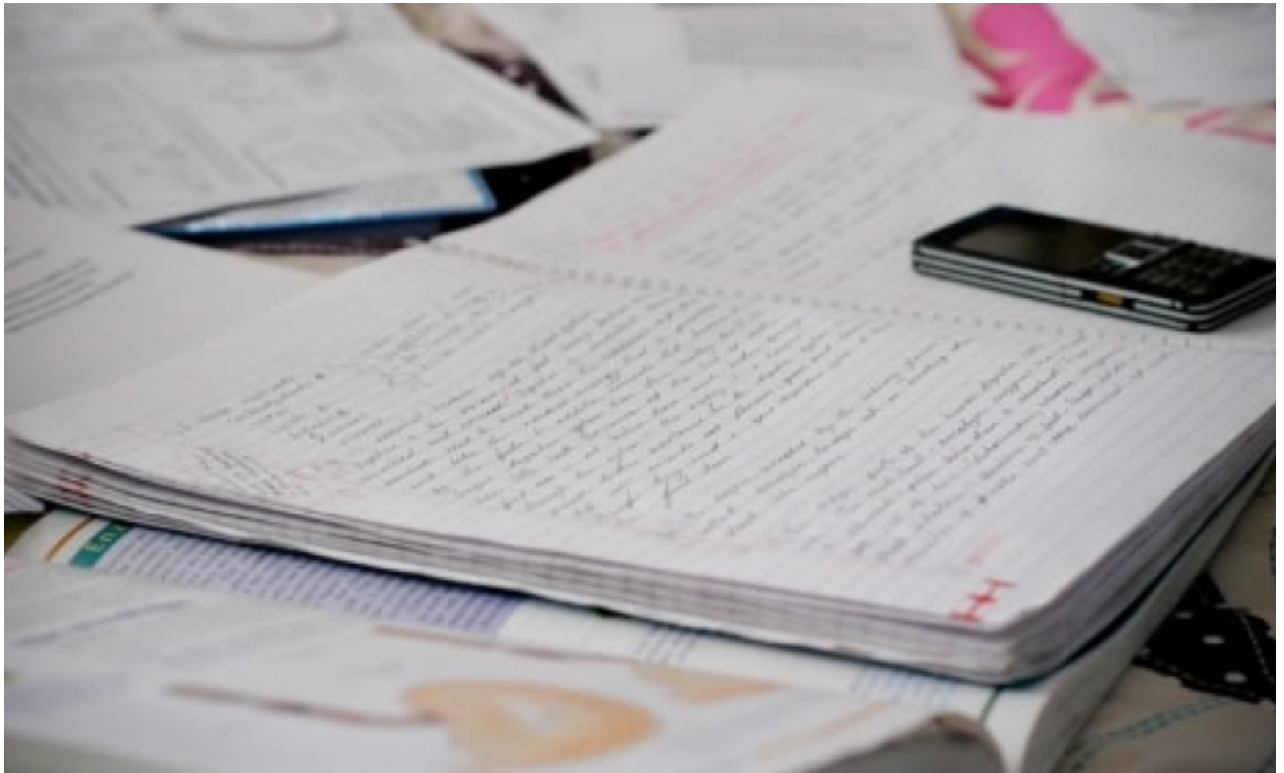


Shelter: 50 years of research



09/08/2016 - 11:52



This is a special year for Shelter, 50 years since we were founded in 1966. From day one, we have campaigned passionately to ensure that everyone in this country has a safe, secure, affordable home. And from day one, research has been central to this.

