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The Impacts of a Charity Organisation on a
Local Community – The Challenges and
Opportunities: A Case Study of Blackpool
and Fylde Street Angels

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Abstract

This project explores the unique dynamics of a charity, Blackpool and Fylde Street Angels (B&FSA), working in Blackpool town centre, a deprived coastal resort. It aims to draw attention to the intersectional challenges the service faces, alongside the opportunities and positive outcomes the charity stimulates working with vulnerable individuals. It places a fine focus on; the work carried out to curb the effects of homelessness, alongside the dynamics of working with substance users, and running a charity in an area of higher deprivation with a unique tourist dynamic. It acknowledges the current direction and future vision the service is moving towards as they hope to create ‘a cycle of rehabilitation’, providing holistic support with long-term sustained outcomes. This study provides a detailed depiction of Blackpool’s social and economic landscape, using interviews and participant observations supported by grey literature and academic research. By using the voices of those working within the charity and of those using their services, this project investigates the charities substantial impact in the community, whilst also acknowledging the areas weakened by the complexity of the issues they deal with, or external agents (council, government).

Key Words: Charity, Social Exclusion, Homelessness, Coastal Resort, Deprivation, Urban Geography

Contents Page

Acknowledgments.....	6
List of Figures and Abbreviations	7
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	8
1.1 Charities	8
1.2 Introducing Blackpool.....	8
1.3 Blackpool and Fylde Street Angel (B&FSA)	10
1.4 Aims and Objectives.....	10
1.5 Structure.....	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review	12
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Coastal Towns	12
2.3 Housing	13
2.4 Homelessness	14
2.5 Tackling Homelessness in a Coastal Town	15
2.6 Charities	16
Chapter 3: Methodology	18
3.1 Introduction	18
3.2 Primary Research	18
3.3 Secondary Research	20
3.4 Transcribing and Coding	20
3.5 Research Setting	21
3.6 Sampling.....	22
3.7 Ethics	22
3.8 Positionality	23

Chapter 4: Data Analysis	25
4.1 Geographies of a Charity in a Coastal Town	25
- 4.1.1 Opportunities and Challenges of Working in a Tourist Town	25
- 4.1.2 Opportunities and Challenges of Working in a Town Vs City	26
- 4.1.3 Opportunities and Challenges of Community Cohesion	27
4.2 Opportunities and Challenges for a Charity Working in Blackpool	29
- 4.2.1 Volunteers	29
- 4.2.2 Funding	30
4.3 B&FSA's Social Impacts: Opportunities and Challenges of working with Homelessness.....	31
- 4.3.1 Homelessness	31
- 4.3.2 Housing	33
4.4 B&FSA's Social Impacts: Substance Users and Enabling Culture.....	35
- 4.4.1 Working with Substance Users	35
- 4.4.2 Social Debate: Are Charities Enablers?	36
Chapter 5: Conclusion	38
Bibliography.....	42
Appendices	53

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List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Data Collection Sites. Page 21

Abbreviations:

B&FSA Blackpool and Fylde Street Angels

HMO House in Multiple Occupation

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Charities

There is no single measure of what a ‘charity’ is (Bryson et al., 2022). Very broadly, these organisations provide services, improving the social well-being of a community. Their work provides opportunities to participate in community-based activities in a cyclic structure that supports an area’s social capital (Bryson et al, 2002). In March 2024, in just England and Wales alone, there were 170,766 active charities (Gov, 2024) with a collective income of £96 billion.

In studying the geographies of charity across England it was noted that smaller organisations are 2.5 times more prevalent in affluent areas focusing their initiatives on “cultural cohesion and community involvement” leading to more group-based activities rather than focussing on an individual (Mohan, 2011). Conversely, Clifford (2012) suggests larger charity organisations working in deprived areas focus on individual initiatives improving economic wellbeing, thus leading to a prominence in one-to-one financial aid services, young family support and mental health services (Lindsey, 2012).

This difference in initiatives is often dictated by the varying forms of social issues found in these areas. Whilst seaside towns are often perceived as vibrant holiday destinations, many suffer from persistent poverty, seasonal unemployment, and social challenges that disproportionately affect their residents. These complex social issues require holistic support (Beatty & Fothergill, 2003). Unfortunately, these communities often receive less funding allocations, are less socially connected and acquire fewer resource provisions (‘enabling resources’) (Clifford, 2024) that would allow them to develop these areas. Consequently, the range and depth of support charity organisations can offer is reduced (Clifford, 2012).

1.2 Introducing Blackpool

Beneath Blackpool’s bright lights, tourism and entertainment industry, there is significant deprivation, making it one of the most disadvantaged towns in the country (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019). The Blackpool Public Health Report (Blackpool Council, 2024) identifies Blackpool as densely populated with high rates of child

poverty, unemployment, poor mental health, high substance abuse, homelessness and rough sleeping, all exacerbated by low wages and a transient population (JSNA, 2024). The 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranked Blackpool as the most deprived area nationwide (Gov, 2019).

In the 19th to mid 20th centuries, seaside resort towns, such as Blackpool, were ‘extraordinary’ new ‘architectures of pleasure’ (Chapman and Light, 2011, p.210) that provided attractions such as piers, promenades and eventually arcades. These ‘liminal’ spaces became geographies of escapism (Preston-Whyte, 2004) that created a great demand for low-budget hotels and guest houses in the area. However, with the creation of cheaper package holidays abroad and a decline in the town’s economy, these resorts have seen the conversion of these accommodations into HMOs. Recently, issues of unfit housing, rogue landlords and a shortage of accommodation has created a ‘skewed and imbalanced housing stock, a marked lack of community cohesion and extremely high levels of deprivation’ (Blackpool Council, 2021). The towns social and economic climate has been further exacerbated by the seasonal, low-skilled nature of jobs in these resorts, demanding a large workforce in peak seasons, but a huge reduction in shifts in off-peak (Green and Owen, 1988). Consequently, creating high levels of transience in the area.

Additionally, this lack of high-quality employment has led to ‘a lack of aspiration in young people’ to find better employment, in turn sustaining the cycle of poverty found in deprived areas. For those who do ‘achieve academic success’ they often leave the community for better employment (Blackpool Council, 2024). This causes a brain drain, lack of wealth retention and commitment to the community (Kyung, 2016), reproducing various complex issues (crime, poverty, ill-health). For example, drug misuse has led to deaths four times higher in Blackpool than across England (Blackpool Council, 2024) and rough sleepers in the town centre in 2024 ranged from 10 to 15, with more in summer (Blackpool Council, 2024).

Stanley (2005) identified that these complex behaviours were often forms of escapism from the reality of living in Blackpool. He argued the lack of community cohesion diminished the reality of consequences in partaking in ‘risky behaviours’ due to the idea that a large number of those around them also partook in those activities or had little aversion to them.

1.3 Blackpool and Fylde Street Angels (B&FSA)

In this context charities, such as B&FSA, play a crucial safety net for those experiencing multiple deprivation (Trussell Trust, 2021).

B&FSA is a Christian run charity, founded in 2005 as a response to the ‘wild’ nighttime economy (Paul Blakey, 2015) in Halifax providing basic first aid and support to those on nights out. As of 2024, the charity works in 140 towns, one being Blackpool, across the UK and overseas providing tailored support to each town’s needs.

Working in a town such as Blackpool, with such significant economic and social challenges presents numerous obstacles, including financial instability, high demand for services, and the complexities of engaging with transient and vulnerable populations.

One of the charity’s primary roles is to assist individuals who become vulnerable during nights out, particularly those under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Volunteers patrol the streets, offering water, first aid, and emotional support to people in distress. They also work closely with local emergency services to ensure that individuals receive appropriate care, whether that be medical treatment, safe transport home, or signposting to further support services.

