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Conference:
Housing and Social Justice

Teacher Building, Scottish Engineering Centre, St Enoch Square, Glasgow

1 October 2004

Plenary Session 1: Professor Robina Goodlad, Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice/University of Glasgow

Housing and Social Justice: a Framework for Assessing Housing Policy

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Scottish Centre for Research on
SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Housing and Social Justice: a framework for assessing housing policy

Robina Goodlad

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Outline and aims

- What does housing have to do with social justice and social injustice?
- What do we mean by social justice anyway?
- How is housing (disadvantage) related to social injustice?
- How can we tell if housing policy is advancing social justice?
- Scottish focus
- Some concluding thoughts

Summary of argument

- Housing is implicated in key inequalities that constitute or contribute to social injustice
- To tackle social injustice requires that housing policy:
  - addresses the sources of injustice
  - defines ‘just principles’ for distribution
  - specifies who is responsible
  - ensures resources are provided
- And that *other* policies support the same aims
- Policy endorses social justice – can it deliver?

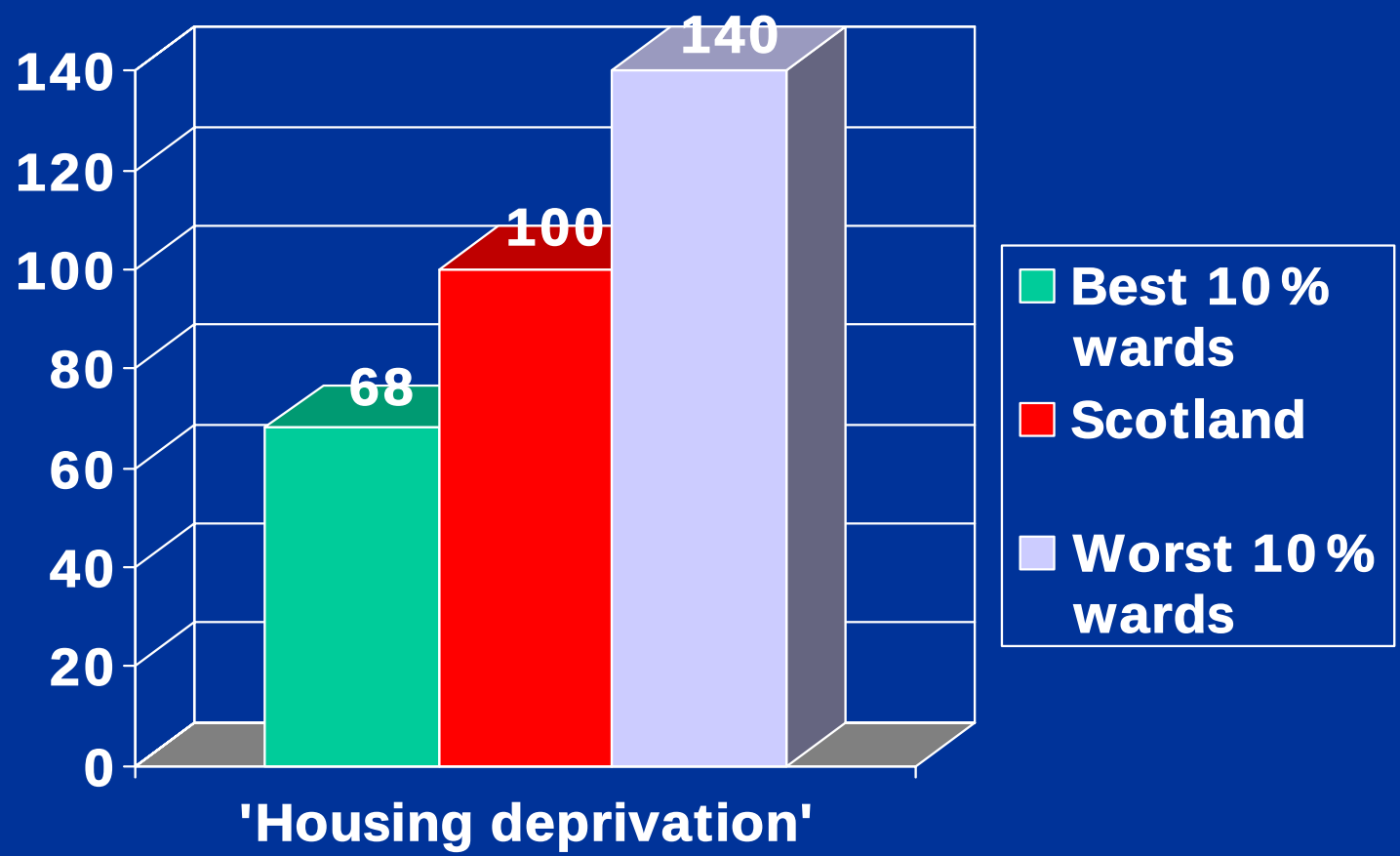
- Thanks to Nick Bailey and Jon Pickering; ENHR

