift – was quietly at work. With dilute bleach solution and a cloth, she gently pottered around Noah, disinfecting all of the touch points. Caitlyn did not conform to the conventional 'twin-set and pearls' middle-class retiree archetype of English charity volunteers (Treloar 2011 cited by Kirwan 2016). She dressed youthfully in a black hoodie conveying the message 'CHOOSE LOVE'. Caitlyn was an accomplished military nurse, medical lecturer and hospital manager; and she had singlehandedly overseen adjustments to

the hygiene of the shelter on her own initiative. We reflected on COVID, my PhD, the future of homelessness and its fading pasts, such as the closure of night shelters and the abrupt end of Noah.

Having entirely bypassed the obligatory small talk inherent in staff-volunteer interactions, Caitlyn critically subjected the Sanctuary to conversation with me. 'What's their recruitment like?', she mused. I responded that as a general norm, CCHP recruited by referral (from potential recruits known personally to its current staff) and by backfilling. This seemed to both verify her preconceptions and to incite a follow-up reflection: she inquired if it was 'dodge'. She continued by explaining that her friend had applied for the Sanctuary support work role in October 2019 and 'didn't even get an interview'. This was despite the fact that she had supported him with the application and believed that he was adequately qualified.

I responded to Caitlyn that the role he was applying for was the same one that I was ultimately offered; this seemed to assuage her concerns. In retrospect, however, when I later recalled Elle's personal insistence that I apply for that post – owing to her claim that no suitable candidates responded to the public job advert – it became difficult to figure out which side of the story was accurate.

The Ace Foundation assessor and Caitlyn were, respectively, subjecting Noah and CCHP to different conceptions of a 'good project' (Krause 2014). In both cases, each of them sought to assess these charities' merits in their own right, not by comparison to the other, revealing apparent blind spots in their respective claims to humanitarian authority.

For the Ace assessor, Noah lacked credibility as a prospective grant holder. At the beginning of the meeting, she sought to elicit Noah's value proposition, what distinguished it from any other night shelter. For her, 'psychosocial interventions' – Kev's response – was not credible in the absence of professional accreditation, clearly defined objectives/outcomes and the means of tracking these. Her emphasis was on evaluating the 'efficiency' of Noah's interventions and its adoption of industry best practices (such as criminal records' checks, separation of governance roles and deployment of sector-wide database software) – these are the features of a good project.[57] Meanwhile, Kev seemed to believe that Noah's beneficiaries – such as Chris, Phil and me – represented compelling, living proof of his unmediated will to care. In short, whereas these shortcomings may have been proud indicators of 'purity' to the

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[57] It is worth noting that CCHP does not use In-Form either.

Noah delegation – by demonstrating a wilful disavowal of adopting industry standards and various best practices – for the Ace assessor, it seemed to be a sign of unprofessionalism.

Similarly, Caitlyn evaluated CCHP according to expectations of professionalism that, it seemed, were distant from the ways in which Elle and her colleagues had cultivated the Sanctuary's humanitarian authority. By querying if CCHP regularly acted in a 'dodge' way, Caitlyn revealed a suspicion that CCHP favoured its own and was therefore falling short of proper merit-based recruitment standards. Her will to question was motivated by her own personal relationships, the perception that her friend in particular was unjustly treated, evoking indignation at CCHP given its claims to propriety.

This divergence in belief about what constitutes a good project mirrors what Krause has described in the aid industry as the 'fragmentation of reason' (Krause 2014). Just as in the international aid industry, there is no consensus in Castlebury's homeless industry about the proper mode of response to homeless suffering or about the proper way to direct the operations of a homeless organisation in the first place. These are essentially contested questions; in Krause's (2014:19-21) terms, they are indeterminate. The English homeless industry lacks the same standardisation initiatives as the international aid industry.[58] The lack of shared vernaculars or declared commitment to common principles amplified Noah and CCHP pursuits to map out their own vision of the playing field and to 'invent' their own charters with reference to the other's failings. Similarly, the multiplicity of key stakeholders involved – Ace and Caitlyn being two key examples – demonstrates the fragility of these organisations' claims to authority when scrutinised against other conceptions of the good project, such as monitoring and evaluation, accountability and merit-based recruitment.

Conclusion: Landscapes of antagonism redux

This chapter has demonstrated how the will to care was a site of contestation and differentiation between two intimately entangled organisations, offering one example of the fraught realities that lay beneath the widely vaunted New Public Management ideal of interagency partnerships. By drawing on Monika Krause's work, it has highlighted that

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[58] For one, Krause (2014:Ch. 5) offers the example of the *Sphere Handbook* – a widely adopted manual that outlines a statement of 'the humanitarian charter', a list of human living standards (for example, hydration and nutrition) and various technical indicators to assess the attainment of such standards. The *Sphere Handbook*, she notes (Krause 2014:134), seeks to offer a common language for the aid industry 'to compare results, not just against initial goals but to an external set of criteria'. No such equivalent exists in the case of Noah or CCHP. In a similar vein, the logframe – a ubiquitous planning template for aid interventions that maps out an orderly set of objectives, inputs, assumptions, outcomes and indicators (Krause 2014:Ch. 3; Mosse 2005:38) – is another unknown technology.

competition in the aid industry is not necessarily only animated by the scarcity of resources; instead, competitive logics also play out on a moral plane where actors interactively vie for humanitarian authority. Leading figures in Noah and the Sanctuary constructed the charter of their respective projects as a necessary moral corrective to the shortcomings of the other, motivated by mutually directed forms of indignation.

Established both as responses to – and products of – austerity, Noah and the Sanctuary emerged from, and made up, various landscapes of antagonism (Newman 2014). Newman's term draws attention to the uneven political dynamics that unfold in an era of neoliberalisation and fiscal retrenchment, particularly between UK central and local government. These dynamics crystallised in St Mark's Church Hall, where the party wall that set Noah and CCHP apart from each other also symbolised the moral boundaries of these institutions. As a project closely associated with the local Anglican church and part-funded by the local authority, Noah was one 'island' (Wills 2012 cited by Newman 2014) that sat uneasily beside a different kind of island, the Sanctuary, a project fully funded by a windfall from central government. The contestation that took place between Noah and the Sanctuary cannot be exclusively understood in terms of their different donors or as a reflection of central-local government conflicts. However, on the frontline, these various forms of proximity and distance were affirmed by figures such as Kev and Elle in their fragile pursuits to position their project as more legitimate than the other; and the affordances of these different support packages lent themselves to different styles of night shelter in the first place. Crucially, the profoundly differentiated ethoses of these projects corresponded to the distinct personalities of the leading men and women who headed them, leading to the re-enactment of historical forms of interpersonal conflict in the present and the emergence of new ones.

The following chapter reveals how this fragmentation of reason plays out in the industry's evaluations of deservingness.

Halcyon Close: interlude

After residing in Noah for six months, Will had progressed to the YMCA in June 2019, the 'next step' of the Castlebury single homeless circuit.[59] For as long as I have known Will, he has had severe arthritis in both hips and walked with a limp. White English and a fifty-something former builder who was born and bred in Castlebury, Will's hallmark is his self-deprecating sense of humour. It earned him widespread affection in Noah; and he took pride in reprising a further former craft – 'cheffing' – whenever Kev had given special dispensation for his involvement in meal preparation. He is also an unusually skilled Cockney speaker for a person hailing from Castlebury. He links this to his working-class upbringing, 'spending time on the streets', working in construction, and formerly 'being a boyo'.

In December 2019, during his stay at the YMCA, he had surgery to replace his right hip joint. I recall Will's elation immediately after the surgery: he had been longing for this procedure for some time. However, Will suffered subsequent devastating medical complications. In the months that followed, Will found himself intermittently back in hospital to deal with recurrent post-operative infections precisely at the core of his long awaited replacement hip. These complications only worsened. By May 2020, he became an in-patient after an unexplained fever: the recurrent hip infection had led to sepsis. This time, he also had life-threatening pneumonia and a pulmonary embolism. His pre-existing asthma fed into – and was exacerbated by – these conditions.

During Will's extended hospitalisation, I later learned, he had been evicted in absentia from the YMCA. Laura, Will's sister who lived locally and was named as his next-of-kin, had been unexpectedly contacted one morning during that summer by a YMCA staff member, who requested her to vacate his room of its belongings that day. The explanation given to Laura for this, she recounted to me, was that he had been 'in hospital for too long'. Jacob, Will's allocated HEDI housing advisor, somewhat corroborated this, speculating that Will had become deemed as being 'too high support need'. At the same time, Jacob regretted

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[59] After Will left Noah for the YMCA, he and I lost close contact with each other until August 2020, when Reg – former Noah guest and one of our mutual friends – shared our contact details with each other again, inspired to do so after he heard about Will's extended illness in summer 2020. In the events narrated in this section, I assumed something of a personal welfare assistant role for Will from then onwards, seeking to apply my past experiences in the industry in the service of Will's pursuits. This role, Will understood, was as a friend and a researcher, since I was no longer affiliated with any Castlebury organisation; and I am grateful to him for offering me access to his 'case' with express approval to write about it. Moreover, Will insisted that Jacob kept me apprised of developments in this case. In the event, this was mutually convenient, since I came to assume some of Jacob's workload on the matter.

resignedly, he lacked the capacity to challenge Will's eviction. Relations between CCHP and the YMCA were already 'not great', Jacob observed to me, and he noted that his time was being consumed by 'fighting the council' in anticipation of engaging solicitors for cases that were 'even worse' than that of Will's YMCA eviction. Shortly later, Laura attempted unsuccessfully to contact the local MP as a means to challenge his eviction, she told me. Will's licence to occupy his YMCA room was precisely that – a licence, not a tenancy – which conferred a wide scope of discretion for YMCA staff. This enabled the YMCA to evict Will at a moment's notice without a requirement to communicate the eviction – or the reasons for it – in writing.

No one closely involved in the eviction – Laura, Will or Jacob – was able to coherently explain its rationale. It was still unclear on what basis Will's hospitalisation was deemed 'too long' for him to retain his YMCA accommodation. The most plausible explanation is that the relevant YMCA staff member had misinterpreted the Housing Benefit rules, presuming erroneously that a claimant's eligibility for Housing Benefit ceased after thirteen weeks of absence. For workers across Castlebury's homeless industry, this was commonly understood to be the maximum permitted period of absence. In cases of hospitalisation, however, the rules permitted an absence of up to one year. His eviction, then, was arbitrary; and it was not accompanied with housing advice or an alternative offer of accommodation in anticipation of his discharge.

Will finally left hospital in August 2020 after a further series of surgeries to reverse the fraught hip replacement, leaving him with a stop-gap prosthetic joint in the interim that rendered him largely immobile. Upon his discharge, he was 'homeless' once more, moving into Laura's council maisonette. Given his profound immobility, the maisonette was plainly unsuitable, as I learned during a visit. The bathroom and spare bedrooms were located upstairs, rendering him effectively unable to access these. As a result, he resided on Laura's living room sofa for several months.

Will's only recourse, Jacob now resolved, was for Castlebury Council to accept a duty to accommodate him (due to his 'priority need') under Part 7 of the Housing Acts (see also Chapter 6). However, Jacob was uneasy about the prospects of success for this, observing to me that Castlebury Council would necessarily contrive to 'gatekeep' and/or make a negative finding. He observed that before he could advocate for Will to the Council, he would require the usual bundle of paperwork for such a request: evidence of Will's medical vulnerability as

well as proof of income, of identification and, ideally, of receipt of disability benefits. Will seemed to embrace the task of acquiring this paperwork, which he called in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek manner his 'homework'. As a friend of his with past experience in accumulating similar evidence, Will enlisted me in the work of, as he once joked, 'helping' him with some of the 'homework'; although he insisted that I 'leave' some homework for him, because he took seriously 'trying to help myself'. The forms of homework I confronted included making a claim for disability benefits, writing supporting letters and applying for a replacement birth certificate. In my own way, I shared Will's pursuit of 'a place of my own', as he called it, which he anticipated from the Council. At the same time, I felt obliged to offer him a 'tip off, as a mate' that the process may prove disheartening at times, given the typical extended waiting times and the uncertainty of even receiving an initial response from the Council. This did not seem to dampen his hope, however. In fact, he started to respond to my attempts at expectation management with what became a new motto of his: 'be lucky'. Similarly to Amir in Chapter 6, the process of assembling Will's bundle took over two months, before Jacob sent it off to the Council in December 2020.

For Will, this process seemed to resemble a test of his character. 'Being homeless for the third time has actually made me humble and also [it] give me drive', which he viewed as an essential component of what he called his 'will to success'. In his words, the eviction from the YMCA and the various forms of homework – institutionalised forms of precarity and conditionality – were 'hoops' that he sought to 'go through' because

> I don't give up not giving up. And I can't. Because once you give up, that's it. You might as well say goodbye to your life. I know we've all got our little stepping stones […] It's a rollercoaster ride. The reason why I say that is because you don't know what's happening or anything. It's out of your control […]

Shortly after sharing these reflections with me, Will predicted with a certain confidence that 'I'm focussed on achieving what I want to achieve […] I tell you: in a year or so, I'll have my own flat'. 'You make your own luck', he said, defining luck as 'be[ing] in the 'right place at the right time' and the pursuit of 'be[ing] a nice person, otherwise why should they help me?'

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

In January 2021, an official from the local authority responded to the application that Jacob lodged on behalf of Will. It was an initial housing need assessment by Castlebury Council, which takes the standard form of a 'Personal Housing Plan':

> **Finding a home**
>
> Castlebury District Council's Housing Options service exists to support you in finding a home.
>
> [...]
>
> Due to the fact that there are so few available council houses in the borough, and there are strict criteria for eligibility, it is highly unlikely that you will be able to move into a council house. Even for those who are eligible there are long waiting lists.

