

Crisis Skylight

Final Report of the University of York Evaluation

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UNIVERSITY *of York*

Crisis

About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. We are determined to end homelessness. We do it person by person and by influencing policies to ensure everyone has a place to call home.

Homelessness is devastating, leaving people vulnerable and isolated.

Crisis offers ground breaking housing, health, education and employment services. We work with thousands of homeless people across the UK every year.

We are determined campaigners. We draw on our research, partnerships and years of experience of working directly with homeless people to deliver change and a vision to end homelessness for good.

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Disclaimer

This report draws on administrative data collected by Crisis. The University had no input into the collection or validation of these data. The statistical analysis within this report was undertaken by the authors and they are responsible for any errors in that analysis.

Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of Crisis or of the University of York.

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Foreword

Crisis has come a long way since we were founded as a Christmas appeal to raise awareness of homelessness and destitution in East London. We now have 11 Crisis Skylight teams across England, Wales and Scotland, supporting homeless people through year round services.

In 2017 we mark our 50th anniversary. While reflecting on what has been achieved over this period to help homeless people, it will also be an opportunity to examine what needs to be done to end homelessness and ensure we are not here in another 50 years. A crucial part of this is using evidence to inform what works and what needs to change to help us meet our goal of ending homelessness. Objectively examining our own services is a fundamental part of this.

This final evaluation report in a series of three provides robust evidence of the impact of Crisis Skylight services on our members. It represents the culmination of three years' work to understand how members progress through Crisis Skylight, and how Crisis Skylight supports them to progress towards independence, and away from homelessness.

The areas for improvement identified by the interim reports have already led to refinement of the Crisis Skylight model. Elements of our building-based and outreach services have been brought together, enabling members to access a combination of group learning and one-to-one support. Through the evaluation we now know this is linked to greater success in meeting their goals including gaining employment, and improving their wellbeing and self-esteem. We are also focusing on better supporting members who might struggle to engage with Crisis Skylight services. We now have a more developed housing offer, and continue to innovate in its delivery to meet the needs of our members against a changing context.

I am proud that Crisis is committed to investing in evidence and I am confident that the learning from this final report will inspire further action to ensure that Crisis Skylight services are the best they can be for our members at a time when they are needed more than ever.



Jon Sparkes
Chief Executive, Crisis



Summary

The Crisis Skylight model

- Crisis Skylight is an array of services focused on promoting social integration primarily for single homeless people, people at risk of homelessness and those with a recent history of homelessness. Crisis Skylight is structured around the Crisis Model of Change, which seeks to promote good health and wellbeing, housing stability, good relationships and social networks and employment and financial stability.
- Crisis Skylight services provide arts-based activities, basic skills education, training, support with housing and health and extensive one-to-one support designed to help single homeless people progress towards paid work. Crisis Skylight also provides extensive access to volunteering opportunities and facilitates access to further and higher education and professional training. The *Changing Lives* grants provided by Crisis Skylights can pay for externally provided education or support someone starting their own business.
- Crisis Skylight is a flexible service designed to respond positively to the expressed needs and wishes of single homeless people. Staff teams are expected to be respectful, non-judgemental and to follow a broadly strength based approach with service users. Crisis Skylight is, however, not a passive service. It actively supports service users, referred to as *members*, towards what is termed *progression* to paid work, education, training, volunteering, housing stability and better health and social supports.

The research

- The aims of this research centred on assessing the capacity of Crisis Skylight to deliver the goals of the Crisis Model of Change:
 - Good health and wellbeing
 - Housing stability
 - Good relationships and social networks
 - Employment and financial stability
- This research explored the outcomes for six Crisis Skylight services, in Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, Merseyside, Newcastle and Oxford over the period 2013-2015. Three of these services were building-based and three were outreach-based. The research employed a mixed-methods approach. This centred on a large scale qualitative longitudinal study that explored the experience of using Crisis Skylight from the perspectives of 158 homeless people. The research team also examined anonymised administrative data and conducted a range of other interviews and focus groups.