Are housing inequalities unjust?

- Housing 'inequalities':
  - unfair, issue for policy concern OR
  - mark of free society; fair reward for effort; result of free choice, geography, designers' or users' taste ?
- Unjust or just different? Is housing implicated? eg as cause or remedy

- Associations between poor housing/homelessness &
  - Certain income groups
  - Certain tenures
  - Certain types of neighbourhood/small area
  - Certain household types
  - Certain regions
  - Certain age groups
  - Certain ethnic origins
  - Certain ability/disability

Housing deprivation and multiple deprivation (overcrowding/no central heating[census2001] & SIMD2003)



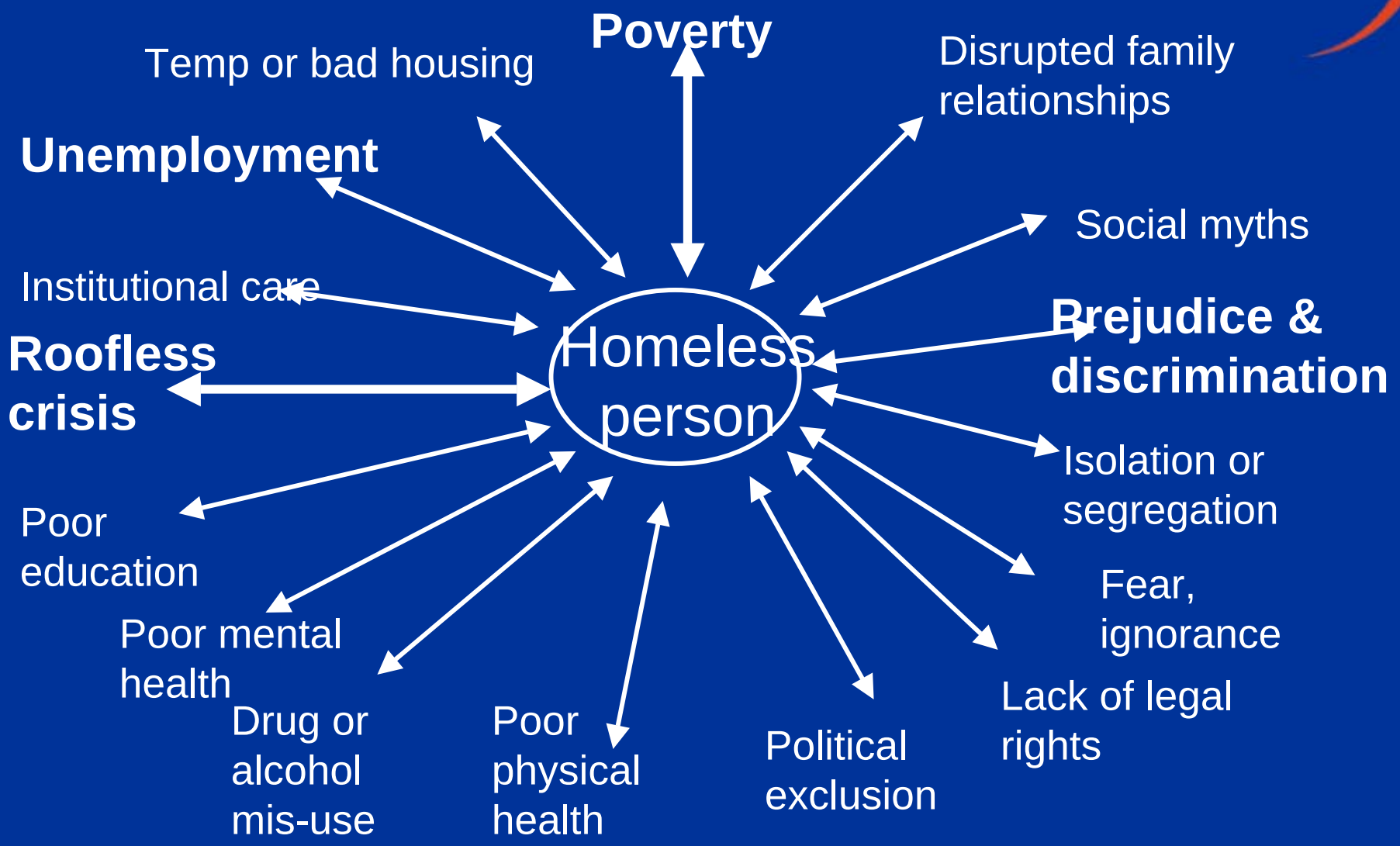
What do we mean by social justice?