It also signalled numerically the unaffordability of private-sector accommodation in Castlebury, using a chart of concentric circles with a distorted scale:

Average rent for a one bedroom home in Castlebury

£300 per week

Maximum housing costs paid by the DWP to benefits claimants for rent in Castlebury: £209.77
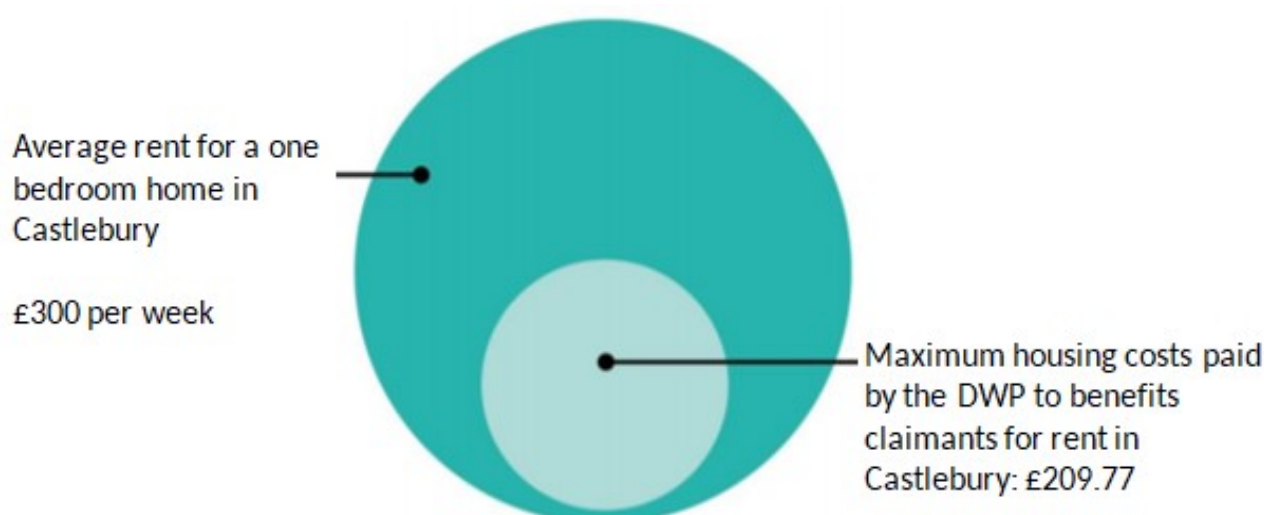
Figure 10 - Image from Castlebury Council housing application response

> It is really difficult - almost impossible - to find accommodation in Castlebury that can be covered by housing benefit.

It reminded housing applicants that it was not necessarily the Council's responsibility to accommodate them:

> If you are threatened with homelessness, we have a duty to try to prevent your homelessness by assisting you to stay in your current home where appropriate. If you

are homeless, we have a duty to try to relieve your homelessness and provide you with advice and assistance to help you to find alternative accommodation. This is likely to be in the Private Sector.

However, it is not the Council's sole duty to offer you a home. You will need to work with us by following the actions set out in your Personal Housing Plan to help you remain in your current home or secure alternative accommodation in the private sector. You are required to contact your allocated officer and provide updates on the actions you have taken. Your officer will provide you with updates and you may also be contacted by other officers of the council who will try to prevent your homelessness.

The final part of the generic section of the Personal Housing Plan detailed a diagrammatic timeline which illustrated the (ideal) process which ensues from the point of the initial assessment until securing accommodation. The Council's role in the timeline consisted of the following undertakings:

- Referral To Other Services: Private Sector Scheme, Single Homeless Services, Support Services, CAB

- We can contact friends or relatives to help you find a place to stay

- We will advise you on:

  - Access to private-rented accommodation

  - Finding family or friends to stay with

  - Deposit/Financial Assistance

  - Applying to the Councils [sic] Housing Register

  - Housing Waiting Times

In parallel to the Council's undertakings in the timeline were those of the applicant:

Best ways to find accommodation:

- Speaking to friends/relatives

- Search for private rented accommodation

This corresponded neatly with the personalised section of the Personal Housing Plan, which detailed Will's 'required steps' to 'work through':

Step 1: Search for accommodation to rent

[…]

If you find affordable and suitable 1 bedroom accommodation, please let me know and the Council may be able to help you with the security deposit and one month's rent in advance through the homeless prevention fund.

Check notice boards in supermarkets, small shops, newsagents, and libraries.

These often have adverts for places to rent put there by landlords

Advertise yourself that you need a place to rent

The adverts are sometimes free or cost very little

If you use Facebook or Twitter, or any other social media, let your contacts know you are looking for a place

[…]

You can also sign up to housing associations should you wish to

Step 2:

Speaking to friends or relatives about whether you can stay with them for a while. This is likely to be the most successful option whilst you are search for permanent accommodation.

Speak to your GP about a referral to adult social services so that social services can provide you with support where necessary. Please explain to your allocated social worker that I will need to be in contact with them regarding any temporary accommodation that you would be offered

Step 3:

Assistance finding accommodation through the Accommodation Finding Service

If the tenant finder service contacts you for a viewing, you must respond straight away and attend any interviews they make with you. Have they contacted you?

Please send me your bank statements when you receive them

Speak to UC to see if you may be eligible for employment support allowance [sic]

The Housing Options Officer's required steps were markedly briefer:

Add to the tenant finder list

Refer to the resettlement team to additional support completed

I will send you through any 1 bed properties that estate agents alert me to.

There was a blank space below each required applicant step in the Personal Housing Plan, entitled 'What I have done to complete this step?' There was no equivalent space for the Housing Officer to record her progress at the subsequent meetings envisaged. The only allusion to the possibility of the Council assuming responsibility for accommodating Will lay as a footnote on the final page: 'Duty owed: under investigation'.

The Plan variously located responsibility for accommodating Will to a disparate array of agencies and realms: the private rented sector, Support Services (ambiguously defined), the Citizens Advice Bureau, GP, social workers, Universal Credit, his family and friends, supermarkets, small shops, newsagents, libraries, Facebook, Twitter and other social media. Moreover, it also located the responsibility to 'Single Homeless Services', which refers primarily to CCHP. In this case, this subtly indicated that the responsibility resides with CCHP as opposed to the Council, generating the seeming possibility of (infinite) regress. Whilst the Council undertook to assemble many of these disparate realms together in the search to secure accommodation, it claimed that the applicant is primarily responsible for doing so. And if the applicant ultimately fails to demonstrate a willingness to search for accommodation beyond the council – a case of failing to 'co-operate' – the Plan warned that the Council possesses a statutory right to terminate the application altogether. At the same time, such a search for private-sector accommodation, the Plan suggested, was 'really difficult – almost impossible' in any case. Above all, reading between the lines, the Plan resembled a stereotypically bureaucratic attempt to disclaim responsibility, with the central message that 'it is not the Council's sole duty to offer you a home' delivered with a slew of inadequate – if not impossible – alternatives.

Nevertheless, Will was characteristically well-humoured upon receipt of the document, sending me the following WhatsApp message:

> Hope your having a fucking great weekend, because of you I am, love and I will not forget this and I hope you got your email meaning me sent it I hope please tell me I got it right <3

Moreover, upon hearing the news that the Council had sent Will a Personal Housing Plan, Laura, Jacob and I shared with Will a kind of elation, seemingly oblivious to the actual text of the Plan. For Laura, this was a welcome sign that 'he's [now] on their [the Council's] books'. Jacob congratulated Will that the Council was now 'aware of you'. Privately with me, however, Jacob suspected that this was possibly an unusually subtle attempt at 'gatekeeping'. Jacob observed that the Housing Act provisions place the Council under a duty to provide immediate interim accommodation as soon as it had minimal 'reason to believe' that Will was homeless and sufficiently medically vulnerable (see Chapter 6). Meanwhile, for Will, this was 'what happens when you do your homework', 'it's the first step to moving up in the world'.

The Council's response did not seem to recognise the merits of Will's claim. It did not represent an offer of accommodation; instead, it was a routinised attempt to signpost applicants every which way. However, it inspired hope due to the mere fact that it acknowledged receipt of his claim – an accomplishment that contrasts with the gatekeeping non-decisions (Chapter 2 and 6) that commonly take place. For Will, Jacob, Laura and I, it was an emotional achievement that Will had simply become 'seen' – the culmination of willpower, persistence and homework.

<div align="center">***</div>

Fifty-six days or so had elapsed since Will's initial assessment. Will sent me a WhatsApp:

> Morning bro hope you are well […] the man been told where I'm going. [78 Halcyon Close] don't know when I'm going to view the property but let you know bro have a good day :P

The following day, he views the property: a studio flat in Holway, a neighbouring district approximately 7 miles from Castlebury. Will accepts this offer of temporary accommodation: he is legally obliged to do so – even if he deems it unsuitable – since refusal of an offer would also lead to the abrupt termination of his housing application. As he observed to me on WhatsApp:

Sorry bro, it's all moving to fast and I can't remember a lot of things but thanks for your input and happy day What a week :D :D

<div align="center">***</div>

As the licence agreement also reminded Will:

A licence is only personal permission to occupy and can legally be terminated by the Council without reason. You should be aware that there is no security in licensed occupation which is for a temporary period only.

Will, his sister, Jacob and I were elated – it was a move-on that had been hard-fought, after a long wait and a typical encounter with bureaucracy. This was despite the fact that the offer of temporary accommodation was made unexpectedly, causing Will to experience anxiety about the sudden change; and also despite the fact that he expressed initial reservations to me after the viewing that the accommodation was a 'shit hole' that he felt compelled to accept.

Not long after he moved in, I accepted Will's evergreen invitation to visit him in his ground-floor studio flat in Halcyon Close, a typical post-war end-of-terrace house at the neck of a cul-de-sac. His street, just off a busy main road, presented a symmetric formation of such houses, and Will's building had been converted into a series of single dwellings. 78 Halcyon Close contained four self-contained residential units, all serving as temporary accommodation.

The warm smell of incense welcomed me into the building before I entered the front door of Will's flat. He had left it on the latch in anticipation of my arrival. The fresh scent of bleach and fruity solid gel air freshener greeted me with gusto. 'It smells good in here!' I joked to him, enquiring about the brand of the air freshener. 'It smells like Turkish delight, dunnit?' Will responded. 'Fifty pence from Lidl', he boasted.

The studio was L-shaped; a low double bed lay in the middle of the flat, where the two limbs of the L intersected. The interior decoration had a clinical yet assorted look. Its walls were painted off-white; the thin dark-brown laminate flooring was unevenly installed, bowing. The furniture and fittings, provided by the managing agent, were well-worn. A small plastic table clung to the right hand wall, flush with the front door when swung open. A scarlet red scented candle burned gently atop. Two comfortable, mahogany-toned chairs sat on either side. This improvised dining area neighboured a

pinewood wardrobe that bordered the entrance to the wet room. Across the narrow space at the heart of the L, Will's 14-inch flat-screen TV stood on a rickety, repurposed computer console. Pocket-sized framed photos of Will's mum, dad and siblings rested on the broken-down radiator beside his bed. There was no sofa. The sound of ITV1 – Will's preferred channel – filled the flat. The far-side of the flat hosted the kitchenette. It consisted of two hot-plates, a sink basin, and an under-counter fridge (with an ice-box). The chrome kitchenette surfaces seemed industrial and icy whilst strangely blending in with the rest of the flat, adorned with the same walls and flooring.

Will and I settled down and he told me about his day

'It was a good 'un. The geezer who does the maintenance for this place came today', he began.

'He was looking around the gaff and he goes "raaaah man, I've never seen a fella's place this clean! What are you even doing here?"' Will told me that the maintenance engineer would 'put in a good word for him' back with the owners of the property. He remarked that his visitor was astonished by the condition of the home despite the fact that Will 'is disabled', as Will put it.

As Will observed to me:

> I just can't stop cleaning and sorting bits out in the flat myself. I'll sit down for a moment and then something will catch my eye. The other day, I stood on that chair there in the garden and put the aerial back in place; the wind shifted it out of place and I couldn't watch telly. I did slip a lil [...] it was a silly one.

The chair that Will referred to was a perilously unstable wooden stool that ordinarily resided in the other end of the flat.

Will showed me his storage innovations. The cardboard packages for the toaster and the halogen oven became repurposed as storage boxes for his mounting paperwork. The microwave doubled up as storage for his tableware and cutlery. The kitchenette windowsill hosted some of the finest table condiments, not least Lea and Perrin's Worcestershire Sauce, Bisto instant gravy granules and Tabasco. These sat beside his mugs and the kettle. At the end of one organisation puzzle, Will observed teasingly:

'Bang tidy.' Taking care of the home also entailed a veritable embrace of mopping the floor and ensuring that all was, in his words, 'spick and span'.

Time passed over a few cans of Carlsberg; Will purposefully did not drink much this evening. He was relieved to tell me about how his remedial surgery to resolve his fraught hip replacement has been finally scheduled for next month. It was a feat that he attributed to 'keeping his head down': being patient, chasing up his hospital clinicians and looking after himself and the flat.

After not long, I excused myself to the bathroom. 'Sorry for the mess!', Will quipped from afar.

I entered the bathroom and noticed its tidiness, contrary to Will's remark. He had accumulated a small stockpile of bleach bottles, stacked neatly as if on display at a supermarket. The mirrors were crystal clear. Even though every shelf in the small space is replete with an array of cleaning products – disinfectant, surface cleaner, window cleaner – it seemed pristinely arranged.

'What mess?' I exclaimed incredulously from inside. Will chuckled, knowing that I was in on the gag.

<div align="center">***</div>

Readying myself to depart for the night, Will bid farewell to me by using his favoured catchphrase: 'Be lucky, bro.'