B&FSA also assists Blackpool’s homeless population, who often seek refuge in the town due to its availability of cheap accommodation and transient economy. Many individuals experiencing homelessness face complex challenges, including substance abuse, mental health issues, and relationship breakdowns (Crisis, 2020). B&FSA helps by distributing food, warm clothing, and hygiene products, as well as connecting individuals with services, support networks and providing temporary accommodation through their 24-hour bed unit.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

This study aims to explore the impact the charity organisation, B&FSA, has on the local community in Blackpool, identifying the micro-geographies of working in a seaside resort town that has experienced significant economic decline. Chapter one identifies the challenges and opportunities B&FSA experiences whilst working in complex social environments and how they tackle these. Additionally, it attempts to recognise how the particular geographies of

Blackpool impacts the charity's core focus and the initiatives they carry out. By gaining the unique perspectives of the manager of B&FSA Paul Rawson, the founder of Street Angels Paul Blakey MBE, volunteers at B&FSA and users of the service it seeks to discuss the charity's vision and impact on the town. It also highlights how these insights have shaped the specific scope and vision of the organisation.

This will be achieved by considering the key questions/themes and objectives, identified below, that emerged from these discussions and are explored further in the following chapter.

Research Questions:

- a) What social impacts do charity organizations have in an area of higher deprivation?
- b) What opportunities and challenges do charity organizations face in an area of higher deprivation?

1.5 Structure

Chapter 1 has introduced the geographies of charity and the social and economic landscape of Blackpool. Chapter 2 reviews existing literature highlighting key themes that this discussion will centre around. These include economic deprivation and social inequality in Blackpool, charitable engagement for organisations such as B&FSA, and the impact of Blackpool's tourism economy on charitable work. Chapter 3 identifies the methods used to collect and analyse primary and secondary data. Chapter 4 analyses the data collected, supporting it with literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of how charities operate in a complex socioeconomic landscape. This hopes to broaden the understanding of the social impact B&FSA have and balance both the opportunities and significant barriers that arise in areas with higher deprivation rates. Finally, Chapter 6 summarises key findings, identifying limitations of the study and provides ideas for future research. Ultimately, understanding these dynamics can inform future policy decisions and improve the effectiveness of charitable interventions in coastal communities such as Blackpool.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Coastal towns have a unique set of micro-geographies; dependent on their various structural factors they become idyllic destination spots or symbols of economic despair.

Tourist resort towns along England's coastlines have seen the impacts of this severe decline as they struggle with 'lack of economic diversity, transience and in-migration' (Shared Intelligence, 2008). These disparities have led to a 'deep exclusion' of sub-populations within these communities (Agarwal et al., 2018) as 'deprivation' does not align with standard ideas of a 'normal life' or facilitate the promotion of a tourist destination (Bauman, 1998, p.37). Exclusion is often followed by various social issues, creating tension in these areas, leading to a greater demand for intervention and investment from government resources.

2.2 Coastal Towns

Resort towns struggling with issues of deprivation face the dichotomy of appealing and advertising their assets to prospective tourists, whilst supporting their own, often very vulnerable, communities.

Positive place image is highly significant in promoting an area's assets to prospective tourists. Harvey (2001, p.355) attests that places encourage funding and tourist spending by appearing to be 'creative, innovative and safe'. Where there is a lack of financial injection into the built environment by its council, there is often less motivation within the community to invest their own time and effort into the area, further weakening community cohesion and the 'place image' (Zou and Yu, 2022). As such, initiatives aiming to rebrand an area often wish to 'remove' issues of homelessness, substance usage and broader deprivation (Seo et al., 2021). This can cause friction amongst residents between those welcome and unwanted within the community, creating a dichotomy of the 'socially included' and the 'socially excluded'. These tactics enhance the public image to outsiders whilst weakening the cohesion, pushing the excluded toward increasing acts of 'risky behaviours' (Stanley, 2005).

This was exemplified through Petrie et al's., (2006) analysis in which participants living in a deprived area 'expressed concerns regarding their lack of resources' and felt 'threatened for their personal safety'. Stanley's (2005) study postulated that forms of escapism from the reality of living in Blackpool were taken through risky behaviours (drug and alcohol usage, crime). He argued that a lack of community cohesion diminished the reality of consequences due to the idea that a large number of those around them also partook in those activities or had little aversion to them. Carr et al. (2017), suggests that legal intervention and policing of deprived communities is complex due to an individual's appraisal of 'risk' and as such, can be inefficient in areas of higher deprivation. Risk is subjective to the individual, so in deprived areas crime is often higher as risk and reward often outweigh the punishment.

2.3 Housing

As stated in the introduction, the proliferation of HMOs in deprived coastal towns has attracted many in need of affordable housing or temporary accommodations (Whitehead et al., 2016). As austerity continues in the UK, cuts to universal credit and the cost-of-living crisis (ONS, 2022) have placed increased economic pressures on households, prompting some to look for cheaper accommodations elsewhere. Despite having a 'legal duty to house vulnerable individuals and families', councils have struggled to do so due to severe shortage of affordable housing across England (Shelter, 2024). This has resulted in a growing dependency on HMOs and a weakened welfare protection (Shelter, 2023). HMO's often house vulnerable individuals, making them exempt from restrictions on housing benefits (LLT, 2023), providing 'rogue landlords' with a loophole through which they can offer unfit properties at inflated rates.

For deprived coastal localities, this has been further exacerbated by the high number of people who 'claim sickness and disability benefits' moving to coastal resort towns in search of cheaper accommodations (House of Commons CLG, 2007). These surges have resulted in a poorly regulated system that mostly benefits those that exploit it. In recent years, a greater effort to regulate and police the system has been noted. One example has been the introduction of 'a national database that records and warns of landlords convicted of housing offences' (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018a). However, Willink (2005) cautioned that 'legal interventions are often lost in legislation'; without practical work to supplement legal action, the cycle continues.

2.4 Homelessness

‘Homeless’ is generally defined as: “living in a place of habitation that is below a minimum adequacy standard; and lacking access to adequate housing” (Amore et al., 2011, p. 32). Cloke and Milbourne (2006) detailed that it often includes sofa surfing, short-stays and a ‘willingness to put up with unfit housing’. Homeless individuals are often highly regulated by dominant agents (Property owners, financial agents and local and national governments) and have ‘weaker social ties’, excluding them from the community (Granovetter, 1973). As such they become socially excluded. Bossert et al. (2007) defines social exclusion as a ‘condition of deprivation that is persistent or has worsened over time’. He also acknowledges the importance of identification. If there is little identification with other community members, individuals can often experience alienation and prejudice as they do not align with ‘normal ways of living’. As such the defining label of their identity becomes the ‘homeless identity’ (McCarthy, 2013), which in turn hinders them from accessing necessary support as their circumstances and personal agency are often overlooked.

Media discourses have reinforced these stereotypes of the homeless population, placing a great emphasis on the ‘disease aspect’ of the community (Boydell et al, 2000, p.28), thus removing the humanity of homelessness. As such, they become ‘objects of discourse’ (Pascale, 2005, p.261), straddling the fence of being both seen and unseen, simultaneously, within the community. As such, sleeping rough and other ‘street practices’, exposes them to further actions from outsiders. Wright (1997, p.1) acknowledged they face a range of responses from being ‘tolerated and avoided’ to ‘ignored, tallied, or intervened upon’. Once again, these discourses often fail to acknowledge the circumstances which has led an individual to homelessness, creating a divide between ‘them’ and ‘us’. This binary reinforces rigid societal norms that makes it harder to provide support.

Before attempting to tackle it, it is important to consider the causation of homelessness. Empirical research identified ‘mental illness, addiction and disturbing childhood events’ as contributing factors (Carton et al., 2000, p. 258). Other scholars disagree, suggesting the mix of powerful agents and policy work, restrict the agency of the individual.

The Structural-Agency (Meert and Bourgeois, 2007) seeks to combine both these ideas, postulating that people’s situation of homelessness are due to factors on both micro and

macro scales. The former acknowledges that an individual's own agency, enables their pathway into homelessness; O'Flaherty (2004, p.1) listed some as 'vulnerabilities, institutional experiences, and insufficient protective factors'. At the macro level, structural factors can determine someone's housing situation; 'broader social and economic contexts' such as the cost-of-living crisis and policy shifts force individuals into homelessness. As such, homeless individuals are described as social agents that are socially constrained by dominant actors ('property owners, local and national agencies and voluntary sectors).