- No agreed definition or conceptualisation
- Dominant view of ‘justice as fairness’
- Social justice provides a rationale for ‘how the good and bad things in life should be distributed among the members of a human society’ (Miller, 1999): who gets what, when,.. and where?
- What rationale can be suggested? *Agreed?*
- Social justice and other values

What do we mean by social injustice – in the case of housing?

- Housing has key role in society / life chances
- Unfair distributions of (good and) bad housing conditions/amenities/homelessness etc
- Housing disadvantage – unfair if not fault of individual: 'carry over' of eg poverty, domestic violence → poor housing & homelessness
- Also poor housing & homelessness → *contributory factor* in other disadvantages: education, employment, (ill)health & wellbeing, disability, race

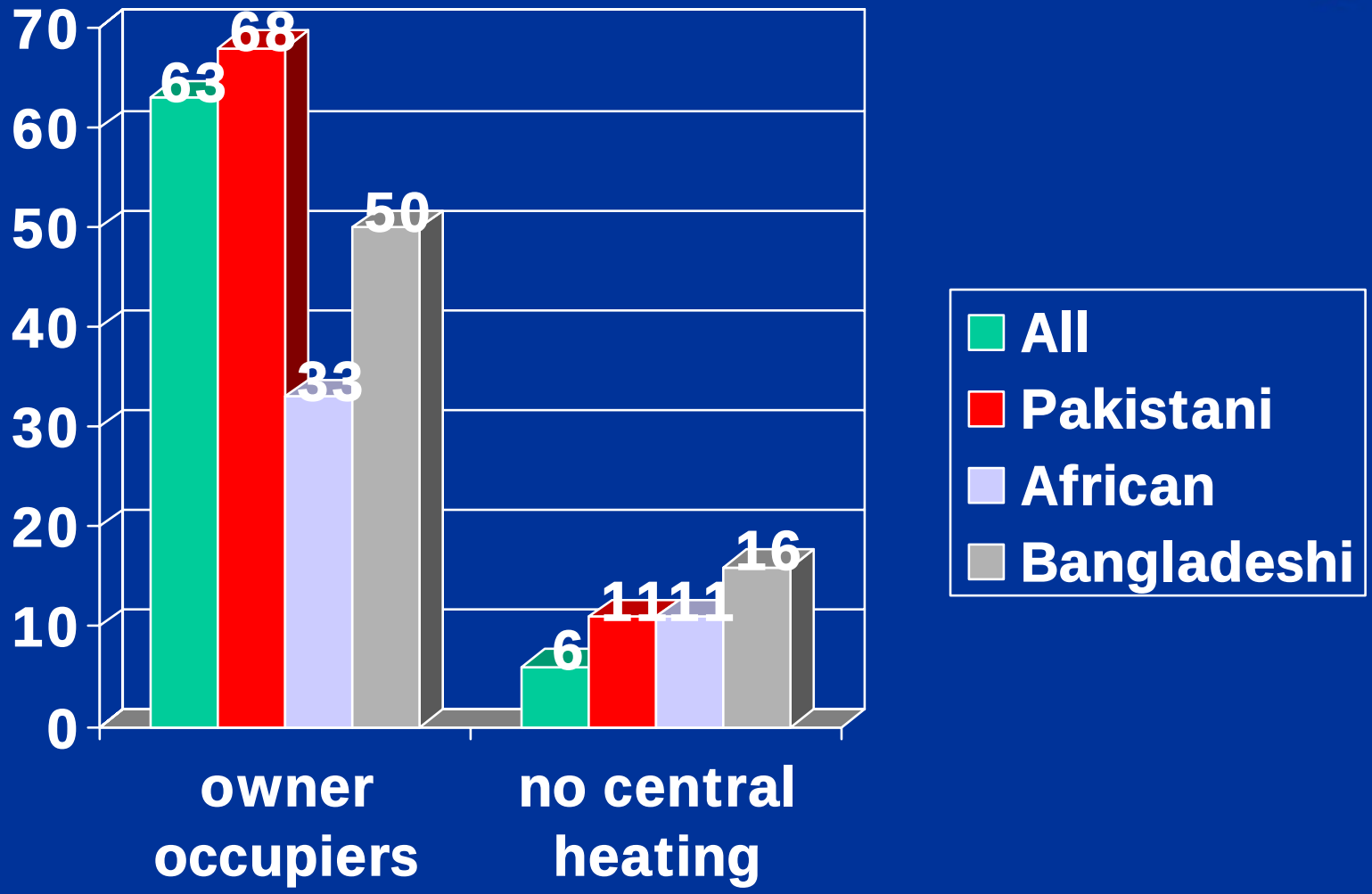
The causes and consequences of homelessness