Chapter 6
The impossibility of deservingness: sincerity, intersubjectivity and the allocation of homeless assistance

The doors of the Noah night shelter are always firmly closed to outsiders, unless they successfully appeal to the benevolent discretion of its gatekeepers. The following two depictions are mirror encounters of this fraught and unpredictable exercise.

Encounter #1

New Year's Day 2019. Kev affords Noah's residents a lie-in today. Meanwhile, CCHP's office is closed: its contract with the local authority affords its workers a day off on bank holidays.

As Noah awakens shortly after Kev's arrival, the shelter's doorbell sounds. I am the supervising volunteer this morning. I inspect the front door: a warmly dressed, white middle-aged man is at the doorstep. Dishevelled and stubbly, he is an unknown but uncannily familiar entity to me. His baby blue hoodie is discoloured and frayed. His blue eyes peek starkly; his face is round and swollen. He had surely spent the night outside, I presume – one of Castlebury's rough sleepers who I had not yet met.

Novel characters ringing the front door present unease for volunteers and even shelter staff. Noah's spatial boundaries are clearly delineated. Volunteers and staff are responsible for enforcing these. Noah training sessions always instil wariness of people who are seeming strangers at the doorstep: they may be disgruntled former guests who seek reprisals or perhaps they are just unwelcome acquaintances of current shelter guests. In any case, our instruction is clear: we must defer to the judgment of

the most senior authority available at that moment, even if it means phoning Kev at unsociable hours.

Thankfully, Kev darts to the front door shortly after I do. Kev instantly recognises the man and opens the door at once. Kev effusively greets the stranger, expressing sorrow at his appearance. Kev welcomes the man in for breakfast, in a manner reminiscent of the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

Kev introduces me to the man – Harvey – and instructs me to be at Harvey's service for anything he needs. Most pressingly, Kev advises, Harvey needs a shower and a shave. I am charged with gathering all the shower essentials that Harvey might require; then I lead him to the showers.

As he showers, Kev fills me in on 'Harv', as Kev affectionately calls him. Harv was a former Noah guest, having stayed there about 4 years ago. Formerly a rough sleeper with an alcohol dependence, Kev tells me that Harv abstained successfully from alcohol while in Noah. This qualified Harvey for residential rehabilitation; and then he 'graduated' from rehab, moving to a halfway house. Harvey, then, was something of a Noah success story.

Harvey emerges from the shower not long after. He has several razor cuts, but Kev seems delighted from Harvey's seemingly reborn complexion. Kev tells me to 'sign up' Harv for the Noah night shelter there and then – bypassing all the usual screening processes. I take Kev aside and protest that I had never signed up a guest before, surely that was well beyond my remit of volunteer. Kev reassures me.

As I improvise the paperwork and induction briefings, Harvey ruminates. He recalls how after his rehab and even before 'the drinking', he had been a support worker and had most recently volunteered with a homeless charity himself. But then, for his daughter's birthday just a week ago, he broke his sobriety; eviction from his halfway house followed shortly after.

By now, our formalities are complete. Harv departs for the day; Kev gives him a parting hug.

I next see Harvey some nights later at Castlebury's other night shelter: the Sanctuary. I recognise Harvey immediately and ask him what he 'is doing here'– Noah guests only ever sleep in the Sanctuary if they had been evicted from Noah; this transition from Noah to the Sanctuary is widely perceived as 'going backwards' in the Castlebury homeless pathway.

Harvey regrets that he was drinking that evening. Knowing that Noah's disciplinary regime demands sobriety, Harvey tells me that he decided to spare the spectacle that might occur at Noah if his intoxication were detected; this is how he perceives the consequences of a rule-breach.

Some days later, Harvey's tenure at Noah ends. He pre-emptively abandons his bed there due to continued alcohol consumption.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Encounter #2

May 2019. A tall, smiley man is at the door this Thursday mid-afternoon. Noah has wound down for the day; as usual, all of the guests had been 'turfed out' since the late morning and most of the staff too. Only Sammy, Kev's de facto deputy, and I remain.

I open the shelter door to greet the stranger. Daniel Brack politely introduces himself to me, asking if I knew where he could seek housing assistance. He is articulate but shy – another stranger. Daniel tells me that he had been sleeping in the car park of a nearby Marks and Spencer's store for a while.

'Who is that?', Sammy shouts from afar, annoyed at me.

I ask Daniel to wait a moment whilst I seek guidance from Sammy. I explain to Sammy that Daniel reports being a rough sleeper and is seeking urgent assistance.

Sammy responded: 'Tell him to leave: we don't take shit'.

This answer feels unsatisfactory to me. I ask myself: could Noah not at least signpost the stranger to another organisation?

I return to Daniel and politely apologise, telling him there was nothing Noah can provide; but that I will alert a friend of mine who is working in street outreach to keep a particular eye out for him.

Daniel extends ostensibly sincere thanks, and departs.

The sociological impossibility of deservingness

The classification of certain aid-seekers as 'shit' is understandably alarming. It is not a term that was frequently employed to describe any types of 'homeless people' during my research. But neither was it the exclusive preserve of Sammy or the Noah shelter. Occasionally, caseworkers told me that they were careful not to put forward 'shit' to schemes of accommodation. 'Shit' is a potent index of a supplicant's presumed lack of virtue. It signals a disinclination to assist, implying that the supplicant does not merit such a sacrifice of time and bed space. Moreover, styled purposefully as a big-C Community by its founders, Kev and Sammy proudly reiterated their role as guardians of the Noah Community. 'Shit' is also an index, then, of the anxieties of vouching for someone who may ultimately prove disruptive to Noah guests' collective well-being – an unwelcome form of entanglement. In short, it declares a supplicant's undeservingness.

'Deservingness' is a well-worn subject in the social sciences, even though it often lacks a precise cognate term beyond the English language. Modern schemes of means-testing in the Global North are variously denounced as having Dickensian or Victorian provenance, since it relies on the enduring distinction between a deserving and undeserving poor (see e.g., Howe 1985, 1990; Sales 2002); these include contemporary unemployment welfare benefits, conditional on recipients' demonstrable financial need and willingness to work. The difference between the deserving and undeserving poor in this sense is animated by preoccupations about the extent to which a person is blameworthy for their poverty given that the Victorians were purportedly keen not to reward 'sin' but nonetheless took their Christian imperative to alleviate suffering seriously (Dean 2020:103-104). As a result, the differential distribution of relief was guided by 'behavioural standards' to ensure that assistance was allocated to those whose poverty was not ostensibly precipitated by their personal deficiencies – most infamously evident by the 'less eligibility' and 'workhouse' principles. These principles of the Victorian Poor Law mandated that social assistance should only be provided to the indigent inside the workhouse, rather than outdoors via cash and in-kind

support, at a level lower than the going rate for labourers of the lowest class; and that the conditions inside the workhouse should be so unfavourable that it would only appeal to those who are genuinely desperate. Only the really impoverished would feel compelled to seek out such assistance – and their conduct would be subject to an ongoing disciplinary gaze.

Scholars across diverse distributional contexts emphasise that everyday evaluative decisions are largely artefacts of hegemonic ideas about deservingness. For example, in his study of a social security office in 1980s Northern Ireland, Leo Howe (1990:133) observes that the distribution of welfare payments enacts officials' evaluation of unemployed claimants' 'conformity to a widely held set of moral values', adding that 'one of the principal criteria for deciding on inclusion in or exclusion from the moral "community" is the degree of presumed adherence to shared ideas of individual responsibility, self-reliance and the necessity for work'. This is associated, he suggests, with a wider 'definite tendency to locate […] unemployed people in a moral hierarchy' (ibid.:165). Elsewhere, Holmes and Castañeda (2016:19) emphasise the central role played by representations of refugees and irregular immigrants in the 'European refugee crisis', suggesting that these reproduce 'the scale of deserving immigrants' in which 'Syrians appear to trump Africans', They also observe that this reflects and enacts a 'hierarchy of deservingness' (2016:19; see also Kyriakidou 2021:134; Sargent 2012), reflecting important pan-European 'patterns' (2016:14).

Meanwhile, Didier Fassin's insights have proved instructive for several scholars studying migration and welfare. For Fassin, the study of 'the moral evaluation of difference' unveils 'the ethic of contemporary states' (Fassin 2005:366). Adapting Giorgio Agamben (1998), Fassin (2005:381) suggests that governmental regimes draw on – and produce – a hierarchy of humanity which is structured by sovereign calculations about the kinds of human life that merit political recognition and those that have only the right to barely live. As such, he suggests that the study of different states' distribution of citizenship rights reveals how they exercise their sovereign capacity to distinguish between full life and bare life. This analytic framework, for Fassin and others, is best equipped to capture 'the moral heart' of the state (Fassin et al. 2015; Fassin 2005:366 citing Heyman 1998).

This approach has emphasised the centrality of 'vulnerability' in the distributional logics of humanitarian government. One landmark example is Ticktin's (2011:89-127) discussion of the French 'illness clause' in immigration law, which specifies that illegal immigrants facing deportation can be given discretionary leave to remain in France. Ticktin

suggests that this clause is a clear example of sovereign exception, which legitimises the presence of such migrants who evidence sufficient, grave illness. This clause enables the French state to perform compassion, Ticktin (2011:2) states, and it relies on an evaluation of the immigrant's evident suffering. This exemplifies what she and other critics of humanitarian governance term a 'politics of care' which enshrines the suffering body as the ideal-type of 'the morally legitimate subject of care' (Ticktin 2011:3). This is at once a regime of biopolitics but is mediated through moral sentiments and vernaculars (for example, compassion, sympathy and resentment).[60] In the same move that the suffering body is seen as deserving, the 'labouring body' is disqualified: 'this is not [in fact] the exception, but *the rule*' (Ticktin 2011:4, emphasis added). Such policies, she suggests, reflect and enact 'a hierarchy of morals' that prescribes who is seen as 'a legitimate manifestation of a common humanity' (Ticktin 2011:98).

These diverse studies tend to highlight the singularity and coherence of these imaginaries: *a* moral hierarchy and *the* moral community (Howe), *a* hierarchy of deservingness and *the* scale of difference (Holmes and Castañeda), *the* moral heart (Fassin/Heyman), *a* hierarchy of morals, *the* rule and the notion of *a* common humanity (Ticktin). These scholars trace a continuity between these imaginaries and the everyday distribution of resources and rights, suggesting that such imaginaries provide an interpretive grid that predetermines the reading of a claimant's markers of difference. Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar's ethnography (2012) of self-identifying anti-racist immigration NGO workers in Andalusia, Spain offers a further rich illustration of this approach. She shows how 'staffers routinely prioritized Latin American and Moroccan women, and placed men, especially Moroccans, in the lowest priority ranking', 'allowing widely circulating imaginaries of Muslim, Arab men as dangerous and untrustworthy to guide their decisions' (Rogozen-Soltar 2012:644). Despite workers' conscious pursuits of anti-racism, she suggests that racial prejudice nonetheless 'overwhelms' their intentions (ibid.). She concludes that 'it is the differentiated treatment of immigrants according to their positions in a historically rooted, regionally specific hierarchy that helps determine who is slotted for inclusion, and who is not' (Rogozen-Soltar 2012:649).

This chapter challenges the notion that there is a necessarily singular or coherent moral heart that animates the different distribution of resources and rights. It argues that there

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[60] Although Fassin (2007, 2009) does argue it is best described as a 'politics of life' itself, extending beyond the idea of the biological subject as the locus of discourse and control

is not necessarily a sociologically coherent hierarchy of humanity – even locally – that guides evaluations of deservingness; and it contends that a person's apparent markers of difference are open to unpredictably divergent readings that do not neatly align with the interpretive models sketched by multiple scholars of welfare and humanitarian governance.[61] Moreover, Fassin's presumption that the everyday distribution of aid might converge with the ethics of the state is tenuous. All told, these scholars' findings do not neatly apply to mosaic-like and contested institutional terrains such as Castlebury's homeless industry, a contrasting setting to those studies cited above that are situated within the confines of a single bureaucratic institution or single rule-based eligibility regime. The context in Castlebury heightened the unpredictability of individual decision-makers like Kev and it also generated a variety of contradictory evaluations across decision-makers. For one, Tsvetelina was a Sanctuary guest who was warmly embraced in the Sanctuary by Ann and her colleagues (Chapter 2) before being humiliatingly evicted by Kev in Noah (Chapter 4). Moreover, the eviction from Noah of Pawel – another Sanctuary guest – inspired Ann to feel compassion towards him and added indignation towards Kev (Chapter 5). These distinct and interactive renditions of the will to care constitute and reflect a wider fragmentation of reason (Krause 2014), similarly playing out in evaluations of deservingness. In Castlebury's homeless industry, the humanitarian question of 'whose lives are worth saving' (Barnett 2013:387) prompts highly dissonant answers that reveal the interactivity and indeterminacy of such evaluations on the frontline.

Returning to the opening vignette, Kev's decision to admit Harvey does not intuitively correspond with entrenched moral hierarchies of deservingness. Harvey seemed to epitomise the archetype of 'rough sleeper' in his appearance, hygiene and alcohol consumption, which has been emphatically and stigmatisingly positioned firmly at the bottom of the British public imaginary. At the top of such a putative moral hierarchy might be the 'model' deserving recipients, such as Alf, whose 'success story' I discuss below. These include the war veterans, the recovered alcoholics, the blameless and others who variously evoke resilience and contriteness. At the bottom have been historically included the 'queue jumpers', the 'scroungers', wantonly pregnant 'single mothers', the 'Paddy O'Connors of this world' and the 'crowds of drunken, dirty, often abusive and sometimes violent men' who

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[61] Their arguments – cited above – somewhat resemble Paul Farmer's 'multiaxial model of social suffering' (1996, 2003, 2004) which is an attempt to theorise the differential distribution of social suffering as stratified by race and gender among other 'variables'. See Graeber (2012:112-114) for a necessary critique and Fassin (2004) for an implicit critique too.

plague public spaces (see Loveland 1995 and Humphreys 1999:173-174 for historical review). These epithets often transcend ideological fault lines and are familiar to Kev, who embraced the role of caring for such 'societal deviants' as he put it.

