**The HME Study**

**Methodology: an abductive, user participatory approach**

The abductive research strategy will use semi-structured interviews to compare and contrast the perspectives, experiences and priorities of multiply excluded homeless people with those of key informants from support agencies. A key component in validating this research strategy will be homeless volunteers currently working with Thames Reach and Framework, who will be involved in research design, interviewing and data analysis. In an abductive research strategy abduction is “the process used to produce social scientific accounts of social life by drawing on the concepts and meanings used by social actors and the activities in which they engage” (Blaikie, 1993: 176). It begins by seeking to discover and describe the way the social world is experienced and perceived from the ‘inside’ by developing an understanding of ‘insider’ views, (i.e. multiply excluded homeless people), moves across to ‘outsider’ (i.e. key informants’) accounts and aims ultimately to form a more comprehensive understanding of the social world by developing or amending ‘expert’ accounts that take lay (i.e. service user) explanations seriously. Abduction is applied in moving from the lay explanations and analysis to more technical descriptions of social phenomena (Blaikie, 1993). An important aim of the research is to penetrate the perceptions and experiences of homeless people to allow their aspirations and priorities to become an integral part of ongoing theoretical and policy debates about the causes of, and solutions to, multiple exclusion homelessness.

Fieldwork will therefore begin by exploring the way in which multiple exclusion homelessness is experienced from the ‘inside’. The use of semi-structured, interviews with homeless participants will facilitate an understanding of the particular factors and events that they consider to be influential in the evolution of their homelessness stories. A parallel set of semi-structured interviews with key informants working for agencies providing support services to homeless people will also be conducted. Subsequent abductive analysis offers the possibility of moving backwards and forwards between the accounts and priorities of homeless people and key informants to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how homelessness intersects with other aspects of deep social exclusion. This interrogation of the two sets of interviews will allow for an exploration of similarities and dissonance in the agendas of multiply excluded homeless people and support agency informants. This process will generate grounded data from two groups of people with the most relevant experience of multiple exclusion homelessness to better inform future policy and practice