What are the sources of social/housing injustice?

- Poverty and other material need that ‘carries over’ to compound disadvantage
- ALSO
- Lack of status and respect; powerlessness arising from ‘difference’ that compounds disadvantage – gender, ‘race’, disability
- Together can exert powerful effect: eg disability, low income and housing disadvantage

Some housing characteristics by selected ethnic origin (Census 2001, %)



So how do we achieve fairness? 'Just' principles?

Favoured in public policy are:

- Need
- Equality – of what?
  - Material conditions: *sufficient* equality
  - Status: disability, 'race', gender, homelessness
  - Rules and procedures: universal application
  - Need to recognise difference

Unjust principles?

- Discrimination on grounds of disability, gender, ethnic origin, sexuality, age/youth, other non-relevant characteristic eg stigma of homelessness and neighbourhood deprivation
- Nepotism

- Market ‘principle’: 2 views
  - Just desert – reward for effort & qualifications? + efficient and sensitive to individual preferences
  - Unfair – perverse, outcome of chance and luck, source of exploitation and unfair power

Summary so far

- Social justice has to do with who gets what, when, where and how: housing is implicated
- Social injustice in housing has two main origins – poverty and ‘difference’
- Just principles: need and equality; place for market more problematic
- Since housing disadvantage can be *result of* or *cause of* injustice, housing policy will contribute most to social justice *alongside other policies* on disadvantage

Housing policy: summary of criteria for judging it as ‘just’

- It addresses the sources of injustice
- It defines ‘just principles’ for distribution
- It specifies who is responsible
- It ensures resources are provided: it goes beyond rhetoric

Scottish policy: 1. tackling the sources of injustice?

- Poverty & deprivation:
  - supply: construction & affordability, land;
  - renewal – stock transfer, investment, standards, HITF; Local Housing Strategies;
  - homelessness TF – 2001 and 2003 Acts, RSI etc
- Is it enough?

- Powerlessness & low status: 'difference':
  - Homelessness rights; women's refuges;
  - Tenant participation; housing management & Best value; choice
  - 'Supporting People'
  - Anti-social behaviour – balancing rights
- Is it enough?