Kev did not consider Harvey 'shit'. Harvey was not excluded from Noah's embrace as might have been expected from his seeming undeservingness. Instead, Harvey was the recipient of Kev's benevolent discretion. Kev interpreted his Christian moral vocation to fulfil 'Kingdom Work' as a call to care precisely for such 'societal deviants' and he diverged from locally acceptable shelter admission practices – those he established as founding manager – in order to care for Harvey; even though taking such a chance ultimately (and perhaps predictably, due to Noah's insistence on sobriety) did not pay off. It remains one of the rare occasions that a Noah guest has not been subject to the usual induction process. It demonstrates Kev's distinctive performance of philanthropy and authority on New Year's Day; it was informed centrally by Kev's long-standing emotional attachment to Harvey and knowledge of Harvey's 'backstory', which inspired an underlying hope for Harvey's renewed transformation. Noah's rendition of 'Kingdom Work' – to which Sammy also vocally subscribed – did not evenly extend to aid-seekers such as Daniel, who exemplified the radically unknown claimant. Unlike Harvey, Sammy did not know Daniel's origin story, his personal inclinations and temperament, let alone his name; and the opposite also applied. The only information known about Daniel was that he was seeking assistance due to his reported status as rough sleeper. In his anonymity, Sammy was unwilling to chance that Daniel was worth the time or bed space, dismissing him as 'shit'.

The everyday work of evaluating deservingness, then, is often profoundly interactive and relational. The well-worn anthropological lens of the gift magnifies the interactivity and relationality of deservingness in Castlebury. Anthropologists are well-accustomed to addressing such questions about gift-giving and have done so previously (e.g., Mauss 1990[1925]; Parry 1986), producing a conspectus of gift taxonomies. Ethnographies of the 'philanthropic impulse' (Bornstein 2009) and 'free gifts' (Laidlaw 2000) demonstrate that preoccupations with deservingness by prospective gift-givers – of *who* should receive a gift – reflect gift-givers' own dispositions (in various vernaculars) and their pursuits of salvation, *karma*, the good and so on. The gift has an untapped capacity for understanding the sociology of deservingness. It is well-attuned to capture the anticipated merit and intentionality of the gift-giver in making the gift; it highlights the forms of entanglement that gift-giving can

entail, and it has the potential to accord sociological primacy to the individual moral labour inherent in gift interactions.

Moreover, the unpredictability of deservingness shares with 'the gift' a certain ambiguity: it is paradoxically selfless and self-interested at the same time (Parry 1986; Laidlaw 2000; Derrida 1992). This is particularly relevant to the case of charitable gifts, once controversially dismissed by Mary Douglas (1990:ix) in a foreword to *The gift* (1990[1925]) as not a species of gift at all because they lacked a supposedly key attribute: the possibility of reciprocity. It is precisely this ambiguity which enables further productive insights. It highlights the asymmetry of such gifts as well as their situatedness in wider networks of value. In the English homeless industry as in organised philanthropy more generally, the offer of accommodation is by definition not premised on the possibility of a commensurable return from the recipient. Nonetheless, Noah and the Sanctuary did not render these services for free. Their gifts of accommodation were valued and paid for primarily by the state. In other words, it is not entirely dissimilar to the ultimately 'unfree' Hindu gift – *dan*. Parry (1986:462) and Laidlaw (2000:626) highlight how the anticipation of *karma* plausibly inspires givers of *dan* in a manner akin to 'compensation', but in a way that both obliquely denies the selflessness of the gift and so cannot be admitted. In the same way, given the ambivalent orientation of Noah and the Sanctuary towards their state sponsors, a simultaneous disavowal and acceptance of compensation beyond the recipient takes place.

In both *dan* and the charitable gift in Castlebury, this mediated nature of recompense riskily entangles the fortune of donor and recipients. Parry (1986:460) and Laidlaw (2000:624) demonstrate that the value of recompense in the salvation economy is directly proportional to the worthiness of the recipient. In Castlebury, as I will show, this equally applies in the representational economy of 'success stories' in which former charity beneficiaries are persuasively invoked in fundraising materials as essential proof of the charity's value. However, the charitable gift in Castlebury diverges crucially from the *dan* in one key respect. Parry (1986:459-461) and Raheja (1988:32-36) suggest that *dan* – a transfer from the dominant caste to the lower castes – is accompanied by a transfer of the donor's sin to recipients. In the Castlebury case, this poison is often feared to flow in the opposite direction: where a recipient has been insincere in gaining the gift, it is feared by the donors that this might cause *them* reputational harm. The fraught enterprise of ending homelessness in Castlebury heightens such fear of poisonous gifts: the continuous and real risk of funding

cuts combines with scarce time and resources, compounded by seemingly increasing demand. Noah's differential treatment of Harvey and Daniel exemplifies how estimations of sincerity govern deservingness. Kev's decision was premised on the estimation that Harvey was reliably sincere. It was less likely premised on Harvey's prospects of sobriety. In the end, Harvey excluded *himself* without confrontation: this honesty is arrestingly consistent with Kev's estimation

This fear of the 'poison of the gift' (Raheja 1988) responds to – and is compounded by – the phenomenological problem of otherness (Ryle 1949; Levinas 1979; Rapport 2015; Benson & O'Neill 2007). Gift-giving in such circumstances latently implies access to a prospective recipients' innermost self to ascertain the truthfulness of a recipient's request, as will be seen in this chapter. This is at the crux of the impossibility of deservingness: access to the other's innermost self is foreclosed by the phenomenological boundaries of the evaluating agents' self, which cannot reliably be overcome. Put differently, objective knowledge of whether or not a prospective gift-recipient is doubtlessly deserving is impossible – it would require the gift-giver to mind-read. In the absence of mind-reading, determining deservingness is a fraught phenomenological exercise: it searches intersubjectively for perceptible traces (Keane 2014, 2015) of sincerity as far as possible. Sincerity connotes unique authorship and spontaneity of the self's own conduct – a purportedly free enactment of intention, it cannot be enacted 'out of deference' or by 'parroting' the words of another (Keane 2002:75; Haeri 2017:127). At the same time, deservingness evaluations are precisely social situations that demand a particular performance of self. These forms of evaluation, then, are paradoxical and so profoundly unstable, rendering imprecise such evaluations – a 'problem' consciously encountered on the frontline.

In this chapter, I argue that evaluations of deservingness are predicated on estimations of sincerity. I emphasise the indeterminacy of deservingness: that what constitutes a 'deserving' person is unpredictably contingent on time, locale, the evaluating agent's subjectivity and a wide array of other latent factors. I suggest that deservingness does not rely singly on a prospective recipient's markers of difference, which are in any case subject to divergent interpretation by various gift-givers. By framing deservingness in terms of the gift, I foreground the interactivity and relationality of deservingness evaluations, attending to the connection between intentionality and anticipated merit in these encounters. By demonstrating the reliance of these decisions on sincerity, I indicate that such gift-givers

make estimations about supplicants' interiority and about whether their performances of self are truthful representations of their inner thoughts, feelings and intentions. I demonstrate that this is a deeply fraught exercise: the gift-givers in what follows recognise that such estimations are imprecise and they harbour recurrent fears of becoming entangled with an insincere recipient. At the same time, this is situated within a representation economy of 'success stories' where these institutions rely on the sincerity of their recipients for financial support and moral authority. Briefly put, the will to care impossibly seeks the sincere.

This chapter centres on the social lives of the narratives of three men – Alf, Bear and Amir – presenting their contested claims to deservingness for accommodation in that order.

Of saints and sceptics

I first met Alf during Noah's annual volunteer barbecue in July 2018. This was incidentally my first ethnographic engagement in Castlebury, when I had only heard of Kev by name but did not know what he looked like. At the helm of the barbecue, I spotted an outgoing man, proudly entertaining the revellers. I extended my hand out to him and said 'You must be Kev!' Alf grinned warmly, pleased with how I had mistaken him for 'the guvnor'. Alf then introduced me to Kev – who seemed equally endeared by my faux-pas.

Kev warmly embraced Alf, lauding Alf as a Noah success story. However, Kev disclosed to me early on his felt inability to propel Alf to move on from Noah even though he observed that Alf also shared this desire. By September 2018, Alf had been living in Noah for approximately three years, making his length of residency one of the longest in the shelter's history.

In any case, Kev insisted that I have a private meeting with Alf to find out more about the shelter, a kindly means of induction. Alf keenly obliged; he and I had already taken warmly to each other, partly because of a shared interest in 'AnthroTwitter', Colman's English Mustard and the band Dire Straits. Alf was also a dedicated anti-fascist with a noteworthy online presence.

One question Alf posed to me caught me off-guard, however: about the English law of defamation. The relevant provision is below with emphasis added.

Defamation Act 2013

2 Truth

(1) It is a defence to an action for defamation for the *defendant* to show that the imputation conveyed by the statement complained of is substantially true.

'Truth is a valid defence to libel, right?', he enquired, appealing to my knowledge of undergraduate law. I confirmed that it was. He followed up with a further question. 'In a libel case, who is the burden on to prove truth?' I responded that the evidential burden was not in fact on the subject of the libel to prove that the remarks are untrue: it is the person who makes the libellous statements that has to prove that they are true.

Alf beamed with relief, pleased with my response.

I did not enquire at the time why he asked. Its significance will later become apparent.

In our meeting, Alf narrated his tours in Afghanistan and Iraq as a British serviceman and how he escaped a damaging relationship with a partner who would 'drink a bottle of vodka every night, sometimes two'. Alf disclosed to me that he had debilitating PTSD. I learnt that he needed leave from the usual flow of communal shelter life for the two weeks around Guy Fawkes' Night and Armistice Day in November. He told me that the fireworks recalled the trauma of combat as did the annual commemorations of military servicemen. I also learnt that Alf was immensely proud to have quit smoking. Alf accredited his success to Kev's 'Quit Smoking' coaching: an optional part of the 'psychosocial interventions' that Kev offered. Under Kev's transformative tutelage, Alf informed me that he had even assumed an unusual amount of responsibility in the shelter, such as supervision and catering.

Alf's service to Noah extended beyond his meetings with me and the communal dinners that he cooked. '*Alf's story*'[62] also featured extensively in Noah fundraising material:

> Alf, a former SAS Staff Sergeant, arrived in Noah in winter 2015 after months of rough sleeping and sofa-surfing.

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[62] The following excerpt is an adaptation of the fundraising material which uses the same vocabulary as the original source; some potentially identifying details have been changed.

He had served in the SAS for 20 years and then worked as a builder for 10 years before everything fell apart in early 2015.

'I found myself in the perfect storm: my wife had cleared out our bank accounts after our relationship ended and my landlord was unreasonable. My PTSD went through the roof. I lost my home. My life was turned upside down.'

But Alf was resourceful and resilient. He endured the streets for months.

Then he visited CCHP and was given a place in Noah within hours. He hasn't looked back since.

'I have Kev to thank for my recovery – he's the best of humanity. He loves those that other people find hard to love. Being part of Noah let me rebuild my life after a chaotic time.'

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH COMMUNITY

'Alf's story' occupied a prominent place in Noah fundraising leaflets: distributed in Castlebury town centre, local church groups, annual reports and grant applications. Indeed, other Dorm 6 guests joked that he was the 'poster boy' for Noah. The story succinctly exemplifies an ideal homeless conversion narrative (see Robbins 2007, 2010 for one anthropological approach to conversion; see also Moving on: interlude). Alf was saved by Noah, who admitted him at once; Kev's beneficence as manager is equally celebrated. Alf's virtuous moral self suffuses this narrative with its affective force. Noah's claims to philanthropic authority and financial deservingness depended on Alf's sincerity. Alf's success story is really a Noah success story.

A few months into my fieldwork – after Kev noticed that I had become woven into the fabric of Noah – Kev asked for my observations about why he found it so difficult to propel guests such as Alf towards a move-on. I put it simply to him that Noah's dependence on Alf and vice versa had limited both parties' incentive to end the relationship. 'I hear you', Kev replied, inhaling disappointedly at my answer.

***

Eight months later, Kev purposefully invited me for a cigarette outside. He was evidently agitated and sat closely beside me on a rickety bench. Even though the shelter had been vacated for the day, he deliberately whispered to me.

He asked me if I recall Alf's 'army stuff', revealing to me that 'some of it' is 'untrue'. Because it had been used extensively in Noah fundraising materials, Kev disclosed that Noah is being threatened with legal action to the Charities Commission by far-right online political activists who are out to 'expose' Alf as a fraud. Kev explained that these are people who are alienated by Alf's own online anti-fascist endeavours.

With a heavy sigh, Kev told me that he now felt let down by Alf. He told me that he had confronted Alf and had asked Alf to level with him: how much of it is really untrue? Alf conceded in that conversation that '20%' of it may have been fictitious, Kev recalled.

'Okay, rule of three', Kev stated, inviting me to triple that percentage and so implying that Alf's narrative is mostly false. Even at the precise moment that Alf was confessing to insincerity, Kev suggested that he was concealing the true extent of his lies.

Kev feared that this might be the end of Noah as an organisation.

I tried to comfort Kev: 'but Noah did not actually commit fraud, right? Because you did not know that Alf was being dishonest and you did not intentionally lie yourselves.' He interjected: 'of course not, we didn't know'. Yet it seemed an insufficient comfort: Kev still feared enormous reputational damage.

About a week after this conversation with Kev, removal vans arrived to facilitate Alf's departure from Noah. Hastened, there was none of the farewells, explanations, or celebrations that saw off other long-term guests. It had coincided exactly with the moment that the insincerity of his story was 'revealed' to Noah.