Crisis Skylight members and engagement with services

- During 2013-2015, 14,922 people joined the six Crisis Skylight services as members. Seventy per cent were homeless at the point of their first contact with Crisis Skylight, the others were at risk of homelessness or had a history of homelessness. One third (33%) reported a history of mental health problems, 27 per cent reported problematic drug/alcohol use and 21 per cent were ex-offenders. Just under one third of members were women (32%), of whom just over one quarter reported experiencing domestic

violence (26%). Rates of educational attainment varied, but were generally quite low; 20 per cent of members had no formal qualifications at first contact with a Crisis Skylight.

- Participation in arts-based activities was extensive, with 3,773 members participating in creative arts and 2,289 in performing arts. Basic skills education was attended by 5,514 members during the course of 2013-2015. Collectively, 3,053 Crisis Skylight members passed 7,554 exams and certificates during 2013-2015. Overall, 3,819 members received one-to-one support with progression in education, training and seeking paid work during 2013-2015. Seven per cent of members became involved in volunteering, within Crisis Skylight and externally, during the course of 2013-2015 and 8 per cent progressed to further and higher education and training. Over the course of the evaluation, 904 members received support with housing from specialist housing coaches, with additional housing support being provided by other members of staff. The housing coach service expanded over the course of the evaluation. A total of 1,685 members received support from specialist mental health coordinators over the course of the evaluation. The service was being expanded during the three years covered by this report.

Progression through Crisis Skylight

- There was clear evidence that Crisis Skylight was able to progress members into paid work. Overall, 1,452 members had found paid work. As available work could be temporary or part time, some members had secured two or more jobs via support from Crisis Skylight.
- Distinct pathways through Crisis Skylight existed. Members were sometimes characterised by *regaining progress*, when a previous career, higher or further

education had been disrupted by homelessness. Crisis Skylight services could help someone restore their life as it was before homelessness. Other members could be described as *making progress for the first time*. Following sustained experience of social and economic marginalisation, of which homelessness was one part, they moved away from homelessness and into education, training, volunteering and employment as a result of using Crisis Skylight.

- Some Crisis Skylight members made *punctuated progress*. These were people who had engaged with Crisis Skylight and started to see positive changes. However, illness or a change in their situation had created obstacles to education, training, volunteering and job-seeking. This group experienced steps forward and steps back during their contact with Crisis Skylight. Other members made only *limited progress*, again linked to their health and wellbeing, but also sometimes to not wanting Crisis Skylight services or, in a few cases, encountering problems with these services.

Outcomes

- Extensive use of Crisis Skylight services, particularly one-to-one support and education, appeared to lead to paid employment. Previous reports from this study, listed in Appendix 1, have reported very positive views of Crisis Skylight services among members. This finding can also be reported here; one-to-one support, education, training and arts-based activities were widely praised.
- Gains in health, wellbeing and social support occurred among Crisis Skylight members. While successes were achieved in respect of improvements to mental health, self-esteem and wellbeing, outcomes could be more uneven than progression in respect of arts-based activities, education, training and securing paid work.

- Improvements in housing security were also delivered by Crisis Skylight. However, challenges existed because of the high housing stress in two of the areas – London and Oxford – where Crisis Skylights were operational. Housing coach services had mixed effects, sometimes beneficial, sometimes not. Although members participating in the cohort study tended to view structural problems with housing markets as at the root of difficulties. Housing costs in London and Oxford were often higher than the wages that Crisis Skylight members could realistically earn.
- A large group of people appeared to only have short-term contact with Crisis Skylight, dropping out after only a few weeks (25% of members engaged for less than five weeks during 2013-2015). The views of members who sustained contact with Crisis Skylight was that this dropout occurred because of changes in circumstances, particularly moving out of the reach of Crisis Skylight services, or because Crisis Skylight did not offer the kinds of support they wanted to engage with.
- Crisis Skylight showed particular strengths in relation to inter-agency working and the development of productive working partnerships with local authorities and with other homelessness services.
- Crisis Skylight can provide services for people at risk of homelessness. It has the potential to contribute to local homelessness strategies within a national policy framework that will become increasingly orientated toward homelessness prevention.
- The evidence base is shifting in favour of service interventions that give real choice and control to single homeless people, including those with high support needs. Crisis Skylight is following good practice established by highly effective service innovations that give control to single homeless people, including those with high support needs. The emphasis on choice, on working with single homeless people in ways that allow them to exercise real control over what happens to them, is a feature of the Crisis Skylight model that sits comfortably alongside this development.