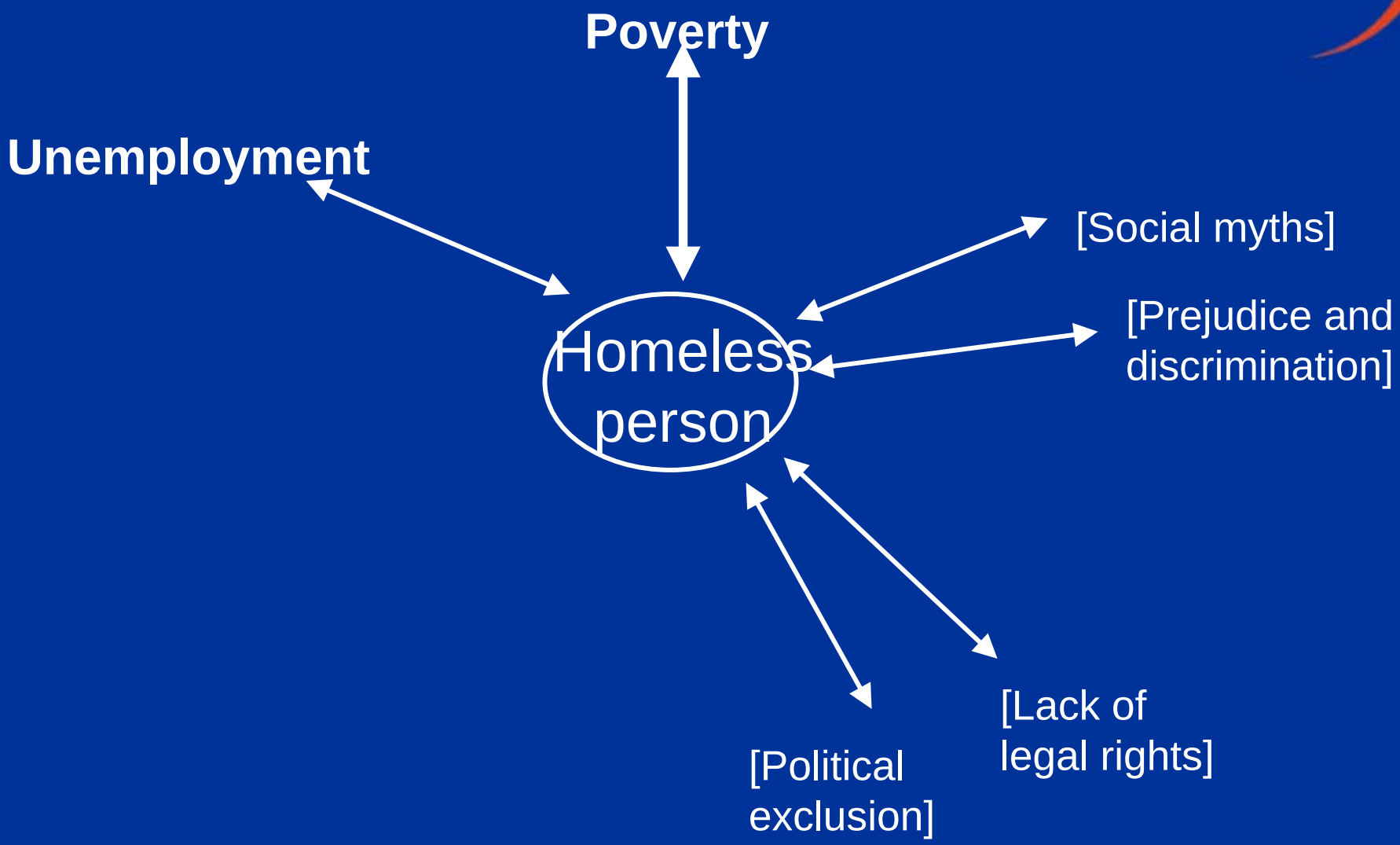
2. Just principles?