***

A selective biography of the accusations reveals how Noah became implicated in the controversy. Although the coverage aligned with well-worn political fault lines – Alf on the left and his detractors on the right – it was Alf's sincerity that was centrally contested.

A far-right political website had penned an 'exclusive' in which Alf was denounced as a 'Walter Mitty'. This is a pejorative term to describe a masculine figure who is renowned for his pathological lying, particularly about military service. In the exposé, the self-styled 'Walt hunters' triangulated Alf's personal disclosures on Twitter with his CV that was reportedly shared online. They alleged that these were inconsistent with Alf's claimed timeline of military service.

This exclusive was published in March 2018, before I started my fieldwork.

Despite this 'exposé', Alf's anti-fascist activism endured. However, more recently, in 2019, Alf's connection with Noah was revealed online. Alf now stood accused of fraudulently co-opting the honorific status of military service for two purposes: to legitimise his anti-fascism and to deceptively take advantage of Noah's charity.

Alf asked me the question about libel law in autumn 2018. So it is almost certain that he asked with the online crossfire between him and the far-right activists in mind. Alf seemed to be imagining a fictional civil court hearing between the activists and himself where he might sue these activists for libel, seeking justice for their defamatory allegations of fraud. Alf also seems to have foreseen that the activists – as the defendants in a defamation case – might contend that their allegations of fraud are legally justified because they are truthful. What relieved him was what the Defamation Act 2013 states in section 2: the evidentiary burden is on the activists to show that Alf faked his military history.

In retrospect, I was puzzled: why was Alf so pleased that the burden of proof was not on him?

I could not find an answer to that question that satisfied me; but I later understood that my question was part of the problem. By assuming that it would be better for the burden of proof to be on Alf, I presumed that he was insincere until he proved otherwise.

I realised that it was not my place to verify the sincerity of his claims. Alf's sincerity – and indeed, the reasons why Alf was happy to shift the burden of proof onto his accusers – remains unknowable. His narrative circulated and was variously appropriated and denigrated and celebrated.

<p align="center">✳✳✳</p>

Alf was not the first person in the Castlebury homeless circuit to be accused of insincerity about military service. The fraught dependence of charitable organisations on the sincere representations of their beneficiaries extends beyond Noah. Accusations of a beneficiary's insincerity emerged once more as a possible threat to moral authority, this time for the Sanctuary.

During my first Sanctuary volunteer shift in November 2019 when Ann was the shift lead, she invited me to examine a webpage on her tablet that I 'might find really interesting'.

It was an article in *the Castlebury Informer*, written about one of the Sanctuary's well-known guests, Bear:

> STAYING SOLID WITH ROCKY ON THE STREETS OF CASTLEBURY by Antonia Pritchard[63]
>
> In Castlebury town centre, you will see a placid Staffordshire Bull Terrier named Rocky, with his homeless owner Bear.
>
> The dog was born in a Salvation Army day centre, as they welcome the homeless no matter which furry friend accompanies them.
>
> Rocky was life-threateningly unwell as soon as he was born, but when Bear looked into his eyes, he said he 'had a gut feeling that he was going to make it. And he did. He's made of stern stuff'.
>
> Like Rocky, Bear is no stranger to adversity – rough sleeping and living on the streets for 25 years. He was born with debilitating asthma and spent most of his 55 years' alive in the Army, including the SAS, and worked as a Royal Marine too.
>
> People are pushed into become homeless for different reasons: for Bear, the immediate cause was that his relationship broke down. Being in the Army gave him post-traumatic stress disorder, but he doesn't drink or takes drugs.
>
> Bear wants to protest about the 16,000 homeless ex-soldiers by making a gravestone and taking it to next year's Armistice parade. On the gravestone he wants to write: "is this the only home we deserve?"

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[63] As with *Alf's story*, this is also an adaptation and not the original text

Bear persuaded the Director of CCHP to change their policy about dogs because before they did not accept them. Tom Snellen said that 'CCHP welcomes dogs and those who we work with who have dogs; this is really important otherwise we condemn dog owners to further isolation and exclusion'

Bear said that if he was Prime Minister, he would get people to build their own houses. He has never applied for council accommodation because they go against Bear's policy: 'Love me, love my dog. I would rather have a dog than leave the streets'.

Instead, Bear has desperately been hoping to buy a houseboat and a friend who has a boatyard has offered him free mooring. If he had a houseboat, Bear would be able to live by his own rules and have the freedom to live as he should.

His great-grandfather survived the Holocaust and walked out of the concentration camps alive. Bear believes that he has inherited the same resolve.

A GoFundMe for Bear's houseboat project has been set up here – please donate generously.

Ann dismissed Bear's story as 'rubbish' and 'a hoax', regretting the extent that the journalist seemed to take his narrative at face value. In the silence of the overnight shift, she cast doubt on whether Bear was in fact a former military serviceman, telling me that

> if you ask someone who used to be in the army what their badge number is, they will recite it immediately off by heart; but when you asked someone like Bear, they would say 'oh I need to get back to you on that, I can't remember it right now' […] Ridiculous, because if you were genuinely, genuinely in the army, it would be something you'd recite off the top of your head.

Ann added that Bear had in fact been temporarily excluded from the Sanctuary as he was being what she called 'difficult' and a 'nuisance'. When I met Bear, I quickly learnt that he felt similarly about Ann due to what he saw as her unnecessary strictness; the animosity appeared mutual and perhaps contributed to Ann's ready complaints to me about Bear.

Ann confided these reservations about Bear's sincerity to me in hushed tones, even though she disclosed that it was an open secret in the Sanctuary staff team that Bear's

behaviour was consistent with what she described as his identity as a 'massive narcotics user'. Ann told me that Tom had deftly resolved the difficult situation in which the journalist had put him. She observed that his diplomatic platitudes about canines sidestepped engagement with the truthfulness of Bear's story. After all, Tom had no inclination to verify (by implication) Bear's account, Ann noted, knowing that he would be complicit in Bear's dishonesty and risked censure if it was ever known that he did so; but equally Tom did not want to 'alienate' Bear – and wider publics too – by revealing his insincerity either.

The diplomatic challenge that faced Tom was fundamentally due to how his role of gift-giver – by allowing Bear to stay in the Sanctuary – would be perceived in light of Bear's narrative inventiveness. Similarly to Noah, the Sanctuary is reliant on the perceived sincerity of its clients' narratives, or else these organisations risk censure – a public perception that might pollute the moral authority that these organisations purposefully cultivate and rely on to maintain legitimacy and financial support.

The sincerity of Bear's narrative was not just inextricably – and uncomfortably – tied to the Sanctuary's public persona. Antonia Pritchard, the journalist, also relied on it and sought to employ Bear's story in order to evoke the necessary sympathy to raise funds in the GoFundMe that she had started alongside the publication of the article. Both in her role as a journalist and local political figure (having then been a Labour Party candidate in the recent local authority elections), Antonia relied on and presumed the authenticity of Bear's narrative for the advancement of her own political projects, career, *the Castlebury Informer*'s reputation and its advertising revenue. It resembled a scene, as Andersson (2012:70) observes in clandestine migration, of 'mutual interpellation', in which both parties relied on each other. *The Castlebury Informer*'s customary search for a feel-good Christmas story presented Bear with an opportunity to (re-)invent himself (Hacking 1986) to a wider audience; and it afforded Antonia a worthwhile opportunity to reprise her role as fledgling local journalist with an admirable interest in social issues.

Alf and Bear's deservingness 'stories' assumed a social life of their own. In turn, the circulation of their narratives proved productive – and fraught – for an unexpected coalition of actors who depended on them in unpredictable ways: *the Castlebury Informer*, Antonia, GoFundMe donors, far-right online activists, Noah night shelter, Ann, Tom, Bear, Alf, and myself among others.

In Alf and Bear's respective stories, their interior selves comprised the tenuous heart of these stories: it was recurrently challenged on the grounds of insincerity. The contested credibility of their claims was poisonously entangled with their shelters' own claims to legitimacy and financial support.

I turn now to how the sincerity of applicants for state housing aid is contested. I show how the impossibility of sincerity represents a primary – even expeditious – site through which public authorities might discredit an applicant's claim to them for legally prescribed accommodation. The same kinds of epistemic scepticism apply in this context. They are enabled *precisely* at the confluence of administrative law, limited public housing supply and 'legal aid deserts' (see Chapter 2; Hynes 2012).

Sincerity > vulnerability: The primacy of extra-legal evaluation

In September 2019, I was introduced to Amir by Emily, the senior caseworker in United in Hope. An accomplished retired social worker, Emily combined fierce intelligence in her advocacy of 'service users' with exemplary diplomatic restraint. With Amir, however, communication was difficult, she confided to me.

Tall, balding and slightly animated, Amir is a middle-aged Maghrebi who had lived in Italy since childhood before coming to England in 2017. For Emily, Amir's English was scarce and he was emphatically agitated. Using her timeless A-level in French, Emily could glean that Amir was a rough sleeper who was seeking assistance due to a disability – '*l'invalidité*' he called it – but that was it. Could I help, she mused? Emily remembered that I was of Egyptian descent and that I had claimed to know some basic Arabic and French. I eagerly accepted. It became apparent that Amir was intensely anxious about an eye complaint, the nature of which was unknown. Emily and I booked him an eye test that afternoon. I accompanied him to the appointment as a bumbling translator; for 'small talk' in the sterile waiting room at Vision Express, he joked that Western politicians resembled the Mafiosi and we both lamented the recent decline of our homelands.

Amir's eye test results were staggering: +17 dioptres in both eyes. Amir seemed impressed with himself in a self-effacing, slapstick kind of way. His eyeglass prescription stipulated an immediate visit to the nearest Eye Hospital because eyeglasses will only ever be

a partial fix to his limited eyesight. He ordered the eyeglasses (free on the NHS) and arranged to meet next week in UIH.

When I next saw Amir, I learnt that he had travelled to the Eye Hospital in the meantime. The Hospital had given him a Certificate of Visual Impairment, an official document confirming that Amir was partially sighted. This furnishes a legal status of disability, equivalent to 'blindness'. With compelling evidence of his disability now in hand, Amir asked me and Emily: when might he apply for a flat from the council as temporary accommodation? (*Le logement*, he called it).

Housing Act 1996

<u>188 Interim duty to accommodate in case of apparent priority need.</u>

(2) If the local housing authority have reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need, they must secure that accommodation is available for the applicant's occupation.

Emily and I exercised caution and perhaps even discouraged Amir from making what we thought might be a hasty approach to the council. *Guardian* columnists, legal advocates and a few scholars in social policy have mounted strident criticisms of English councils' obstruction of homeless applicants (e.g., Cowan 1997; Butler 2011; Fearn 2015; Alden 2015) and continue to do so (e.g., Marsh 2020). Indeed, councils have also been extensively judicially reviewed in recent landmark cases, such as *Hotak*, discussed briefly below. In Holmsey in particular, the Council no longer owned any of its former post-war dwellings. Accommodating applicants such as Amir is therefore a costly exercise: the council would need to disburse near-market rates of Housing Benefit to private landlords to accommodate such applicants. To reiterate, then, in the context of their own funding cuts and the scarcity of public housing, it is largely expedient for councils to deny or otherwise inhibit the receipt of such applications in the first place. In addition to the shortage of legal aid professionals who might be able to tip the cost-benefit balance in favour of applicants due to the threat of litigation, 'getting anywhere with the Council' can often feel 'nigh-on impossible' to recall the memorable words of Lily, my former CCHP advice colleague (Chapter 2).

Emily and I were well aware of these issues. Our resultant pessimism effectively turned her and me into what I would term the 'gatekeepers' gatekeepers' – a predicament that

characterises many housing and benefits advice services across England (see also Koch 2021). Emily, as deputy manager, was acutely aware of her limited time and capacity. But, perhaps even more pressingly, she was aware that once a council had made a decision on a homelessness application, unless one's 'factual' circumstances change, councils are not legally required – and are almost always disinclined – to reconsider the application. The case becomes effectively closed (unless it becomes a judicial matter, which is both demanding and difficult to navigate due to the deserts in legal aid funding).[64] Given these bleak prospects and our heavy sense of responsibility, we felt that we had only one opportunity to 'present' Amir to the council.

It had to be Amir's most deserving self.

Emily and I therefore set out to gather indisputable evidence of Amir's legal eligibility to present to the council. This was a characteristically challenging process: it demanded that we negotiate an array of intermediate obstacles, mediating between a labyrinthine array of state agencies and NGOs to do so.

The first Housing Act obstacle was proving 'eligibility for assistance'. In welfare lingo, this is known as 'recourse to public funds'. This is an immensely technical criterion, which disqualifies EU/EEA nationals resident in the UK who are not 'workers' (among other groups). This obstacle was present in Amir's case: he is an Italian national but, due to his deterioration in eyesight, he stopped working in a sandwich factory in the middle of 2019. To claim recourse to public funds, Amir had to prove that he *retained* his worker status due to the newly certified disability that had immediately followed the end of his job. The most straightforward proof of such status is if Amir is a recipient of Universal Credit: the main British welfare payment disbursed to unemployed adults. Receipt of Universal Credit would prove that the central government agency administering welfare benefits had conferred such status. Amir's scarce English compounded the difficulty of this exercise: he did not understand what the benefits office staff required of him to complete his UC application. None spoke Italian, Arabic or French, nor does it appear that an interpreter was offered or even available on those occasions that he visited the benefits office – he always recounted to me his prior visits there as scenes of manifest confusion, where staff would 'shout' at him and ask him to leave. Amir eventually was in receipt of Universal Credit, after he and I visited the office together on several occasions.