2.5 Tackling Homelessness in a Coastal Town

The in-migration of homeless individuals into coastal towns is often influenced by successful marketing tactics. They are frequently advertised as spaces that provide 'leisure, work, escape' which in turn act as the perfect traveller 'honeypot' (Gerrard and Farrugia, 2014). Due to the regular migration of these populations and the acknowledgement of their possible complex needs, infrastructures are often positioned to address their needs, offering cheaper accommodation, greater charity support and large populations of people for safety. In turn, this produces 'spaces of care' (Parr, 2003); 'complex spaces of inclusion and exclusion' in which excluded individuals of a community find safe spaces that accommodates their needs. These spaces facilitate the provision of resources, temporary accommodations and food alongside boosting the social capitals of the individuals of the community using the services (Stablein, 2011). Establishing relationships with others of the same lived experiences produces a unique 'community' that provides support and structure to an individual's life.

Iveson and Cornish (2015) studied the benefits of engaging homeless individuals in community activities; the results showed that initial engagement often led to further engagement with other community activities later on. Additionally, participants felt they were able to 'reconnect with mainstream society' and 'felt normal again' after countless experiences of marginalisation and prejudice. These spaces of care, produce stepping stones for self-improvement and the restructuring of community cohesion in an area. As one participant said in their study; '*with encouragement I could bring myself back to life*'.

Considering these factors and using the Structural-Agency model, the homeless individual has the potential to make 'purposeful choices' (Alsop et al., 2005, p.11). These decisions can

guide the development of ‘desired actions’ but often requires the support and resources of government funding and third sector work carried out by charities.

Charities 2.6

Charity can be defined as the ‘voluntary contribution of help’ (Oxford Dictionary, 2024) that binds volunteers through a shared empathy (Chung et al., 2021). They strive to improve community cohesion and the social capitals of those who use the services, aiming to stimulate social change. Their ability to mobilise quickly allows them to provide support and resources, targeting the precise needs and demands of the community.

However, work in the charity sector does not come without its challenges. Working within less affluent areas, often generates various barriers to participation in community and charity work (Brodie et al., 2011, pp. 40-41). There is ‘an absence of practical, learnt and felt resources’ that reduces a community’s trust and interactions with sources of aid. This is often shown through a lack of confidence and/or weariness in communicating their needs (Lindsey, 2012).

In any case, charities must adopt the correct strategies to build a firm foundation of trust within the target group before any meaningful work can begin. They must be seen as a reliable source of support, offering appropriate resources and connections to their needs. Empirical studies have found that lower skill sets and confidence in raising issues will often prevent individuals from highlighting their needs to community services (Pennacchia et al., 2018), providing an additional barrier in deprived areas to provide for the demand. Lindsey (2012) suggested that written posters offering information about charitable services often prove ineffective in areas of higher deprivation due to higher illiteracy rates. Multiple deprivation not only instigates the need for these charitable services but acts as the main challenge to providing their services.

In order for the charity sector to thrive in areas of higher deprivation, they must acknowledge and tackle the multi-faceted issues that co-exist in these areas. A realistic long-term strategy is essential before engaging in any successful and meaningful regeneration within a target group. Any such plan must be seen and carried out alongside existing council and government level investment. McCarthy (2013, p.49) detailed that social action ‘requires

both redistribution and recognition of difference'. To effectively address the core issues facing an area, a redistribution of resources (whether that be economically, socially or politically) and a recognition and addressing of dominant actors that enforce these systems is required.

This dissertation examines the impact of B&FSA's work whilst working in an area with complex multi-faceted needs. Although there is extensive research on urban deprivation, there is a weaker focus on the micro-geographies of coastal towns, specifically tourist resorts. This study looks at the various social issues a charity faces working in Blackpool, highlighting the opportunities they are able to capitalise on, the positive outcomes they facilitate against the backdrop of the social, political and economic challenges they face.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study used an ethnographic approach to collect individual accounts of the experience of working in complex environments. It used an inductive, bottom-up, approach using qualitative techniques to ‘move beyond statistics’ and understand the perspectives of the research participants (Zainal, 2007). The flexibility in these methods allowed me to link broader conceptual ideas to other disciplines producing a dynamic and well-structured discussion (Naeem et al., 2023).

3.2 Primary Research

Semi-structured and Informal Interviews

This study primarily used semi-structured and informal interviews to collect the data. I used open-ended questions and follow up verbal and non-verbal probes to allow both the participant and I flexibility throughout the interview to develop a thorough understanding of the topic (Adeoye-Olatunde et. al, 2021). These types of interviews allow participants to communicate their thoughts, emotions and views using ‘language in their own words’ to describe their lived experiences (Karatsareas, 2022, p.101). In total, 2 semi-structured interviews and 8 informal interviews were carried out, averaging 30 minutes each. The depth of information that was collected gave ‘reasonable coverage’ for the small sample size that was obtained (Patton, 2002). I did not deem it appropriate to record my informal interviews during the food; this was in order to maintain a level of trust and comfort for the participants whilst discussing possibly vulnerable topics of conversation.

A semi-structured interview plan (Kallio et al., 2016) of open-ended questions was formulated based on research of the B&FSA website and social media pages (Naz et al., 2022). The questions were tailored to match the knowledge base of the participant; Paul Rawson (manger of B&FSA) and Paul Blakey MBE (founder of Street Angels) were asked different questions to the participants at the outreaches as they were able to explore their unique knowledge of the service (Ruslin et al, 2022). The interview guide (see Appendix 4)

established a 'degree of relevancy' throughout the conversation, ensuring the participant stayed engaged and focused on the topics (Bartholomew et al., 2000).

I collected the data iteratively, by attending the food outreaches weekly throughout July to September 2024. This allowed me to fully immerse myself in the work of B&FSA and network with potential participants. Due to my position as the 'outsider', wariness of my intentions was initially inevitable from users of the service. 'Trustworthiness' (Haines, 2017) was promoted by consistent engagement, built rapport and continuing conversations week on week. Additionally, 'laying the groundwork' of the study within the first couple visits promoted communication between the participants and I, thus encouraging and sustaining a relationship (Sutton, et al, 2003).

Additionally, the power dynamic between the researcher and the participant should always be acknowledged. In this case, a researcher had entered the participants space and was asking personal questions about their circumstances (Miller et al., 2009). Steps were taken to reduce this power differential. Language was tailored to 'participants capabilities' (Few et al., 2003) and it was ensured that participants understood the aim of the research and their right to object. Similarly, I encouraged participants to guide the conversation using open-ended probe questions; I also engaged in topics of conversation that were not pertinent to the study in order to sustain the flow of the interview and allow the participants to express themselves through their stories.

Participant Observation

Due to the continual flow of people at the food outreach, it was difficult to find appropriate times to interview participants. As such, it was easier to compliment the small pool of interviews with observations of behaviours that had been acknowledged in the interviews. It allowed me to observe the 'backstage culture' (DeMunck and Sobo, 1998) of B&FSA in their natural setting whilst simultaneously establishing a rapport with the community. I was able to observe interactions and events described in the interviews, whilst also noting 'events participants may not have shared' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

3.3 Secondary research

Secondary data substantiates the primary research of this study. Although it is a time and economically efficient method, the data itself can be outdated or inaccurate as I had no control over the original data collection process (Kumara, 2022). As such an iterative process of collection was used. This minimised flaws in the collected data, identifying themes and patterns in various data sets and policy papers in order to collect the most suitable research.

Additionally, methodical triangulation was used to reduce the ‘deficiencies of one method’ by allowing the data to be substantiated by another (Bans-Akutey and Tiimub (2021). For example, topics discussed in the interviews, were then observed in the observations allowing for a thorough and accurate discussion. This analysis of a particular theme was then supported by official policy documents and secondary research. It provides an added breadth and strengthens the analysis and conclusions (Denzin 1978).