Costs

- Total per capita spending, covering the entire costs of service delivery, averaged less than £5,000 for each member who had secured paid work with a median cost of under £2,500.

The strategic role of Crisis Skylight

- Crisis Skylight was initially viewed with some uncertainty by local authorities and other homelessness services, when it first began operating outside London. However, other agencies reported that Crisis Skylight was a valued addition to the services on offer to single homeless people, worked effectively and productively with other services and enhanced local homelessness strategies.

The successes of Crisis Skylight

- Crisis Skylight is an innovative service that mixed-methods research has shown can deliver economic and social integration, particularly in relation to progression towards paid work. Crisis Skylight often made a real, positive difference to the lives of many single homeless people, those at risk of homelessness and people with histories of homelessness. The Crisis Skylight programme can end and prevents homelessness through progressing single homeless people towards social integration.
- Crisis Skylight challenges some popular assumptions about single homeless people, who can be stereotyped as unwilling, or unable, to work. The willingness of large numbers of single

homeless people to engage with Crisis Skylight, actively and voluntarily seeking progress towards paid work, shows the dangers of making assumptions about who single homeless people are or what they want from life.

- Crisis Skylight uses a model of change that emphasises good health and wellbeing, employment and financial stability, housing stability and the building of good relationships and social networks. The effectiveness of Crisis Skylight varied across different aspects of the Crisis Model of Change during the period 2013-2015. Crisis Skylight was most successful in respect of education, training and employment, with positive engagement in arts-based activity, which facilitated and supported these activities, also being evident.

Recommendations

- Success in education, training and related areas was closely linked to the provision and use of flexible, non-judgemental one-to-one support which used a choice-led approach, allowing members to work with Crisis Skylight to set their own goals and trajectory. Where this support was provided and engaged with, outcomes were at their best. Ensuring universal access to one-to-one support is a clear developmental goal for Crisis Skylight and a recommendation of this research.
- Overall, 825 members also reported improvements in their housing situation, but results here were more mixed. There was evidence from the cohort study showing that housing outcomes were not always positive. Crisis Skylight members in London and Oxford were encountering challenges in finding affordable housing. Results could also be more variable around health and wellbeing and social networks, in part because the services on offer were less extensive than those centred on employment and education.

More broadly, the strategic emphasis of Crisis Skylight was clearly on education and training, it was less focused on other aspects of the Crisis Model of Change. Over the course of the evaluation, the mental health and housing services on offer from Crisis Skylight increased, but the bulk of activity remained focused on education, training, job-seeking and arts-based activities.

- Questions exist about the service balance within Crisis Skylight. For example whether it should place greater emphasis on ensuring service users, the *members* of Crisis Skylight, avoid homelessness where possible and are as rapidly re-housed as possible, when they present as homeless to a Crisis Skylight. There are wider strategic questions about the role of Crisis Skylight and whether it presents sufficient return on investment for Crisis. This will need to consider developing the Skylight model to reflect changes in the external environment and incorporating learning from Crisis' future evaluation of its services.

1. The research

Introduction

This research explored the performance of six Crisis Skylight services, designed to promote social integration for single homeless people, in Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, Merseyside, Newcastle and Oxford, during 2013-2015. The research also reviewed the wider Crisis Skylight model. This chapter provides an outline of the methods employed.

Aims of the research

The aims of the research centred on the extent to which Crisis Skylight was delivering the goals of the Crisis Model of Change, which seeks to deliver the following for single homeless people and those at risk of homelessness:

- good health and wellbeing
- housing stability
- good relationships and social networks
- employment and financial stability.

Using the terminology employed by the Crisis Skylight programme, the research sought to explore the extent to which *progression* towards these core goals was being achieved by Crisis Skylight. To determine success in a broader sense, it was also necessary to examine a series of related questions.