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[64] See Chapter 2

The next criterion was 'priority need', historically the most nebulous obstacle. In Amir's case – a single adult claiming on health grounds – the UK Supreme Court's recent decision in *Hotak* [2015] is instructive. It holds that an applicant should be considered as 'in priority need' if the applicant is:

> more vulnerable than an *ordinary person,* if made homeless.

In doing so, the Supreme Court reversed an earlier decision made in a 1998 case known as *Pereira*. The *Pereira* test for vulnerability was the former, well-established standard which council officials and legal advocates alike had used to evaluate applicants:

> whether the applicant when homeless, would be *less able to fend* for [himself] than an *ordinary homeless person*

The difference that *Hotak* made to the *Pereira* vulnerability test was subtle, but it was highly legally significant because it eased the restrictiveness of the criterion (Loveland 2017). *Hotak* was celebrated by homelessness organisations such as Crisis and Shelter, who lauded their role as intervening parties that made supporting legal arguments in the litigation against the Council that was being judicially reviewed at the time (London Borough of Southwark). Meanwhile, legal commentators have long argued for the abolition of the vulnerability test altogether in housing law, rightly observing its enduring unintelligibility and indeterminacy. In practice, many housing advice workers and council officials continue to rely (erroneously) on the defunct *Pereira* test, not fully understanding what the actual legal test is or what it means.[65]

Emily and I feared that his Certificate of Visual Impairment would not suffice. So we sought a supplementary note from Amir's Eye Hospital consultant that attested to how Amir's eye condition rendered him 'more vulnerable than an ordinary person, if made homeless'. The ophthalmologist consultant promptly obliged, writing the following:

> This man is legally partially sighted, that is he has functionally very poor vision. He might be expected to be more vulnerable than others who are rough sleeping as a

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[65] For example, several of my former colleagues in CCHP's HEDI advice service relied on an inventive syncretism of the *Hotak* and *Pereira* formulae or something else altogether. None were able to accurately cite the correct (*Hotak*) test, showing how entrenched the *Pereira* formula is.

result.[66] Activities such [sic] crossing the road, recognising people and recognising risks will all be much more difficult for him than normally sighted people and may well place him in greater danger.

This letter contented Amir, Emily and me greatly, but Emily and I knew there was one final documentary proof we could obtain to evidence Amir's vulnerability. In the UK, local councils hold a register of local residents who are blind or partially sighted. This is a relatively straightforward process. After the issue of a Certificate of Visual Impairment, the certified person can send this proof along with a brief form to a voluntary organisation to which the local authority delegates social assistance for the blind and partially sighted. I completed this form and sent it to Holmsey Sight. Amir was then placed on the Holmsey register of blind and partially sighted persons. Holmsey Sight's social workers also provided a letter in support of Amir's anticipated homelessness application; it resembled the one written by his ophthalmologists.

The documentary jigsaw nearly complete, Amir joked: '*moi, tout ce que je suis c'est les papiers*!' ('All I am is paperwork'). To Emily, Amir and me, the thickness of the bundle indicated the overwhelming evidence of Amir's deservingness. It relayed a hefty bundle of proof from a series of credible institutions: the DWP, the NHS and Holmsey Sight (an agency contracted by Holmsey Council themselves). A final layer of verification was a covering letter with UIH letterhead: UIH itself is part-funded by Holmsey Council to serve the homeless.

I emailed Oliver – a housing officer in Holmsey Council's Housing Department – notifying him that Amir and I would be 'presenting' to the Council to 'lodge a homelessness application.' Oliver duly responded with an array of forms to complete in advance of our arrival. I completed them and affixed them to the growing bundle.

It was now two months since I had first met Amir.

<div align="center">✱✱✱</div>

On a bright November mid-morning, Amir and I arrived in the expansive atrium of Holmsey Civic Centre, brimful of expectation. Amir purposefully wore his new spectacles and clutched his new white cane as clear indicators of his partial sightedness. We queued, took a

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[66] Even though I emailed the hospital the correct *Hotak* formula to use in the letter, the letter inadvertently lapses into a construction resembling the *Pereira* formula.

ticket and waited to be triaged. We met Oliver – the Housing Officer on duty – shortly after a bit more waiting and delivered to him the finished bundle. Oliver asked us to complete another form to ascertain the type of accommodation Amir would need. He also requested recent bank statements, which Amir and I emailed from Amir's frail tablet.

Even bigger bundle now in hand, Oliver departed upstairs to his office, requesting patience. So Amir and I sat in the empty waiting area for over 4 hours, sometimes taking turns to stretch our legs outside. Nonetheless, the automatic sensor lights occasionally dimmed because we sat so still for so long. Each time one of us returned from outside, we would greet the other: '*Quoi de neuf*?' Each time, the answer was invariably *rien.*

The November sun had departed by now and so the evening chill arrived. Coinciding with what proved Amir's final breather outside the Civic Centre, Oliver approached the waiting area at last. Surely the waiting was over. Oliver notified me that his manager had not approved Amir's application for emergency accommodation, relaying the news that his manager 'had doubts' about whether Amir was 'actually rough sleeping'. Moreover, Oliver informed me that he had spoken with Luca on the telephone, a friend who had hosted Amir on his living room sofa when Amir first arrived to the UK two years ago. He observed that the dates in Luca's account were inconsistent with Amir's disclosure in one of the forms.

Oliver then appealed to our shared solidarity as professionals. He said plainly to me that Amir did not really 'smell' and he asked me whether Amir was 'known' to SHIH, the homeless charity that carries out weekly street patrols. Amir was not. Oliver alerted me to an impossible shortcoming of the dossier we prepared: it did not evidence that Amir was in fact 'homeless'.

In effect, Oliver questioned the veracity of Amir's account, hinting that he was insincere to some degree, until he proves otherwise. Oliver apologised most politely and returned upstairs. Amir and I were not given a letter confirming a negative decision was made. A non-decision, it was as if the application never happened. I felt resigned and utterly defeated.

What followed was one of the most difficult points of my fieldwork. Upon Amir's return, I informed him of the news. He was consumed by indignation. He felt he had been denied the right to contest the process, not least the imputation of dishonesty. Furious, Amir

stormed out of the Holmsey Civic Centre; I followed. We were greeted by an English downpour.

'*Ma vie est finie*', he wailed.

Amir meandered Holmsey town centre, negotiating an array of congested pedestrian crossings during the evening rush. In French as before, he exclaimed to me that he was going to do something 'bad' that evening. A crime, he mused. Harm to himself? He was finished, he reminded me. I do not know why I was so resolute to follow him, except to hurl clichéd reassurances to him in the same pitch that he conveyed to me his anger.

I do not remember the moment that we parted that evening, nor did I have the resolve to note it.

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This interaction with Holmsey Council – where the legitimacy of a rejection hinged on the pretence of insincerity – is typical of its kind. The counterclaim that an applicant is not sincerely homeless is a refrain with which CCHP HEDI colleagues are, for one, familiar (Chapter 2) as well as applicants themselves. The possibility of such surface-level dismissals of a claimant's eligibility is hardwired into the discretion-laden ethos of the Housing Act.[67] Matt Wilde's own ethnography of English council housing officers supports this observation. To recite the words (Wilde 2022:31) of one housing officer in his study who expressed doubts about whether an applicant was telling the truth:

> He's saying he's sleeping on the streets but he looks well to me. He doesn't smell, his fingernails are clean and did you see his watch? That wasn't no fake – that's a nice watch. I think he's staying somewhere.

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The following week, Amir and I regrouped in UIH to devise a two-pronged strategy to ensure that the council accepted a duty towards him.

The first prong – the 'judicial review' route – proved challenging. Amir and I felt the full brunt of cuts to legal aid when searching for solicitors. Despite numerous enquiries, none

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[67] For a review of recent judicial precedents that indicate a continued reluctance by the courts to rein in the discretionary nature of the Act, see McGuire and Hutchings (2015)

of the legal-aid funded solicitors in a 5-mile radius nor the local Law Centre had capacity to assume the case: those that answered our phone calls all apologised profusely. We found a solicitors' firm further afield who were willing to pursue the case. After I explained the legal crux of the issue – that the 'reason to believe' evidentiary threshold had arguably been met – an eager junior solicitor was willing to consider taking up the case and scheduled an introductory meeting for the following week. But, this solicitor said her firm only ever judicially reviewed councils *to appeal* a negative written decision – since the mechanism to do so is prescribed in statute– never to challenge a council who had not given a decision letter in the first place.

Emily developed her own anxieties about arranging for solicitors to judicially review the Council, observing that it was one of UIH's primary funders.[68] She expressed surprise that Oliver had doled out such harsh treatment, observing that he was reputedly one of the 'nicer ones'. Emily began to harbour her own disquiet about Amir's sincerity, privately showing me that he was registered online as the director of an amateur music company. She also suggested to me that Amir was beginning to appear 'delusional', speculating that he had begun to exhibit early 'symptoms of schizophrenia'. Amir, meanwhile, was now urging me to write a book about the whole ordeal. He 'wanted the world to know' what he was experiencing, he told me. Amir hoped that solicitors and a forthcoming book would prove his sincerity. In short, Amir thoroughly contested the imputation that he was a liar.

Amir and I embarked on the second prong of our strategy at the same time: 'evidencing homelessness'. Amir had already taken the initiative on this, enlisting a friend to record a video of him emerging from his usual sleep site: an abandoned, written-off car. He sent me this video on WhatsApp. I told him that it would not be sufficient evidence for our purposes.

Oliver observed that Amir was not on SHIH's database as a 'verified rough sleeper'. The objective, then, was to ensure that Amir *was* detected on SHIH's next outreach shift. This proved convoluted. The first step of any such verification is a Streetlink referral, so I called Streetlink one afternoon and reported Amir as such a rough sleeper, disclosing the location of his sleep site. Amir then had to wait for SHIH's outreach workers to visit him on their twice-a-week shifts. But neither he nor I knew when SHIH would visit.

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[68] In fact, compared to CCHP, UIH rarely engaged in casework that pursued the activation of service users' Housing Act entitlements. So it was especially unusual practice to engage solicitors in anticipation of judicial review action against Holmsey Council.

This is precisely the point of homeless outreach: to ensure that such visits are made unannounced – a test of sincerity. As an outreach volunteer for SHIH, I observed frequent occasions when the outreach worker telephoned the subject of a Streetlink referral – the 'client' – before beginning the patrol to announce that he was 'on shift' that night and seeking reassurance that the client would be at their reported sleep site. If the referred person said yes, the outreach worker typically responded that 'we will arrive when we do' – refusing to disclose a particular time when asked. Not infrequently, outreach workers would visit a reported sleep site to find the client 'not at location'. Occasionally, an outreach worker would call the client again in the small hours of the morning asking for the client's location. If the call went through, a client would sometimes remark that they were coming from 15 minutes or so away. For outreach workers, this was often a clear indicator that the referral was 'staged' and that the client was not in fact a rough sleeper but instead a 'sofa-surfer'. Outreach personnel would therefore apologise, telling the client that the visit is postponed: 'we will visit again on our next shift', the time of which outreach workers withheld. In order to spare such awkward conversations altogether, it was not uncommon for outreach personnel to decline to call a client who was absent.

Given the November chill, Amir and I were impatient. This was especially the case because Amir did know people who might occasionally host him on their sofas. In the November chill, he deduced that he would have to decline such acts of care for as long as it needed to take. Amir emphatically embraced it as a necessary evil: he wanted to prove his sincerity by being seen by 'the social' (Street 2012), his vernacular term for SHIH.

One Tuesday evening, I received an unexpected phone call from Mo, a former colleague of mine who was the SHIH outreach worker in Holmsey. Mo told me that he was 'on shift', at the reported location of Amir's sleep site and was calling me as the 'referrer' of this report. I explained to Mo the significance of this verification and that Amir's English was limited. Mo apologised to me that it had taken over a week to attend Amir's sleep site, citing staffing shortages which had led to the cancellation of earlier outreach shifts.[69] Spotting the car that Amir reported sleeping in, Mo told me that he was satisfied by the mere sighting of the car and by 'my word' as he put it. Mo decided that there was no need to attempt to open the car or talk with Amir. Trusting my narrative, he verified Amir as if he had seen him

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[69] Mo, in fact, was conducting that shift by himself because there was no second outreach staff member or volunteer available to partner him. According to outreach 'best practice', even that shift should have been cancelled.

Two days later, Oliver emailed Amir, asking him to visit Holmsey Civic Centre again. Amir, it appeared, had passed the test.

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Amir's claims to deservingness on the grounds of vulnerability were plainly insufficient. This contrasts with prevailing anthropological critiques of humanitarian governance, where affliction that is situated in 'the body' remains the primary locus of deservingness (or in Fassin and Rechtman's [2009] later work: the psyche). The resultant 'hierarchy of humanity' that several scholars believe is in circulation is not a ready explanation for why those such as Amir are excluded and others are included. That is, it is not necessarily true that one's position in an ultimately imaginary ranking of deserving subjects – as categorised using the axes of (ostensible) race, gender, injury, life-story etc – determines one's everyday deservingness. Such arguments presume that the various popular discourses and legal articulations surrounding deservingness are neat social facts that predictably influence the decisions that evaluating agents such as Oliver make. Put differently, it overemphasises the role that ideologies of deservingness play and risks overlooking the minutiae of the everyday labour of diverse actors such as Oliver, Emily and Amir in constructing such narratives.