3.4 Transcribing and Coding

The recorded semi-structured interviews with staff provided a verbatim transcript of the conversations, including intonations, pauses and emotive speaking (Barriball and While, 1994), reducing ‘interviewer error’ (Japec, 2008). It also sustained the flow of conversation as it would have been disruptive to write notes and lose physical (eye contact) and verbal engagement (Naz et al., 2022).

Thematic analysis was used to identify themes, using ‘pattern recognition’ (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) and open coding to sort through the data. Initially, it required the me to segregate the data into groups that were conceptually related in order to make links to wider theoretical literature. Master categories were then developed which highlighted the key themes of the interviews (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). Once this had been achieved empirical findings could be connected to broader literature (Cope & Hurtz, 2016, p.648) through recurrent or contrasting themes.

3.5 Research setting

The interview with Paul Rawson took place at the B&FSA base in Blackpool, whilst the interview with Paul Blakey MBE was conducted over a phone call. The 8 informal interviews took place onsite at Bank Street car park during the food outreach. Other informal interviews took place at Bank Street car park or whilst patrolling the streets on Saturday night outreach.

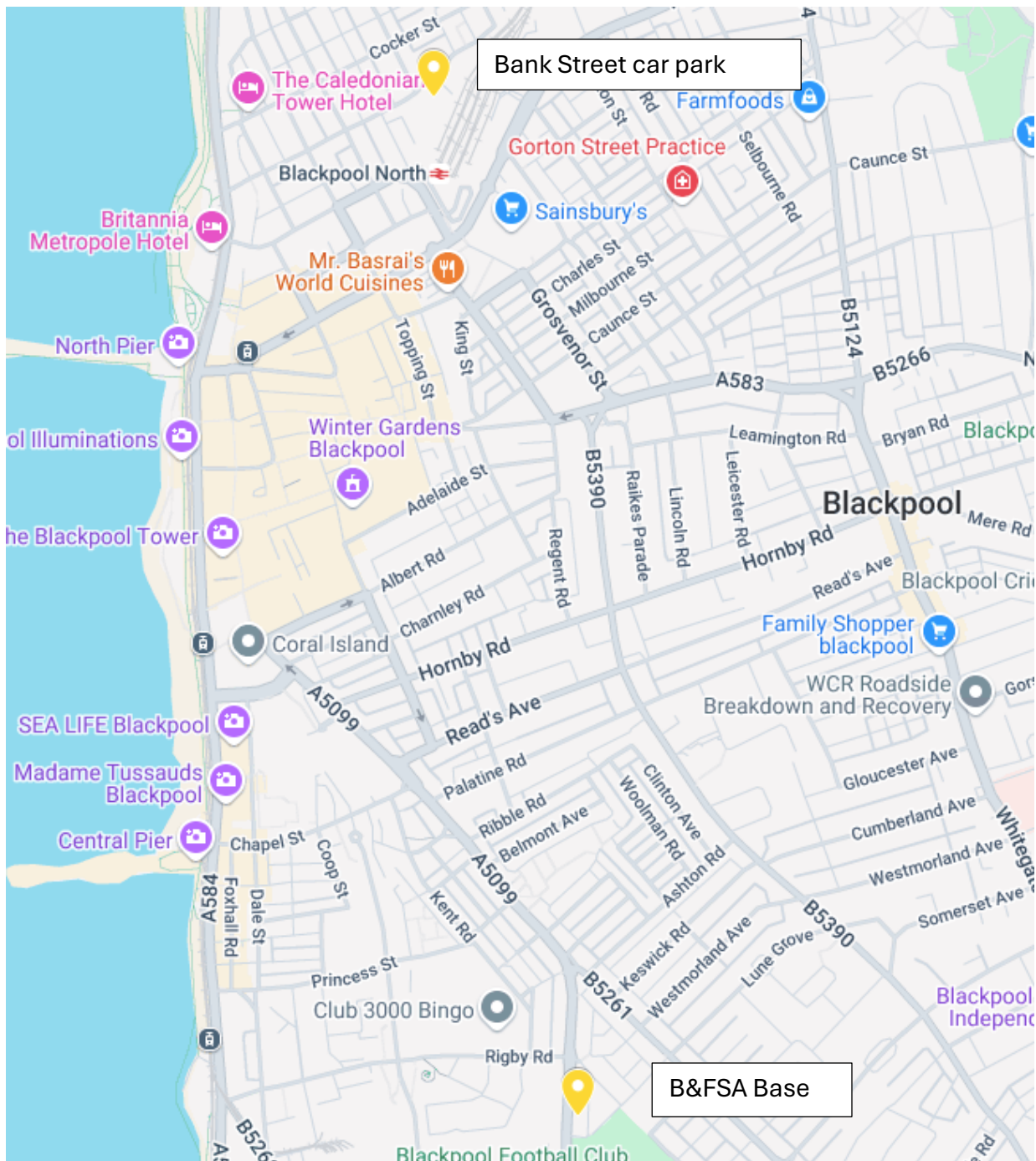


Figure 1: Map of Data Collection Sites

3.6 Sampling

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, with the sample population being the community of Street Angels (Manager, volunteers and users of the service). Using this method, I was able to hand select respondents that would provide ‘appropriate and useful information’ (Kelly, 2010. p.317). As such, the manager of B&FSA, Paul Rawson and the founder of Street Angels, Paul Blakey, were chosen for the semi-structured interviews in order to gain their unique perspectives on the strengths and challenges the charity has faced in its 19 years of service. Whilst undertaking the informal interviews, a volunteer introduced me to participants he felt would feel comfortable being interviewed.

The study aimed to gain an alternative council and/or police perspective on the economic and social landscape of Blackpool and their views on charity work in the town, however it was unsuccessful. Having emailed multiple individuals, a response was never received. Additionally, some participants declined an interview, whilst Street Angels advised against involving certain others. This unfortunately narrowed the potential pool of interviewees.

3.7 Ethics

Before undertaking the data collection, this study was ethically approved by Newcastle University.

Participants who undertook the informal interviews were made aware of their role in the study, how their answers would be used, their right to withdraw and their anonymity (see Appendix 3). As some participants were particularly vulnerable, I ensured that the aims of the study were verbally relayed to them with the reassurance that, should they want to withdraw their data, they could contact B&FSA who had my contact information. The identities of the participants from the informal interviews have been concealed, using a pseudonym ensuring no information can be traced back to them (Jamshed, 2014). Paul Rawson and Paul Blakey signed consent forms (see Appendix 2) and consented to their real names being used. After the study, this information will be destroyed.

As discussed above, building rapport was important for establishing the grounds for the interviews. However, it came with its challenges.

As this is a socially sensitive study, rapport with participants can often produce ‘socially desirable answers’ (Horsfall et al., 2021) and may pressure the researcher into ‘aligning their views’ with the participant ‘distorting the authenticity of the study (Thwaites, 2017). A ‘fine ethical balance’ was met (Guillemin and Heggen, 2009) between building trust, whilst respecting the boundaries of the participant and maintaining an appropriate relationship between the participant and I.

3.8 Positionality

The identities of the researcher and participants are important factors in shaping and impacting the research process (England, 1994).

The perceptions and expectations of others can distort the exploration of data, transitioning what should be an objective analysis to subjective (Freire, 2000). Consistent self-analysis (reflexivity) of one’s position whilst collecting, handling and analysing an individual’s personal data is vital. This is paramount in order to produce research that accurately reflects an individual’s lived experiences.

Similarly, I recognised my position as an ‘outsider’ having never experienced any of the issues tackled in this study (homelessness, temporary accommodations, insufficient support). Acknowledging this, each interview and conversation was handled respectfully. Additionally, a research diary was updated after each visit in order to ethically and emotionally reflect. This form of ‘kitchen table reflexivity’ (Kohl and McCutcheon, 2014) allowed me to recognise moments of self-indulgence by laying all my thoughts on ‘the table’ and correcting those assumptions. Additionally, I noted my thoughts and emotions throughout the data collection to identify my own behaviours and responses in the research setting and how they could affect the analysis and discussion. It was also necessary to recognise biases from both sides, ensuring participant responses were not simply accepted at face value, acknowledging the complexity of these stories and alternate perspectives.