- How effectively were Crisis Skylights engaging with single homeless people?
- How effectively was contact being sustained with single homeless people?
- How enduring were any positive outcomes that Crisis Skylight achieved?
- How well did Crisis Skylight work in coordination with local authorities, other

homelessness services and within the local homelessness strategies of the cities and metropolitan areas where Crisis Skylights were operational?

The research was specifically designed to focus on the lived experience of people using Crisis Skylights, who in the terminology employed by Crisis, are *members* of Crisis Skylight. This meant understanding their whole experience in detail, from before they used Crisis Skylight, during their time with Crisis Skylight and in terms of their lives afterwards. The goal was to understand what it was like for single homeless people to use Crisis Skylight, moving beyond the outcome measures recorded in the administrative data collected by Crisis.

The research had a formative role, which meant that results were fed back to Crisis and to the individual Skylights as the research progressed over 2013-2015. The research team produced a series of grant-specific reports, focusing mainly on performance of individual Crisis Skylights in relation to goals set by the Big Lottery Fund and other funders. Two interim reports described the emerging findings across the six Crisis Skylights (see Appendix 1). This report represents the cumulative stage of the research, in which the findings of the past three years are brought together.

Methods

The research employed five main methods.

- A large-scale qualitative longitudinal cohort study, focused on understanding the experience of members in using Crisis Skylight services, through a series of interviews carried out over the course of 2013-2015.
- A series of focus groups with members who were not part of the cohort study, providing alternative perspectives on Crisis Skylight.

- Interviews and focus groups with the directors and staff of the Crisis Skylights.
- Interviews with external agencies, working in partnership with Crisis Skylight.
- Detailed examination of the administrative dataset collected and maintained by Crisis, which provided details on the characteristics and outcomes of everyone who used Crisis Skylight during 2013-2015.

Earlier reports from this research have drawn extensively on two of these methods; the focus groups and interviews conducted with Crisis Skylight staff (see Appendix 1). In total, 20 focus groups with 145 members of Crisis Skylight, who were not part of the cohort study, were conducted over the three years of the research. 30 interviews and focus groups were completed with the staff in each Crisis Skylight service. In total, 20 interviews were conducted with staff from external agencies, including local authorities and other homelessness services, in the areas where Crisis Skylights were operational.

Therefore this final research report centres on the results of the other three of these methodologies:

- the cohort study
- interviews with external agencies
- analysis of anonymised data from Crisis's administrative systems.

In drawing heavily on longitudinal data, this report is focused on the experience of using Crisis Skylight for individual members and their trajectories through the Crisis Skylight model.

The cohort study

The goal of the research was to conduct a detailed examination of how individuals

progressed towards the goals of the Crisis Model of Change, tracking their progress in terms of their health and wellbeing, their housing stability, the relationships and social networks and their employment and financial security. The research was designed around 150 participants, completing four interviews, conducted during 2013-2015.

Longitudinal research with single homeless people presents a number of challenges. Single homeless people can have high and complex needs. There is an inherent precariousness in experiencing single homelessness, which can mean that people exercise only limited control over where they live. Sometimes temporary and insecure living arrangements break down. At other times someone engaging with the statutory homelessness system, or other homelessness services, will be moved by those services. This makes maintaining continuity in care, treatment and support challenging for any service working with homeless people and researchers face essentially the same challenges.

The method for retaining contact was a 'permission to locate' form, which asked participants to provide their own contact details and the details of other people or services who would be likely to know where they were. At each stage, the research team checked whether this list needed to be amended and if the participant was themselves happy to continue participating and for the research team to contact the other individuals, or agencies, they had named when looking for them. The research was approved by the University of York's ethical procedures.

Ethical conduct in social research centres on ensuring participants are giving consent that is free, ie they do not feel pressured to participate and also informed, ie they knew what the research was and every possible use to which the results might be put. In addition, the researchers had to guarantee

that no harm or detrimental effects should result from participating in research, nor from choosing not to participate.

Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and analysed in Atlas TI and NVivo. Tracking information was destroyed once the fieldwork was complete. The data from the recordings were entirely anonymised, but participants could also opt not to use the recorder, with interviewers making notes when this was the case. Participants could opt to stop the interview at any time and were told they were not expected to answer any question, unless they were happy to do so.