The evidence and degree of Amir's vulnerability was overwhelming; it was uncontested by Holmsey Council. But it did not impel the Council to accept a duty to accommodate him because Amir was presumed insincere about his homelessness until proven otherwise. The primary locus of deservingness was not Amir's biological self: it was his moral self – his sincerity. In other words, moral sentiments did not merely inflect the evaluation of Amir's biological or psychological vulnerability. Instead, it was precisely Amir's moral interiority that was being evaluated and contested. For Amir, what was at stake after the initial rejection was not just accommodation. More importantly, what was at stake was proving the validity of his narrative for reasons that seem to exceed the purpose of securing accommodation. Amir's purposeful endeavours to sleep outside, his emphatic desire to obtain legal representation and to have a published account of this affair: these allude to a desire to have his sincerity essentially recognised. Unsurprisingly, Amir seemed to find the imputations of insincerity plainly offensive. In the end, Mo relied on my account and did not need essential proof himself of Amir's sincerity anyway. For Mo, my relationship with him and involvement as a caseworker – my own sincerity perhaps – became an index in itself of

Amir's sincerity. In turn, Mo's verification became an iterative index of Amir's sincerity because Oliver relied on Mo's own sincerity.

The impossibility of deservingness

The social lives of Alf, Bear and Amir's narratives demonstrate the unstable standards of proof used in evaluating deservingness. In the context of a resource-stricken homeless industry, mini moral panics emerged where the sincerity of supplicants was contested. In such cases, the deservingness of Alf, Bear and Amir were conjoined with estimations of their sincerity. This raised the contingent character of their deservingness to fever pitch, often requiring a burdensome amount of effort to overcome the unstable and plural thresholds of evidence. The proofs of sincerity varied depending on the setting and the evaluator: prior familiarity for Kev and Sammy, military shibboleths for Alf's political opponents, 'smell' for Oliver. Across these settings, estimations of sincerity was central; and it is this weight placed on sincerity that reflects and justifies the primacy of discretion throughout the industry, emphasising the status of its supplicants – even (or perhaps especially) when requesting state assistance – as *beneficiaries*, not citizens (cf. Krause 2010).

For Krause (2010:534), 'beneficiaries are a means to an organization's success and are transformed to be shown as results'. By attending to the social life and productivity of beneficiaries' narratives, this chapter has added ethnographic texture to this claim. For Kev, Alf's apparent failure to live up to his claims of military service that became paraded as fundraising material was profoundly toxic for the survival of Noah. From a different angle, for Ann and Tom, Bear's perceived insincerity in the *Informer* also uneasily entangled CCHP's fortunes with those of Bear, demanding diplomacy on Tom's part to avoid being seen to discredit Bear/CCHP. In Amir's care, dealing with the state, a different dimension of the status of being a beneficiary came more acutely into play, where they 'are selected for intervention if it suits specific funding priorities' (ibid.). For local authorities in the UK – particularly Holmsey, having disposed of all of its public housing stock – accepting such a duty to accommodate emplaces them in the private-rental sector at heightened cost and increasingly minimal risk of litigation due to reforms to Legal Aid. For Holmsey Council, Amir's sincerity was only validated after an extra layer of verification.

The purpose of this chapter, offering what might seem like a forcefully 'flat' analysis as a corrective to studies that have emphasised coherent hierarchies of deservingness, has not

been to deny the relationship between claimants' markers of difference and patterns of distributional injustice. Instead, it has sought to demonstrate that such hierarchies and patterns do not neatly map onto each other in a predictable manner, at least not in fragmented institutional configurations in the UK such as Castlebury's homeless industry where individual discretion is the primary allocative mechanism and checks on such discretion are profoundly limited. In such cases, the predicate of sincerity offers researchers a critical mediating concept for understanding the systematic exclusion of certain classes of claimant, a means of taking seriously the interactive nature of such evaluations and the justifications offered by evaluating agents.

Moving on: interlude

On an unusually cold sunset in October 2018, the CCHP annual open evening commenced: a set-piece occasion where the organisation reached out to Castlebury local residents. During the two-hour presentation, Tom occupied centre stage. The Vineyard Church hosted it, a nod to CCHP's ecclesiastic legacy. Well-attended, these evenings provide ample opportunity for CCHP to raise awareness of their charitable endeavours. The congregants assumed their seated positions. These were would-be volunteers, perhaps would-be benefactors.

Tom invited Barry to the lectern to speak, and he captivated the audience:

> My name is Barry and this is my life journey.[70] I worked in a B&B in Devon for 12 years, running the gaff. It was a good job. Then what happened was: all of a sudden, one day, the guvnor defaulted on the mortgage and done a runner! So I had no job and nowhere to live – on that day.

> Even though I lived there for years, I had no roots in Devon. That was all back in Castlebury. So I came back here to go see the Council to see if they could help me with somewhere to stay. They said no. So I reckon to myself 'alright then, I'll just sleep in a tent to tide me over... it is what it is.'

> By this time, I fall into drink; it happened without me not even noticing. And being on the streets, it weren't easy, even in the tent. It don't feel good: people march past you, look down at you, even your old schoolmates! They call me all sorts of cruel names because I'm homeless. I've even been punched, spat at, kicked in the groin by people out on the town. I've known good lads die on the road from the cold. (*Barry collects himself.*)

> It really hurts. I moved the tent to Castlebury Cemetery for a while, just to get away from it all.

> When I was in the tent, I would go to St Mark's church since they ran soup kitchen there once a week and they did the food bank then too. I'd never gone food bank before this! They did me proper suppers there and took my orders for food parcel. (*He*

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[70] This is a composite narrative. It uses a 'base' narrative from CCHP's website, which I altered and fictionalised by incorporating elements of other homeless success stories in online and print circulation in Castlebury and further afield.

chuckles). Here's a good laugh ladies and gents. One day: when I first went t' food bank, they asked me what I want and they gave me a Fray Bentos! Hang about, I didn't even know what to do with it! I couldn't heat it up because I was in a tent and I couldn't even open it because I had no opener! (*He smiles widely. The audience laugh.*)

I gave it back the next week; they were proper sorry, it touched me. Anyway, we all had a right bubble [a laugh] that day.

It was them old ladies cooking supper in St. Mark's who tell me about CCHP. That opened my eyes. So early one morning, I head over to CCHP and I see Tom, and he puts me on their books straight away.

Then the call came, lucky enough. It was about, I don't know, nine weeks later. I was one of the lucky ones. Tom told me he'd scored me a place in Noah. I meet Kev, the guvnor, and he took me under his wing. I ditched the drink the moment I stepped foot into Noah. Kev, he helped me become a better person; a better human being. He helped me find God. I didn't look back.

It took just one week, one week before I got another call. It was to live in the [CCHP] Pathway Project. I couldn't believe it, it was my own space: a bed, the first time in three months. I had a room in a gaff with three other lads; but I didn't mind that much, they were sound. Kate, one of the support workers, got me on a first aid training. I was volunteering back at the Noah and even started a carpentry course to become a chippy.

Then one day, Kate, she rang me up and told me they had found me a place on the private renting: a flat with my own bathroom and kitchen, all to myself! It was a deal: I didn't have to put any money down. That's a major issue when you rent, you usually have to put a deposit down; but I am sorry, we don't have any money for that! (*He smiles. Audience laughs in sympathetic agreement.*)

Now I have a flat.

But it is more than just a flat, you know?

It's my house for life now, my forever home. It feels good to be turned around and to know that I have the knowledge and conviction to make it. Now, I have a bed, a

fridge, a little studio – and man, I cried. (*He smiles.*) It's all sunshine, lollipops and rainbows. (*He laughs.*)

I am one of the lucky ones. It feels homely.

They all took good care of me in CCHP. So I wanted to give back. Tom asked me if I could do a little bit about CCHP for you all this evening: to share my story, my journey. I jumped at the chance.

Ladies and gents, my life has not been the same; I have achieved things I thought I could not achieve. I'm just gonna keep on keeping my head down. Anyone on the streets could make it just like I did if they accept CCHP's help; they opened doors for me. I recommend them to anyone on the streets. They make you realise what you're worth again; that you're precious.

I just have to say thank you to CCHP for everything they've done for me. I owe my recovery to them. It's been brilliant, absolutely brilliant.

Thank you all very much.

(The audience applauds).

Conclusion

This thesis has offered an ethnographic account of the everyday business of ending homelessness. In a bid to demonstrate the complexities and paradoxes of striving for the public good in the UK in the contemporary moment, it has illustrated the untold pursuits of frontline workers at the coalface of Castlebury's homeless industry. It has shown that their efforts to end homelessness are situated within – and constitute – a distinct and fraught field of intervention. Focussing on the moral labour enacted by these workers and putting this in dialogue with beneficiaries' claims for aid, this thesis has highlighted the ubiquity of futility in the industry and endeavoured to explain it with reference to the conditions which are written into its charter. The evolution of the homeless industry – both in Castlebury and nationally – resembles a feedback loop between apparent state failure and virtuous firefighting on the frontline. Cash-strapped local authorities are legally emplaced to respond to homeless applicants under a highly technical and complicated Housing Act regime without the requisite fiscal clout or housing stock; in the absence of these, they resort to the increasingly costly private sector if they do accept a duty. Meanwhile, successive Westminster governments respond by allocating increasing sums of money on staffing the frontline of an industry with an impossible charter: to end homelessness in the absence of sustainable accommodation. An optimistic refrain – 'the point of our work is to be put out of a job' – sometimes echoes on the shop floor in Castlebury.

The homeless industry is a 'productive, performative and continually contested' space of social action – one elaborate kind of 'policy world' that intersects with others – to borrow the terms insightfully deployed by anthropologists of policy elsewhere (Shore and Wright 2011:2). One objective of this thesis – inspired by other anthropologists of policy (e.g., Mosse 2005; Andersson 2012) – has been to re-animate this policy world in order to hint at its persistence over time apparently despite its shortcomings. Andersson (2012:274-280) concludes his analysis of the illegality industry with a meditation on what he characterises as perhaps its defining feature: purposeless absurdity. For him, that industry finds persistence precisely through failure – reflecting and producing an increasingly absurd spectacle – a sprawling network over space and time of institutions that have the global effect of regenerating illegality and these institutions' will to survive. This thesis has portrayed similar forms of cruel absurdity. Meanwhile, Mosse (2005:242) closes his study of the fraught relationship between development policy and practice by hinting at anthropologists' 'capacity

to open up space for policy innovation'. He suggests that the insights gleaned from multi-sited, multi-positional ethnography of these policy worlds can alter them by offering a *re-contextualised* image of policy implementation and its inevitably social conditions of possibility (Mosse 2005:xii). In sum, these studies by Andersson (2012) and Mosse (2005) are two examples of a powerful double move in the anthropology of policy (see Shore and Wright 2011 for review) that this thesis has also sought to enact. For one, they have shown that the process of implementation is not simply a top-down process of policy-taking; instead, implementation is an unpredictable labour of translation, co-optation and enrolling supporters. At the same time, their studies are precisely acts of translation that offer the possibility of conceiving policy alternatives.

There are alternatives to the state of homelessness in the UK, and these are often painfully familiar to both frontline workers and policy observers. In closing this thesis, several proposals are worth briefly rehearsing as a hopeful form of re-contextualisation. They can be divided, just as Andersson (2016) has proposed in the case of 'breaking the vicious cycle' of the illegality industry, between short-term goals that pursue 'harm reduction' and more ambitious long-term proposals. These fragmentary suggestions are offered in no particular order.

Short-term: towards a safer industry

First, the labour conditions on the frontline of the industry demand systematic attention. Mirroring a trend found in UK social care (see Hayes 2017), these are largely precarious, not least reflecting the uncertainty of employers' own funding streams from the state and other donors. In Castlebury's homeless industry, I observed that written employment contracts were not the norm. My former colleagues were largely employed on the basis of verbal agreements that lacked detail on the length of the job post, the grievance mechanisms available to them, and workers' entitlements to maternity, paternity and sick leave – and so these issues relied on the piecemeal discretion of managerial figures who were themselves routinely unsure of their own responsibilities and entitlements under employment law. Moreover, frontline workers regularly observed that the 'aftercare' on offer when they experience profound and routinised distress was inadequate, some likening the effects of this to having a 'brain haemorrhage' and others crediting their employers for 'making me mentally ill'. These idioms of neglect speak to an evident industry dynamic: a profound

feeling of being undervalued, compounded by a lack of employee consultation or bottom-up accountability mechanisms.

Second, the training and skills of workers require investment and standardisation. For one, the dramatic retrenchment of Legal Aid since 2013 has rendered advice caseworkers in the industry as the first and often last resort for housing and benefits claimants to access justice. They endeavour to challenge adverse decisions and to hold accountable various arms of the state, often in the absence of the prerequisite technical knowledge. The induction and supervision for these posts is ad hoc, non-technical and mostly in-house; workers' claims for additional training are not infrequently met with counterclaims that there is no such funding. In such casework positions, the asymmetry of knowledge and professional supervision in comparison to their local authority counterparts engenders feelings of antagonism at local authority decision-makers who are widely perceived by the other side as being obstructive.

Third, effective lines of communication and accountability must be established within and across the industry. There is a profound gap between the labour of ending homelessness on the frontline and strategic discussions of the business of ending homelessness in the boardroom. For example, despite the small number of employees in CCHP and Noah, many of them observed that they had never met or been introduced to the board members of these organisations, leading to suspicions of opacity and of being excluded from key decisions. Moreover, there is no standardised institutional mechanism for beneficiaries to articulate their concerns about their service provision to an independent agency.

Fourth, the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) set by central government – the maximum level of local rental rebate for benefits claimants residing in private sector accommodation – should at least partly keep up with market conditions in real terms. The five-year freezing of Local Housing Allowance that commenced in 2014 has limited single benefits claimants' access to the private sector on a nationwide level. By 2019, less than 5% of the rental market was financially viable for such claimants in Castlebury (Chartered Institute of Housing 2019). Unable to access the 'mainstream' private rented sector, advice caseworkers resort to signposting their clients to an ascendant class of predatorial managing agencies that cater specifically to 'homeless people receiving Universal Credit' by accommodating them in substandard flatshares (see New Beginnings? Interlude).