This study does not aim to speak for or represent any particular group, as to do so would reduce the interpretive rigor. Instead, it attempts to stimulate a conversation using the voices of the people experiencing it. This was achieved through respectfully collecting data, using

raw data and direct quotes from the participants themselves (Patton, 2002). This study is also not representative of the experiences of all those living in a deprived area.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Four themes emerged concerning the challenges and opportunities encountered by B&FSA whilst working in Blackpool: ‘The Geographies of the Town’, ‘The Functioning of the Charity’, ‘Tackling Homelessness and the Housing Crisis’ and ‘Working with Substance Users’.

4.1 Geographies of a Charity in a Coastal Town:

4.1.1 Opportunities and Challenges of working in a Tourist Town:

Blackpool has its own complex micro-geographies, drawing individuals to the area through its unique coastal and tourist identity. However, the councils focus on ‘re-imaging’ (Seo et al., 2021) of the tourist sector has drawn attention away from the towns core social issues.

In the interview with Paul Rawson, he exemplified the conflict between the town’s ‘image’ as a tourist resort and its intersectional social issues. In the early days of the food outreach, their initial location caused tension with the police as the queues of people using the outreach were “*too visible to tourists*” (Paul Rawson Interview). As such, a deal was made with the council to relocate to a car park that was out of sight from the town centre. This aligns with Wright’s (1997) idea of ‘homeless visibility’; street practices, such as the food outreach, exposed this community to be ‘intervened’ upon. The significance of a ‘destination’s image’ and the ‘purification of tourist spaces’ has reinforced stigmatisation and negative cultural discourses surrounding poverty and homelessness that are then acted upon by the community (Gerrard and Farrugia, 2014).

However, the unique geographies of coastal tourism present just as many opportunities for community cohesion as it does challenges. It was acknowledged by John, a service user, that one of his reasons for moving to the area was the Blackpool Illuminations. He stated he knew the town was a popular tourist hub and the larger populations made him feel safe.

“I needed somewhere where there was life” – Jack

These ideas of ‘safety’ and ‘life’ have been substantiated by Cloke et al. (2007) in which homeless individuals are likely to move to settlements which are recognised as ‘approved and appropriate spaces for meeting their needs’. In this case, both John and Jack’s needs were met with the large population that resides in Blackpool. Similarly, the town’s infrastructures, services and voluntary sector have adapted to its residents’ needs, producing ‘spaces of care’ (Parr, 2003) (e.g – Bank Street car park for the food outreach) which further support the community, bringing individuals together to connect, support and socialise.

However, the fine balance between regeneration of the built environment and social work within the town is yet to be met. With such a large population, it does not have the capacity to house all individuals in permanent accommodation. In 2023 alone, it was estimated that there were 21 rough sleepers sleep on the street per night in Blackpool, the highest on record in 14 years (GOV, 2023). As such, there is a great pressure placed on voluntary organisations to provide substantial services. B&FSA have been acknowledged for the extremely beneficial work they carry out; unfortunately, as with any charity organisation, simultaneous council and government level regeneration, interventions and funding are required to maximise the success of the work in the community.

Recently, it was announced that Lancashire County Council’s is set to receive £2.86 million in government funding to tackle ‘homelessness, rough sleeping and fund services such as drug and alcohol dependency treatment’ (BBC, 2024; Gov 2024). These top-down investments provide the infrastructures and funding to tackle these issues. This leaves the charity sector with the role of developing bottom-up initiatives ‘on the ground’ to support the individuals under their care. This symbiotic relationship hopes to improve the social landscape and opportunities available in Blackpool and for B&FSA.

4.1.2 Opportunities and Challenges of working in a Town Vs City:

Paul Blakey discussed the contrasting dynamics of charity work in a town versus a city. He highlighted the importance of accessibility and community willingness in providing an effective service in varying locales.

“We would generally do better for volunteers in a town centre, as town centres are easier to get into. Cities put up parking restrictions and encourage people onto buses, but there are no

buses at three in the morning, so you have to pay a fortune to park for the night. It's also easier to get into a town centre whereas city centres are harder to access.” – Paul Blakey

“People don't own the city, they own their bit of the city so their community, their neighbourhood” - Paul Blakey

Service provision and volunteer numbers in a town is benefitted by the fact that people like to invest into their environments and are easily accessible. McCulloch et al. (2010) postulated that a community's social capital in disadvantaged areas can be improved through local grassroot organisations and charities as they are more likely to be 'user led' or involve those with lived experiences. Mobilising this community action and support is easier to achieve on a smaller scale with a smaller pool of people.

4.1.3 Opportunities and Challenges of Community Cohesion:

Paul Rawson acknowledged that community cohesion in Blackpool is strained due to the transient nature of the population. Preston-Whyte (2004) identified that transience often stimulates a lack of 'wealth retention and commitment to the community', reproducing complex issues of crime, poverty and ill-health. There is a 'diminished reality of consequence' (Stanley, 2005) that reinforces destructive behaviours, due to lack of ties and constant movement of people. Paul Rawson used an example of people moving from Liverpool and Manchester to Blackpool.

“People move across county boundaries from Manchester and Liverpool from council estates. Some have fallen out with their neighbourhood due to their behaviour and move to Blackpool. They repeat that cycle and within 6 months or up to to 3 years they move out. Their kids go to high school causing issues of violence, drugs and alcohol and go out on nights out and cause trouble”. – Paul Rawson

This breaks down community cohesion and causes tensions within neighbourhoods, substantiating Kearns and Forrest's (2000) study that contact with other neighbourhoods of similar deprivation produces poor cognitive and physical cohesion. For B&FSA, working in a town with weakened community cohesion and neighbourhood tensions adds onto the already complex dynamics that they tackle.

However, the charity works to improve social cohesion in the town through; the services and initiatives they carry out, the support networks they make available and the social interactions they facilitate through their outreaches. Participant, David, highlighted their work has created “*companionship*”, whilst John described the charity as “*social and hospitable*”. Iveson and Cornish (2015, p.19) substantiated these views, postulating that social interactions through voluntary work ‘reduces social exclusion, counteracting the invisibility of the homeless and improving coping abilities through support networks’. In their study, participants used similar terms to John and David to describe the benefits of voluntary organisations:

“It gives me a chance to interact with others, to feel a bit more normal again and not to feel so isolated or alone” (Iveson and Cornish, 2015)

“I can talk to others, it's good to have other conversation sometimes, not just listening to yourself all the time”. (Iveson and Cornish, 2015)

Paul Rawson further supported this idea:

“Some individuals want to be left alone and are very mistrusting, but some eventually open up and some people come for more than just food, they come for emotional support and to socialise” (Paul Rawson).

Through the observations, it became apparent that people collected their food and stayed in the area to sit, eat and chat amongst themselves or with volunteers they became familiar with. Similarly, two volunteers would go out to do ‘chaplaincy’ talking to those who wanted to chat, asking how people were doing, providing first aid to an individual who had cut his hand and praying for those who asked. It was noted how efficient they were in providing support whether that would be on housing issues, providing sleeping bags or advice to those who needed it. Nothing was off the table and all volunteers were happy to help and offer support.

The benefits of B&FSA’s work are clearly shown through interactions and feedback from the community that use their services.

4.2 Opportunities and Challenges for a Charity Working in Blackpool:

4.2.1 Volunteers:

At the heart of Street Angels are the volunteers, all of whom make a huge difference in the community. Paul Blakey identified there is no age limit to who volunteers with them. Volunteers aged between 18-92 have been involved in the charities work and outreaches across the country.