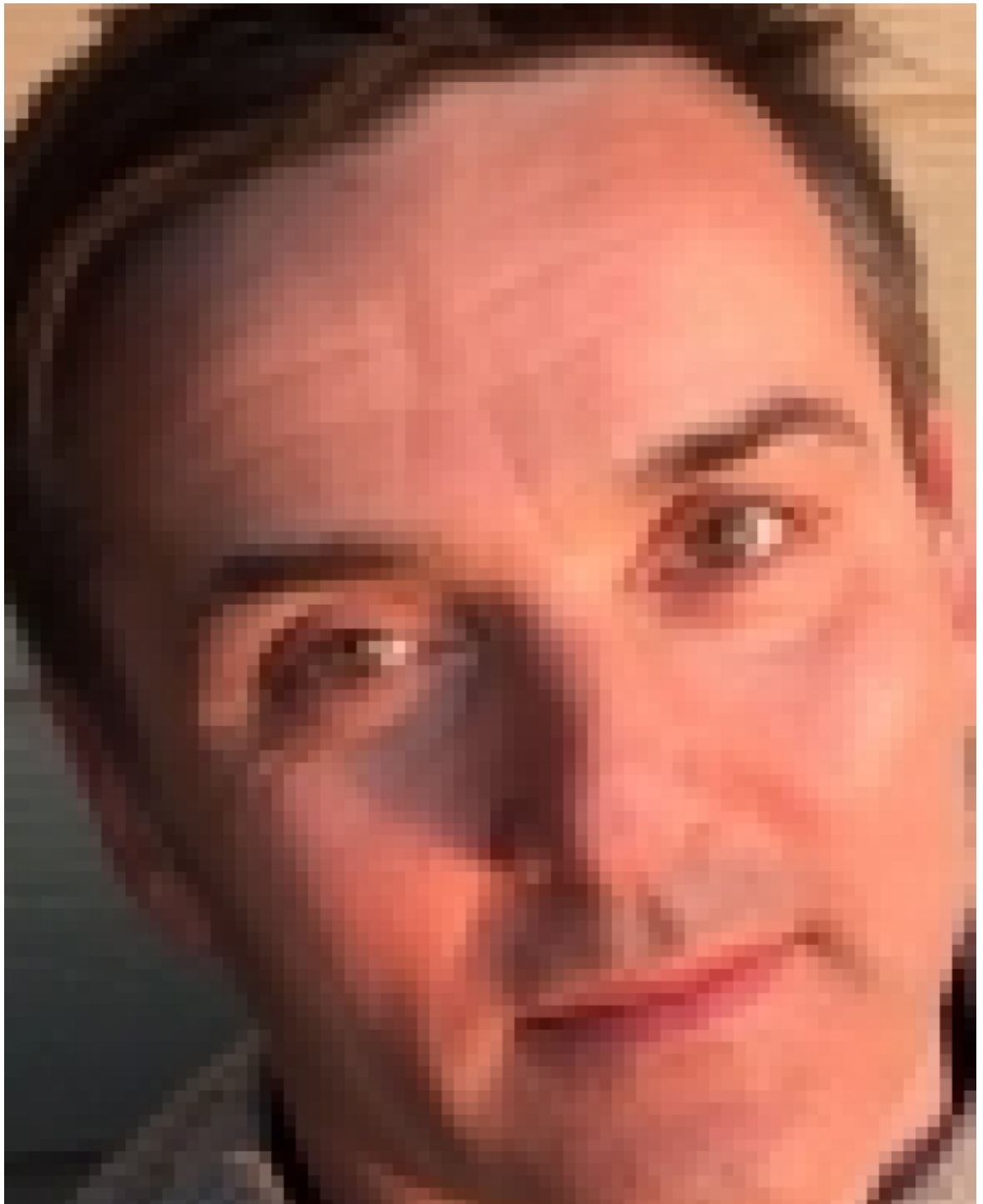
Campbell Robb

Submitted by F Pere Tarrés on Thu, 09/08/2016 - 10:45

Description:

Chief Executive of [Shelter](#)

Vertical photo:



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It was a pleasure to be invited to provide the keynote address at this year's **Volunteering & Volunteer Sector Research Conference**. This is a special year for Shelter, 50 years since we were founded in 1966. From day one, we have campaigned passionately to ensure that everyone in this country has a safe, secure, affordable home. And from day one, research has been central to this.

The very first report Shelter created, setting out the plan for the new organisation, was based on research. Our first Director undertook the research himself, documenting the conditions in the country's worst housing black spots, revealing the appalling slum conditions of the time. Whole families lived in single rooms, plagued with mice, without basic amenities like hot water.

Throughout our early campaigning, evidence was central. Each new campaign centred on a research report exposing the precarious circumstances and horrific conditions faced by thousands of families. These reports set the tone for Shelter: we've never been afraid to challenge the consensus and to use bold, innovative research to do so.

Thankfully the squalid slums of the 1960s are in the past. But tragically, we remain in the middle of a housing crisis. And until this changes, we'll continue to campaign, and research will always be critical to this. A headline-grabbing statistic can still make people sit up and take notice, and the powerful human stories behind the numbers can still stir people to action.

In our 50th year, we're continuing to build on our reputation for bold, innovative research. This autumn we'll be launching a new measure of what home means in modern Britain. This 'Living Home Standard' has been developed via in-depth research with the public, defining what everyone needs from their home to achieve an acceptable standard of living.

Our research is not limited to campaigning. It is about using insight to understand the myriad of people we reach as an organisation, from the people who most need our advice and support, to those who wield political influence. At a time when the charity sector faces unprecedented challenges, from declining public trust to the changing environments in fundraising and service provision, insight has never been more important.

And our research is about understanding our impact: the change we bring about through both our frontline services and our campaigning work. Increasingly it's not sufficient just to look at the number of people we help. We need to understand the actual difference we make for those people. How have we actually changed people's lives?

At Shelter, and across the sector, we now use research in more varied ways than ever, learning from all quarters, from academia to the commercial sector and the opportunities for the research community have rarely been as diverse. There is huge scope for research to add more value to the voluntary sector – helping us to campaign, and helping us deliver better services. We need to continue to make the case for the powerful role research plays in ensuring the voluntary sector is stronger, better, more efficient and effective than ever.

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