- Need:
  - Homelessness laws & policy
  - Standards
  - Affordable housing
- Equality:
  - The Equalities agenda: race, disability, gender ...
  - Material conditions: *sufficient* equality
  - Rules and procedures: compatible with choice?
- The role of the market?
  - HMO regulation; affordable housing; RTB; renewal

3. Who is responsible?

- Multi-level governance
  - 2 key acts: 1999 Scotland Act and 2001 Housing Act
- Less clear: roles of citizens, consumers & markets
- Complexity: homelessness as an example

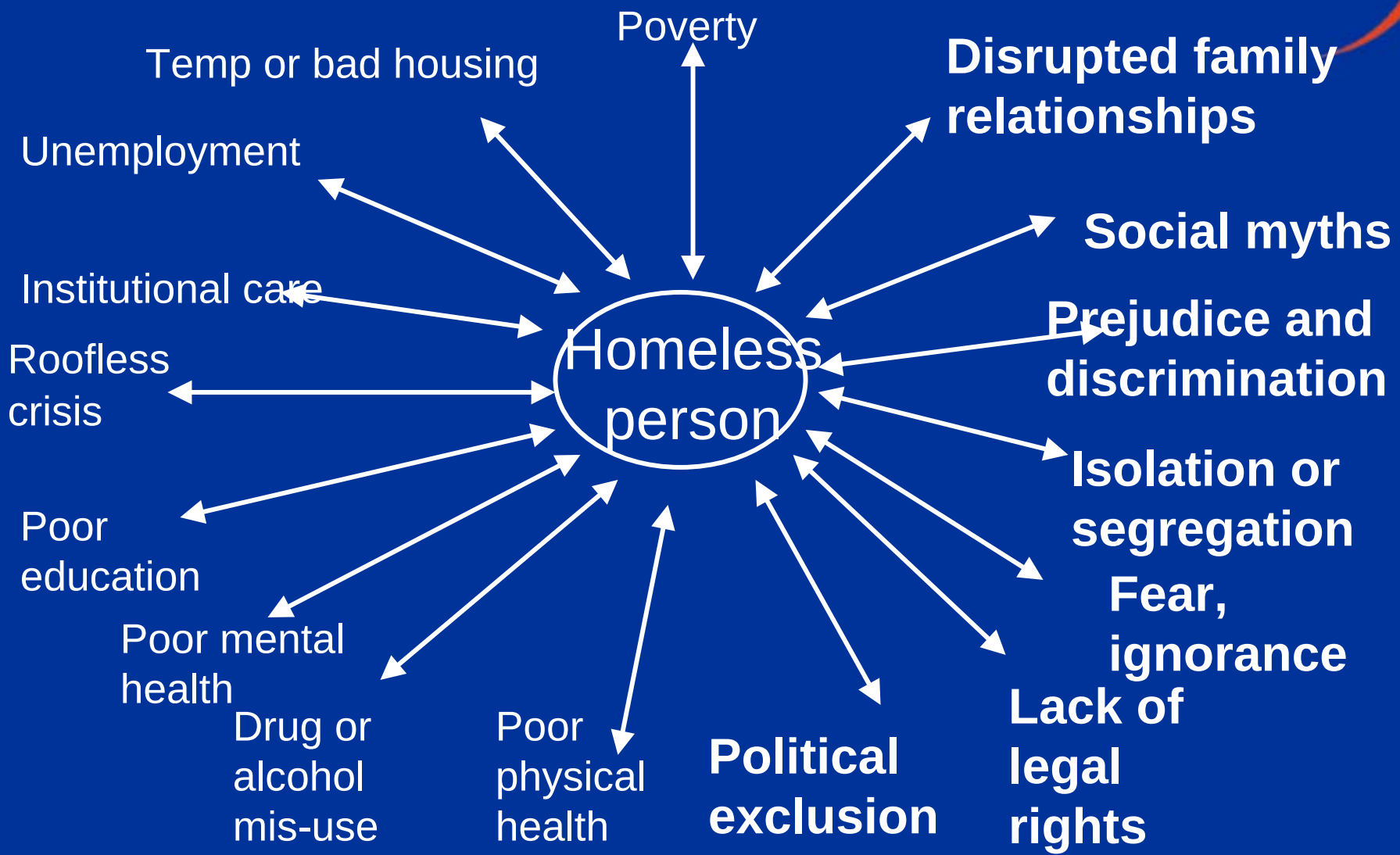
Tackling homelessness: UK responses



Tackling homelessness: Scottish Executive responses

Tackling homelessness: local authority responses

Tackling homelessness: responses required from all of us



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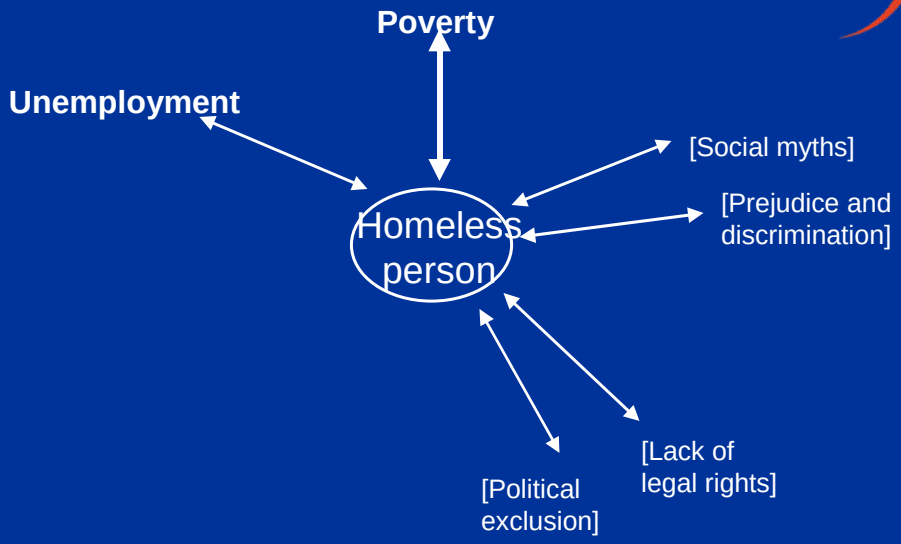