It was observed on the food outreach how the volunteers interacted with each other and formed their own kind of a 'community'. This agrees with Lewin's (1947) work that group-based action increases 'action tendencies' through the positive feelings of 'personal-growth and extrinsic-reward' from working alongside a team to benefit the community. These individual rewards encourage those to continue volunteering and so strengthen the volunteer base and cohesion of the charity, thus stimulating further opportunities to generate greater change in the area.

A similar observation was made on the night outreach in which many of the volunteers had volunteered together for some time and were attuned to the systems in place. They understood what each other needed in order to produce a successful outcome. Paul Blakey highlighted these dynamics:

"There is something to say for volunteering with a group of people at unsociable hours or working in tricky situations". – Paul Blakey

However, this aspect of running a charity does not come without its challenges. Both Paul Blakey and Paul Rawson identified the issue of encouraging volunteers to sign up and complete the training.

"It takes, somebody to see something 7 times before they act upon it. People see 1 in 3 pieces of information you put out. That means you have to put something out 21 times before someone thinks 'oh I'll sign up for that' ". - Paul Blakey

Similarly, not all individuals are suitable for volunteering roles. Paul Rawson identified having to let some volunteers go after showing a lack of judgement or competency in situations that involve vulnerable people. This is not to undermine the many volunteers that provide amazing service, but to acknowledge the challenge in bringing people together and working as part of a team in complex situations.

Both Paul Blakey and Paul Rawson also identified the impact COVID-19 had on volunteer retention. Pre COVID-19, B&FSA often had 20 volunteers for a Friday and Saturday night outreach. However, priorities for volunteers have changed, with many prioritising what they lost during COVID-19 which is ‘time’ (Paul Blakey interview). In Trent’s (2024) study, they found that one in three organisations are struggling with volunteer retention. Reasons for the decline have been cited as ‘changed working patterns, retirement, economic pressures’. Similarly, Paul Rawson cited that health fears have stopped people from volunteering for fear of germ and fluid transmission, despite B&FSA’s distribution of suitable PPE. This has meant that teams have had to push harder on social media and other platforms to encourage people to volunteer, another challenge added to running the charity.

4.2.2 Challenges and Opportunities of Funding:

In terms of funding, Street Angels in general is “fairly low cost” (Paul Blakey interview), with teams walking around with flipflops and water. The more structured it gets; the more funding is needed. Paul Blakey identified funding is always precarious as grants have to be applied for that are very competitive.

In Blackpool, they have received government levelling-up funding which was used to refurbish the bed unit. They have also received money from charitable sources such as the Police and Crime Commissioner for their work on Saturday nights and may get a “token gesture” (Paul Rawson) of a few thousand pounds from the local council. However, there is no one mainstream of funding and that is something that always needs to be carefully minded.

Although both Paul Rawson and Paul Blakey acknowledged that they are a fairly low-cost operation, future initiatives aimed at broadening the span of the charities services requires funding. Ferrell-Schweppenstedde (2023) emphasised that charities are facing increased

barriers to the demand of their services; only 49% charities in their survey felt ‘confident that they had the funds to meet current demands’. Similarly, the VSCE Sector Barometer showed that ‘36% of charities struggle to recruit staff’ and are ‘unable to meet the demand of the workload’.

Although challenges to funding were not touched on in great depth in the interviews, grants and sources of funding are a broader issue at hand for many charities across the UK. With the effects of cost-of-living and cuts to universal credit (ONS, 2022), charities have risen to the need and demand for extra support, whilst having to constantly adjust to fluctuating streams of funding.

4.3 B&FSA’s Social Impacts: Opportunities and Challenges of Tackling Homelessness

Homelessness is one of Blackpool’s most complex issues; it places great pressures on charities and has been exploited by rogue landlords through various legal loopholes. B&FSA have responded to these issues through their temporary bed unit.

4.3.1 Homelessness

As acknowledged above, homelessness is an exceptionally prominent issue in Blackpool, with 925 individuals found to be homeless in 2022/23 (JSNA, 2024). This places great pressures on services and charities to financially and socially support these individuals through their circumstance. However, with such a great demand, the system has become overwhelmed leading to an inadequate provision of support.

Paul Rawson identified his frustration with the system’s lack of patience and understanding of circumstances when it comes to dealing with vulnerable individuals and housing.

“I want to just shout out; you need to get to know some of these people, or you need to get to know circumstances. That’s why, for me, it’s not about just giving someone food or giving them a sleeping bag and some clothing. You’ve got to get to know these people, because there’s reasons. And if you don’t, work out how you can support them, then it’s never going to

change and in ten years' time, they'll still be going to that same soup kitchen” – Paul Rawson
Interview

The Structural-Agency Model (Meert and Bourgeois, 2007) supports the micro/macro-level reasonings Paul Rawson suggests that leads an individual into states of homelessness.

“There are some men that are wounded through having to leave the family home for various reasons, and it's not necessarily always their fault. They weren't used to paying the bills and functioning for themselves” - Paul Rawson

“Some people don't need support, but they need encouragement. They need training, how to function for themselves” - Paul Rawson

“I've absolutely known people before - they've been given a flat, somewhere to live, and they don't last because they can't; they can't cook, they can't pay their bills.” – Paul Rawson

“Some people just don't know how to function; they're trapped in this mental state of not functioning. And sadly, some of them have been very clever people as well. They could go to work and hold down a top-level job, but don't know basic skills” – Paul Rawson

However, the models' binary distinctions overlook the finer details of individual experiences of homelessness. Combinations of various factors creates a far more complex circumstance. As Paul Rawson acknowledged, one-to-one holistic support and basic skills training is essential in understanding the barriers preventing an individual being self-sufficient. Due to the over-saturation of cases, services are unable to provide such support to all those that need it.

This was supported by an individual (Mike) using the service on the food outreach; he had been in prison for 20 years and when he came out, he was provided little support in accessing his benefits and supporting himself. He missed the structure he had in prison. This was maintained by a young participant in Hopkins (2024) report in which they explained that ‘it was easier in jail... at least I had food, a bed, a kettle and a shower’. These perspectives are reinforced by Waldron's (1991) idea of ‘negative freedom’, homeless individuals lack the ‘negative freedoms’ to perform basic acts due to regulations that treat homelessness as a

group and not an individual case. As such, cycles of poverty and homelessness are reinforced without a vision to create proper change.

Regulations and stigmatised discourse from authority figures reinforce discriminatory behaviours towards homeless individuals. Pascale (2005) highlighted this as the homeless community becoming ‘objects of discourse’, removing their humanity and agency. As such negative stereotypes are reproduced that are then acted upon. Paul highlighted incidents of homeless individuals being urinated on outside pubs, with rough sleepers also experiencing verbal and physical violence (people jumping on and kicking tents whilst someone sleeps inside). This was substantiated by David in an informal interview.

“The safest place for a homeless person is the graveyard - it’s not the dead you need to worry about, it’s the living” – David

*“There are some people here *referring to others using the food outreach* that I would not turn my back on” - Sam*

“Living on the streets is dog eat dog” - Jack

In the example of the graveyard, homeless individuals are forced to employ ‘tactics of invisibility’ to ensure they do not challenge their ‘excluded positions’ (Cloke et al., 2007). This exemplifies the efforts that have been made to differentiate ‘the town’ and ‘homelessness’ in order to create a divide between the two constructs, to ensure ‘homelessness’ is seen as out of place.

Paul used these examples as reasons for not providing tents as he believes they are ‘unsafe homes’ which enables the cycle of rough sleeping. The idea of enabling is looked at in greater depth later on in the analysis.

4.3.2 Housing

HMOs have become common place for housing homeless individuals. Social houses and HMOs that house vulnerable individuals are exempt from restrictions on housing benefits that limits how much money they can receive to pay rent (LLT, 2023). As such certain

landlords charge high rents, promising multiple benefits without following through. This was reinforced through the interview with Paul Rawson.