Fifth, a reversal of the draconian reforms to Legal Aid may ease the caseload of advice workers and offer a more robust disincentive to local authority gatekeeping. This

thesis has offered an account of what it means to end homelessness in seemingly post-law conditions. Since the 2013 cuts, publicly funded solicitors and legally accredited professionals are no longer available for cases of eviction until homelessness is imminent, even though early legal intervention in these matters had proven to be cost-effective and positive for all involved parties by militating against such cases becoming increasingly more complicated (James and Forbess 2011; Law Society 2017). Perhaps more relevantly to this thesis, the complexity and constraints of the Legal Aid funding regime particularly inhibit access to solicitors where local authorities make 'non-decisions' on applicants' eligibility for accommodation (Chapters 2 and 6), one specific example of the 'legal aid deserts' (see Hynes 2012) identified across the board. The lack of reliable recourse to legal professionals limits HEDI caseworkers' ability to advocate on behalf of their clients to the local authority, both demanding additional labour and hampering its effectiveness. Without such access to justice, local authorities' duties to respond to homelessness under the 1996 Housing Act are legally inert.

Longer-term goals?

The seeming impossibility of ending homelessness in the UK is historically entrenched and a product of complex historical developments from which emerged an uneven, highly elaborate homeless industry as a fix. Since at least its rediscovery in the UK in the 1960s, there has been no neat consensus at the heart of the state about which arm of government is responsible for addressing homelessness, reflecting the profoundly provisional and fractured nature of the UK constitutional settlement. Within local authorities at the dawn of the welfare state, disputes have raged about whether urgent housing need was a 'problem' for social services departments or for their housing counterparts (Cowan 1997:Ch.2). The residual Poor Law regime predominated until it was abolished by the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977; the Act enshrined a new kind of division of responsibility and enrolled the discretion of individual housing officers at the heart of the allocative process; it encoded age-old moral panics into enduring legal text. The emergence of homelessness as a political issue in the heyday of post-war public housing suggests that increased public housing supply alone is not a solution in the absence of a legally enforceable – and socially effective – *right* to housing.

Calls to increase the supply of council housing offer promise. And if nothing else, they seem to make financial sense. One of the most striking symbols of the state of housing in the UK is the mounting cost of Housing Benefit/Universal Credit housing costs disbursed to

private sector landlords, drawing an unusual consensus from across the political spectrum. In 2018, economist and former senior civil servant Paul Johnson (2019) drew attention to the figure:

> The government spends an astonishing £22 billion a year on housing benefit. That dwarfs spending on the police, on overseas aid and the budgets of many entire government departments. Spending on this one benefit has doubled since the early 2000s […]

> The main drivers of the increase in spending have been the rapid expansion of the private rented sector alongside increased rents in social housing, in part because cheaper council housing has been in decline.

In the same year, predictions from the Tory-affiliated Centre for Social Justice sounded the alarm that the equivalent figure in 2050 would reach £71bn (*Inside Housing* 2018). It called for a renewed programme of social housing building.

Similarly, author and journalist Lynsey Hanley (2021) observes in the *Financial Times*

> In other words, housing still costs the state money: it's just that what it spends no longer translates into new homes. Rather than enabling local authorities to build housing for security and revenue, the public purse is used to subsidise private landlords. In 2018, the Chartered Institute of Housing found that 95.7 per cent of the government housing budget went on housing benefit and mortgage support in the 2015-16 fiscal year, compared with 18 per cent in 1975-76.

As a rough average, the level of social rent (charged by a local authority or third sector landlord) is 50% lower than the equivalent private sector rent (Hanley 2021; Wiles 2014).

For Meek (2014) and Dorling (2014), the absurdity of these kinds of figures drums home the message that successive Westminster governments have wilfully facilitated expropriation on a national scale by allowing the mass disposal of public housing under Right to Buy, dovetailing with the remaking of housing into a capital asset: a 'handout' to an ascendant rentier class. Beneath their trenchant critiques that volley accusations of profligacy back to the state, they present a masterful analysis of the state-sponsored link between the extractive housing market and the endurance of financialised capitalism. The house offers a tradable financial security, a source of rental profit, a nest egg for retirement and inheritance, a wealth effect in cases of positive equity – all to the extent that, as Dorling (2014)

emphasises, the housing market is a 'national obsession' upon which GDP rests, and a profoundly exclusionary one which produces vacant homes (see also Mukherji 2020).

Behind the absurd state of homelessness in the UK, perhaps, lies the state of housing.

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By focussing on the state of homelessness as an industry where workers and beneficiaries constitute each other on the shop floor, this thesis has offered an alternative perspective to this familiar capital-centric picture. It has cast a light on the work of pursuing the public good in the UK in such a fraught setting. It has pointed to the centrality – and futility – of the business of ending homelessness in the lives of workers and beneficiaries. To term this setting an industry unveils, for one, the significance of its working conditions and the everyday acts of labour that emerge from workers' own will to care. The conditions of possibility for this will to care are constrained and enabled by both state-sponsored inequality and the state itself. By drawing parallels to the international aid industry throughout this thesis, it has shown how this industry's fraught charter also 'fabricates its own separation from political economy' (Mosse 2005:238) and indeed from the state. The persistence and enactment of this will, however, does not straightforwardly owe itself to these forces alone. Above all, it is an unsettled domain of struggle, hard work, contradiction and potential.

Epilogue

COVID-19: 'Everyone In'? Or the endurance of homelessness

In the UK as elsewhere in March 2020, the figure of the 'frontline worker' occupied the leading role at the coalface of human emergency – a person whose labour the government designated as essential for the public good. It seemed to be an evocation of World War Two Britain. During the UK's first 'lockdown' that started on March 23rd, being a 'frontline worker' represented one of the few legally permitted reasons to step foot outside one's home without a possible fine. At the same time that the UK government announced the policy to 'lockdown', it also announced 'Everyone In': an audacious venture to end homelessness by accommodating those whose very classification implies the breach of lockdown regulations. Later on, media coverage would roundly applaud the government's implementation of Everyone In, reiterating the claim that the government had finally ended homelessness.

> What the Coronavirus Proved About homelessness (*The Atlantic*, 2020)
>
> Coronavirus: 'Homelessness was ended in three days' (*BBC News*, 2020)
>
> Coronavirus nearly ended homelessness in the UK. Why can't we end it for good? (*The Guardian*, 2020)

This Epilogue presents Everyone In's implementation from the perspective of Sanctuary workers between Friday March 20th and Wednesday 25th March 2020. It depicts the final days of my doctoral fieldwork in Castlebury's homeless industry, where I was also one of those frontline workers seeking to end homelessness. It does so in the form of an ethnographic diary. The fraught events that follow are largely directed behind the scenes by an organisation I call Homes for Good. Homes for Good is an umbrella organisation for the UK homeless industry that both represents its member organisations (such as the Sanctuary) and is almost exclusively funded by central government to do so and to allocate government funding to these organisations on its behalf. In other words, Homes for Good is an unusual intermediary type of domestic GONGO that acts tacitly under the government's authority.

March 20th, the Friday before lockdown. As usual, Elle convened the weekly Sanctuary staff meeting. Elle told us that she has grave concerns about how the shelter might continue to operate in the coming weeks: she feared that increasing numbers of staff would have to self-isolate due to COVID; and she worried that a slip in communal hygiene might lead to mass contagion. She told us that she was still awaiting a response from the Sanctuary's funders –MHCLG – on how to proceed in the coming days. Even so, Elle reiterated her desire to keep operating the Sanctuary, even if MHCLG did not answer and possibly even withdraws funding; she noted that it would be 'wrong' now more than ever for the Sanctuary to close. All the attendees in the meeting murmured agreement with Elle, accepting the renewed invitation to enlist as a frontline worker.

Just before the staff meeting closed, to Elle's surprise, an unexpected mass email had arrived in the Sanctuary inbox. Elle turned her laptop screen to share its contents with us. The email was from Homes for Good that none of my colleagues had previously heard of. The email announced that central government had reserved enough hotel beds for 'all rough sleepers', that the government would arrange for taxis to transport them and that this so-called 'decant' would take place next week. Elle and everyone else in the meeting – including me – were blindsided by this: just moments earlier, in the absence of a government response, we had been planning to keep the shelter open indefinitely. Although the email was seeking to address the uncertainty, it was silent on what should happen to night shelters in the meantime and after the 'decant' took place. In other words, my colleagues were now even more unsure after reading that email about whether they would still be in a job, and this included Elle.

A frenzied weekend followed; a manager from Homes for Good asked Elle urgently to collate a list of the approximately 20 Sanctuary guests eligible for the 'decant', demanding each guest's: full name, gender, date of birth, health conditions, contact details, smoking status, national insurance number and homeless database number. In other words, Homes for Good was asking the Sanctuary to make its guests 'legible' as a condition of hotel accommodation. Since the Sanctuary was a so-called 'open-access' shelter – guests did not need to register or disclose any details besides their name to access it – collecting such invasive information was not straightforward, especially not at short notice – and it ultimately limited the catchment net of possible beneficiaries.

Monday saw the Prime Ministerial broadcast that announces the state of lockdown, and Sanctuary workers frantically finalised the hotel guest list during the shelter's last night of normal operation.

On Tuesday morning, Elle told the Sanctuary staff team that Homes for Good have ordered the taxis to arrive that day and that we should 'keep guests' in an indefinite holding pattern in the shelter hall, explaining to guests that they should not leave the premises or else they might miss the taxis. At 7pm, Elle messaged the Sanctuary staff WhatsApp group, apologising that the taxis would not in fact be arriving after all; she suggested that the taxis may instead arrive the following day. She expressed contrition to us, pleading us to forgive the 'whiplash' that also frustrated her; indeed, Elle confided to me that she had helplessly 'swore' at a Homes for Good official on the phone.

Shortly after, the unrealised promise of the hotel initiative generated confrontation. The doorbell of the Sanctuary sounded. I answer it and found a familiar figure at the door: Robert, a long-term Sanctuary guest who had been 'excluded' by Elle some weeks earlier due to reports of 'antisocial behaviour', just before COVID emerged. Even though COVID had shifted the parameters of life since Robert's exclusion, Elle told us to uphold his exclusion from the shelter, and, by extension, the hotel scheme. Robert peered through the window pane of the front door, agitated, repeatedly observing that it was 'shit' that he wasn't allowed inside the Sanctuary or been offered a hotel room. 'I understand', I responded to Robert, apologising for Elle's decision.

My attempts at comfort provoked pained indignation:

'You don't fucking understand. Don't tell me you understand because you don't. How can you tell me you understand? Don't say you understand', Robert yelled back.

He took a deep breath, and then screamed.

Robert's distress now prompted two of my colleagues – James (a fellow support worker) and Tom (the charity chief executive) – to emerge out of the front door to accompany me.

Robert was furiously inconsolable. He clenched the wooden fence and violently shook it. Tom, James and I restrained him, pulling him back. Robert demanded that we call the police so that at least he had a place to stay for the night. Tom obliged; he observed that if that was Robert's wish, he would fulfil it. Tom walked away with his phone in hand, remaining within eyeshot, and called the emergency services. I grew visibly distressed, shivering. Robert

heard my voice break; he seemed sincerely remorseful. Robert embraced me as he wept; he told me that he does not want to hurt me and that I am his 'friend'.

Shortly after, a police car enters the car park and two male uniformed officers emerged. 'Put down the bottle, Rob', one officer announced.

Robert gulped the remainder of his drink and willingly surrendered. He was handcuffed and led away.

Tom debriefed me shortly after Robert's arrest. Tom rarely swears, but he contritely admitted to me that Robert's frustration is justified: it was 'shit' for him, quoting Robert's words.

The following day – **Wednesday** – Robert was released from police custody. Immediately after his release, Tom booked him a room in a local hotel. This was not arranged as part of the Homes for Good 'decant'; it was paid by the Sanctuary as an urgent interim measure. It is a positive step if not ironic: Robert became one of the first 'homeless people' in Castlebury if not the elsewhere to be accommodated because of COVID, long before the realisation of the Homes for Good decant.

Tom had reprised his role as a benevolent patron, impelled to provide a better solution for the disorder of the night before than could be arranged by the various other agents of the state – Homes for Good or the police. He personally fulfilled for Robert the expectation that the rumours of government assistance had generated. It represented a piecemeal, short-term solution to the problem that Robert had clearly enunciated: his enduring homelessness and the failure of the homeless industry and the state to alleviate it at an exceptional time. It was a contrite performance of moral labour.

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A vicious cycle of whiplash and contrite firefighting, Everyone In revealed the absurdity of the state-sponsored homeless industry and the never-ending circuits of moral labour which it demands. Since leaving my posts in Castlebury, I learn that Everyone In itself had become the subject of a legal challenge by a 'No Recourse to Public Funds' claimant whose immigration status had rendered him exempt from the promises of Everyone In (R v MHCLG ex p ZLL [2022] EWHC 85 (Admin). As Giles Peaker reports (2022), it was decided by the High Court that

Everyone In [was] a "call to action" with a "resonant and inclusive" title: an exhortation to local authorities to do what they could during a frightening time, when decisions had to be made on the hoof. [The presiding judge] found that this type of language and some of the more *ad hoc* aspects of the initiative meant it was unlikely to be a policy. It did not change the status quo […]

The judicial review failed. In deciding that the courts ought not to intervene, the presiding judge Mr Justice Fordham observed

Insofar as there are open questions about how that aspect of Government policy was expressed and communicated, how it ebbed and flowed, how it was understood, and how NGOs were engaged along the way, those questions belong in the arenas of public opinion and of politics.

The will to care endures and is profoundly limited on its own terms. The possibility and impossibility of pursuing the public good are two sides of the same coin. This thesis has aimed to depict these paradoxes and to prompt critical scrutiny of the terms written into the homeless industry's charter.

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