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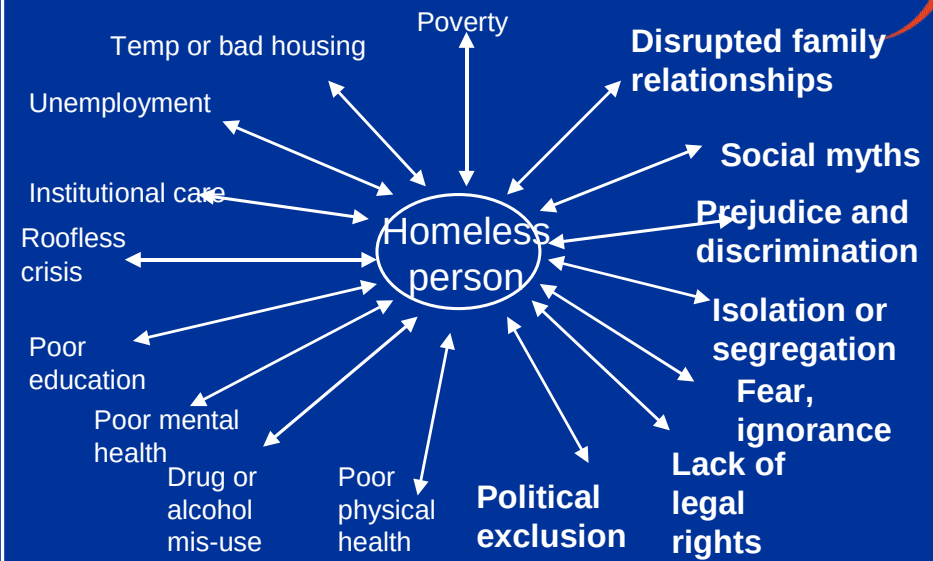
Tackling homelessness: responses required from all of us



4. Adequate resources?

- Hard to tell for two reasons:
  - Data difficulties
  - What is sufficient?
- Homelessness example:
  - £127 million over the three years 2003/4 to 2005/2006, inc. RSI, hostels replacement, B&B and other local authority initiatives; plus affordable housing initiatives etc
  - Impact?

In conclusion

- Challenge in agreeing what social justice means, but clarity is essential to checking progress
- Suggested two key sources of social injustice:
  - Poverty and ‘difference
- Suggested two key principles for deciding who gets what where and when
  - Need and equality – plus 3rd – civilising the market ?
- Evidence policy is pushing in right directions
- Limits of public policy:
  - Other values also favoured – tensions
  - Roles for others