“We’ve heard all the stories; its landlords learning how to abuse a system of what was supposedly supported accommodation. You know, stories of ‘this includes bed and breakfast’ and then they get a piece of mouldy toast in the morning and that means you have to pay a top up of, like, 10-15 pounds a week and you have to pay it or you are back on the street”. - Paul Rawson

However, Paul Rawson did note the ‘shake up of the system’ that is currently underway. Decent Homes Standard (DHS) has set new regulations for housing ensuring they must be ‘safe, warm and decent’ (GOV, 2023). As such, he acknowledged that teams from the council inspect their property ensuring it is fit for use and that they are using the bed unit for its intended purpose. The work carried out by Renter’s Reform Coalition and Citizens UK passed the law through government giving councils more power to investigate rogue landlords (Citizens UK, 2024; Gov 2023). This aims to prevent the system being used as a money-making scheme. This substantiates Vols and Belloirs’ (2019) idea that policy interventions alone are ineffective, practical interventions should supplement policy work. Although these changes positively improve the housing landscape of Blackpool, they place added pressures on landlords and organisations whose property is already up to standard, through tightened policies and monitoring.

Additionally, B&FSA’s future vision aims to create a ‘cycle of rehabilitation’. It hopes to house, teach basic skills/hobbies and rehab individuals, going one step further than simply treating short term issues. Although this is an ongoing project, their initial success has started with the temporary bed unit which provides 24-hour care. They offer meals, bedding, clothing and toiletries all of which has been donated. Alongside their other work, this has contributed to a reduction of reoccurring homelessness by 14% in Blackpool (Blackpool and the Fylde Street Angels, 2023).

“With our facility, as soon as one person leaves or is moved elsewhere to more long-term accommodation, someone’s straight in. And then you know, we make a joke that the beds still warm. We do a room turn around, you know but, it can literally be someone’s gone in the morning and then someone else is in the afternoon.” – Paul Rawson

“There is a very quick turn-around” – Aaron (Volunteer)

The housing crisis in Blackpool is overwhelmed by the high demand for accommodation and lack of new houses being built (UK Parliament, 2024). B&FSA has recognised these challenges, using it as an opportunity to kickstart their vision to improve the quality of life for individuals in the town.

4.4 B&FSA’s Social Impacts: Substance Users and Enabling Culture

4.4.1 Working with substance users:

B&FSA also work with substance users. In Blackpool, there were 126 deaths from drug poisoning between 2021 and 2023 which is four times higher than the national average (JSNA, 2024). 2468 people were also estimated to be using opiate and/or crack cocaine in 2019/2020, the third highest rate in the country (JSNA, 2024).

The B&FSA team are trained to deal with various situations pertaining to substance use. Whether that is someone sleeping rough or on a night out in town; the teams are trained in first aid and are well-versed in the services they can guide individuals towards should they need it. Whilst on the food outreach, a volunteer was observed advising someone on how to contact Horizon, a free council funded service that provides support, treatment plans and rehab for those struggling with addiction.

However, this issue is so deeply rooted in Blackpool’s social and economic makeup that it is challenging to determine an effective strategy to tackle it moving forward. Paul Rawson’s approach tackles each case holistically with the idea that rehabilitation can be encouraged through active participation in community activities. Lewin’s (1947) study substantiates this idea that group-based initiatives boost action tendencies and social identification. This aims to provide a space for the individual to access support and change the environment that enables their behaviours. Similarly, collaborative tasks have been found to improve ‘pro-social behaviours’ that invokes ‘identification with a larger superordinate ingroup’ (Dovidio

et al. 1997, p415). As such, B&FSA headed an initiative which engaged rough sleepers and substance users in a 6-week litter picking exercise in return for a £5 love to shop voucher. Further developments of the initiative saw the regeneration of a run-down crazy golf course that many of these individuals had used as a space to use and drink. The successfully restored the space with funding from the Fulfilling Lives Programme, a National Lottery Community Fund initiative which aims to support individuals experiencing multiple disadvantages. This initiative allowed individuals to actively engage with the environment, learn and use new DIY skills, socialise and use their time effectively to improve their social capital.

4.4.2 Social debate: Are charities enablers?

Finally, Paul Rawson expanded on the debate that charities enable the issues they aim to help.

“There are organizations and what they're doing is just enabling and think they're doing good. Some will actually use social media to put it out there, ‘aren't we wonderful, we fed a hundred people’ and so on and they'll continue gaining donations. And all they do is a service for a couple hours a week. You know, for me, it's about the real work. The real work is spending time, trying to offer someone support. And then try and encourage that person to go to rehab and doing group activities” – Paul Rawson

Additionally, he acknowledged the increased dependency on ‘harm reduction’ as a form of enabling. In Blackpool, Horizon (drug and alcohol service) provides clean needles and drug paraphernalia in order to promote safer drug usage. Paul acknowledged its important basis in promoting safer drug usage but highlighted that an over-saturation of harm reduction starts to reproduce enabling behaviours. He believes people should be supported where they’re at with rehab, instead of relying on methadone prescriptions, needle exchanges and paraphernalia. Similarly, he thought the government and local councils preferred to tackle superficial issues rather than address deeper routed problems. This follows McCarthy’s (2013, p.49) idea that social justice requires both ‘redistribution and recognition of difference’. A change in redistribution (funding of services, monitoring of harm reduction provisions) should be supplemented alongside ‘redressing’ social hierarchies that reinforce dominant norms. These norms often define an individual’s experience of homelessness and/or substance abuse as a central feature of their identity; ‘the homeless identity’ (McCarthy, 2013). Grouping people

into such a binary category, ignores their individual lived experiences and the need for tailored rehabilitation, an idea that B&FSA have used to engage in holistic support.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter outlines the key findings of the study, acknowledging the work of B&FSA and addressing the challenges and opportunities experienced by the charity. It then recognises limitations of the study and gaps that could generate potential future research.

5.1 Key Findings

Research Aim 1: *What social impacts do charity organizations have in an area of higher deprivation?*

The experience of B&FSA in Blackpool is nuanced and complex. The first research question explored the social impacts of the charity, highlighting Parr's (2003) idea that the charity creates 'spaces of care'. B&FSA achieves this through their outreaches and the 24-hour bed unit. Similarly, their community initiatives support vulnerable individuals fostering the social identification and capital of the community improving 'pro-social behaviours' (Dovidio et al., 1997). This was supported by the participants choice of words to describe the charity; 'social', 'a place of companionship' and 'hospitable'.

In addition, B&FSA supports local services (police, ambulance service) through their outreaches, relieving them of the demand on Saturday nights and providing basic first aid and support to those who may otherwise unnecessarily choose to go to A&E. The work of the charity has been acknowledged by the council and emergency services as a great benefit to the local area.

Through the personal stories of vulnerable individuals at the outreach, it became evident that having a space to be known and heard was powerfully therapeutic. To be addressed by name, to socialise with others and for their stories to be listened to, when some feel otherwise invisible, is as important as the physical care they are given.

The significant contribution to the lives of the vulnerable community in Blackpool by B&FSA is incalculable. It's effect on the local community as a source of holistic, physical, emotional, social and financial support cannot be emphasised enough.

Research Aim 2: *What opportunities and challenges do charity organizations face in an area of higher deprivation?*

The second research question explored the strengths and challenges the charity faces whilst providing services in the town. Challenges were varied due to the complex nature of the town's issues; the unique dynamics of an economically declining tourist town identified by Gerrard and Farrugia (2014) highlighted 'the purification' of these areas that often reproduces tensions amongst the community and council. Although the charities working relationship with the police and ambulance services is good, tensions arise whilst navigating the provision of food to the homeless population in the centre of the tourist town. The council must strike the delicate balance of providing and supporting the vulnerable whilst promoting Blackpool as a tourist town in order to support the local economy.

Additionally, the ongoing housing crisis continues to deteriorate the infrastructures of deprived areas. With such a large demand for accommodation and poor housing supply, Blackpool is trapped in a cycle of continuing decline. The extent of this crisis and the growing number of those in need of accommodation and/or support, adds continual pressures on charities such as B&FSA to supply for the demand.

Against the backdrop of these challenges, the charity has introduced many positive and powerful initiatives to improve the lives of those within the community. The 24-hour Bed Unit, community initiatives and the food and night outreaches have been hugely successful with supportive feedback and acknowledgment of the work of Paul Rawson and Paul Blakey MBE through news outlets and national awards. The charity continues to evolve due to the strong leadership of both Paul Rawson and Paul Blakey MBE on a local and national level. Both have a clear vision and passion for the work they do to support vulnerable individuals. Their dedication to the people they serve is the driving force that meets each challenge head on and enables the charity to continue its vital and 'life saving' work.

5.2 Practical Implications

One of the main practical implications identified in the study is the need for greater government funding and regeneration in the area. This could supplement the work carried out by B&FSA, reducing the pressure on the services and charities. Similarly, recovery post COVID-19 has not materialised, with volunteer retention taking a severe hit. A greater push through campaigns would hopefully encourage individuals nationwide to volunteer in their area, benefiting the wider community.

5.3 Limitations to the Research

The methodological limitations of this study were thoroughly outlined in Chapter 3, however this chapter wishes to summarise.

The work of B&FSA could have been discussed more extensively with a larger word count. This study mainly focused on how the charity works alongside/with the homeless community and substance users. However, the scope of the charities work is far broader; the complexity and diversity of their work could not be fully covered in this dissertation.

As the study used the perspectives of vulnerable individuals, it was difficult to obtain a large number of interviews. Some individuals were wary of being interviewed and it was deemed inappropriate to talk to other individuals by the staff. As such, only two females were interviewed, whilst the rest were men limiting the scope of the findings.

Additionally, as I was a volunteer at the food outreach there was limited time to complete each interview. I only managed to obtain 8 interviews, alongside 2 formal interviews with Paul Rawson and Paul Blakey. A greater depth of analysis could have been achieved with more time in the field.

Finally, qualitative research is highly subjective, and as such 'researcher subjectivity' is ever present. This phenomenon impacts the research approach, process and discussion of the study. By using a triangulation method and keeping a research diary requiring continuous reflexivity, this subjectivity was acknowledged and embraced to hopefully produce a

dissertation that offers an insight into the opportunities and challenges experienced by B&FSA.

5.4 Future Explorations

This dissertation hopes to acknowledge and commend the work carried out by the manager and volunteers at B&FSA. It has sought to encourage the reader to consider the complexities of working in Blackpool, but more importantly the positive impact charity work has on the community.

As B&FSA is just a branch of a larger network of Street Angels across the country, there is a large scope for additional studies:

- This dissertation has aimed to highlight the work carried out in one town in the Northwest of England; further empirical research could be carried out on the North/South divide and the geographical variation of issues different branches tackle.
- Further research may wish to use a greater sample size to add depth to the understanding of Blackpool's complex issues. The use of quantitative methods and large-scale funding would allow for a finer focus on the macro-level causes of homelessness.
- Finally, homelessness studies could apply Paul Rawson's idea of 'cycles of rehabilitation' to the concept of using community activities and meaningful occupations in facilitating rehabilitation and reintegration into the community.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form



Consent Form

Title of Study: How do charity organisations impact local communities? A case study of Blackpool and Fylde Street Angels.

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research study. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form.

Please initial box to confirm consent		
1.	I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated {05/06/2024} for the above study, I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and I have had any questions answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, <i>[without my medical care or legal rights being affected]</i> . I understand that if I decide to withdraw, any data that I have provided up to that point will be <i>omitted</i>	
3.	I consent to the processing of my data for the purposes of this research study, as described in the information sheet dated {05/05/2024}.	
4.	I consent to my anonymised research data being stored.	
5.	I understand that my research data may be published as a report.	
6.	(If appropriate) I understand that my research data may be looked at by individuals from <i>[Newcastle University]</i> , where it is relevant to my taking part in this research.	
7.	I consent to being audio recorded and understand that the recordings will be <i>stored</i> anonymously on a voice recording app and destroyed within 2 weeks after the data has been collected / destroyed immediately after transcription and used for research purposes only. I understand that being audio and/or video recorded is optional and therefore not necessary for my participation in this research.	
8.	I agree to take part in this research project.	
<i>Participant</i> _____ _____ _____ <i>Name of participant</i> <i>Signature</i> <i>Date</i> <i>Researcher</i> _____ _____ _____ <i>Name of researcher</i> <i>Signature</i> <i>Date</i>		

Consent Form

1

Appendix 2: Information Sheet

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, Henry Daysh Building, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU, UK

You are invited to participate in a research project by a student enrolled on a degree programme in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology at Newcastle University.

This study will explore the ‘Opportunities and Challenges faced by Blackpool and Fylde Street Angels’ whilst working in a seaside resort town. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, your participation will consist of answering questions surrounding the work of Blackpool and Fylde Street Angels. The entire session should take 30 minutes of your time and there will be time before the interview for you to ask any questions about the research.

The interviewer ‘transcribe’ (write down) what you say during the interview. Additionally, at the start of the interview, you will be asked if you’re comfortable with your voice being recorded; it is completely up to you. The recording can be terminated during the interview and permanently deleted. Recordings in this collection will always remain anonymous. Thus, in writing or talking about this study, your real name will never be used - we will always use whatever pseudonym you agree with the student interviewer. Also, the names of people referred to during the interview will be changed in the written material and deleted in the recordings.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: This exercise does not involve any risks for you other than being asked to talk with the interviewer. It might not be possible for you to foresee any immediate benefit of your participation as you will not receive any payment. However, this research will produce a platform to present the work and efforts of Blackpool and Fylde Street Angels.

SUBJECT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand that the student interviewer is aware that your participation is entirely voluntary and that you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you do not give consent to all of the above points, please indicate which ones to the student interviewer. Also, if at any point during the interview you change your mind about participating altogether, please let the student interviewer know. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions.

Thank you very much for your participation and for making this student project possible. Should you require further details about any aspect of this interview or the resulting data, please don’t hesitate to contact Keira Bowman at K.Bowman2@ncl.ac.uk. Please now complete the ‘Consent Form’ that the student interviewer will give you and you can retain this ‘Assignment Description’ sheet for your own records

Appendix 3: The verbal script for participants of the informal interviews

Hi, I'm Keira, how are you? (small talk... ease in)

I'm volunteering with Street Angels as I'm doing some research on their work and their impact in Blackpool. Would it be possible if I could ask you some questions about Street Angels? Your name and any personal information won't be used in the study, and you can choose to stop the 'interview' at any time. If you want any information removed, or would like to withdraw completely just let me, or one of the B&FSA volunteers know – it is completely fine (keep it light-hearted).

Open nudges

Would you be able to tell me a bit more about...

That's really interesting, why do you think that is?...

Could you give me an example?...

Why is that?...

Appendix 4: Interview guide for both semi-structured and informal interviews

Main Questions (For Manager, Volunteers):

- Can you tell me about yourself and how you are involved with B&FSA?
- What prevalent issues does B&FSA tackle (social, political, economic)?
- What notable success stories are there of B&FSA's work/ any measurable outcomes (health, crime rates)?
- What barriers do B&FSA face when implementing the service?
- How does B&FSA engage with other charities/local agencies/ government and how does this impact their work
- Is there anything else that you feel is important that you think I should know?

Extra Questions for Manager if necessary:

- What logistical challenges does B&FSA face due to:
 - o Geographical location
 - o Physical barriers
 - o Funding limitations
 - o The infrastructure of Blackpool
- What strategies are most effective in Blackpool?
- What lessons have been learnt from B&FSA experience that could be applied to similar contexts?
- What training and support is available to volunteers to increase effectiveness?

Extra Questions for Volunteers if necessary:

- How does the charity build trust and rapport with individuals and the wider community?
- How has community engagement contributed to B&FSA's success

Questions for Service Users:

- What are the positive aspects of Street Angels?
- Is there anything you feel could be improved?
- If you feel comfortable, are you able to share what brings you here today?
- What three words would you use to describe Street Angels