To encourage participation, the financial ‘thank you’ increased at each stage of the cohort study, from £10 at stage 1 to £25 at stage 4. In addition, participants could opt to participate in a draw at each stage, which offered a £100 and a £50 prize. As the six Crisis Skylights differed in size, the two largest were intended to have 40 participants (London) and 30 participants (Newcastle). The remaining four Crisis Skylights, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Merseyside and Oxford were intended to have 20 participants each.

In total, 158 members of Crisis Skylight participated in the cohort study. At stage 1,

135 people agreed to an interview. Some attrition, based on previous experience of longitudinal research with single homeless people, was anticipated, so there was provision to recruit replacement participants at stage 2. At stage 2, retention from the stage 1 was 64 per cent, with an additional 23 interviews with new participants being completed. At stage 3, 79 per cent of the members interviewed at stage 2 were re-interviewed and at stage 4, 85 per cent of the members interviewed at stage 3 were re-interviewed.

56 cohort members completed all four interviews, a further 27 completed three interviews and 22 completed two interviews. 53 people completed one interview. The total number of cohort study interviews completed was 406, typically lasting approximately 25 minutes, or around 169 hours of material (just over seven days’ worth) in which members talked about the experiences of using Crisis Skylight.

Knowing exactly why attrition occurs in longitudinal research is of course not possible, as the people one needs to talk to have disengaged. A small number of Crisis Skylight members did refuse to participate in a second interview when asked to do so at stage 1. One person was known to have died between the first and second stages.

Table 1.1 The cohort study

Cohort interviews	Birmingham	Edinburgh	London	Merseyside	Newcastle	Oxford	All
Stage 1	18	11	40	16	31	19	135
Stage 2	16	9	39	11	22	13	110
<i>New participants at second round</i>	1	4	9	4	5	0	23
Stage 3	12	6	33	9	18	9	87
Stage 4	9	4	28	8	16	9	74
Total	55	30	140	44	87	50	406

Total at stage 2 and overall totals include new participants recruited at stage 2.

Recruitment for the cohort study had to involve members of Crisis Skylight who were engaged with the services being offered. This is because the purpose of the fieldwork was to explore the experience of using Crisis Skylight and the outcomes that were achieved by people using its services. However, an issue arose with how the participants in the cohort study were selected, centring on how their level of engagement was determined. As the goal of the research was to explore the detail of the experience of using Crisis Skylight, the contact between the Crisis Skylight and a cohort member had to be meaningful. When seeking to understand the impacts of a service on someone using that service, there must be enough contact to – at least potentially – allow that service to make a difference. The proxy measure for ‘engagement’ of Crisis Skylight members for inclusion in the cohort study was duration of contact, set at one ‘term’ of participation in classes, activities and receiving one-to-one support¹. As the research progressed, it became clear this proxy measure had two limitations.

- It included people who had been members of Crisis Skylight for several months, but who had not significantly engaged with Crisis Skylight services. These members were unlikely to maintain contact after the first interview, because their service use had been so low as to mean Crisis Skylight had not really played a role in their lives.
- Using a basic metric of at least one term of engagement with Crisis Skylight meant that the cohort study engaged with some members whose contact with Crisis Skylight was nearly complete at interview one. In one way, this added depth to the cohort study, because the stage 1 interviews included many people

who could already talk about an entire experience of using Crisis Skylight². However, some of these participants were already moving on with their lives and becoming more remote from the experience of single homelessness and thus from Crisis Skylight. Again, this seems to have lessened the chances that they would continue to participate.

Contact with other services

In the cohort study, the members of Crisis Skylight were asked to list the other services they were using and then to ‘weight’ the relative impact of Crisis Skylight compared to other service inputs. In practice, this meant that, for example, if someone had secured paid work while using Crisis Skylight, but thought it had played no part in their securing that job, this was not recorded as an outcome delivered by a Crisis Skylight. The administrative data collected by Crisis, covering 14,922 people, was designed to only record outcomes achieved directly achieved by Crisis Skylight (see Chapter 3).

¹ See Chapter 2.

² 67% reported using Skylight for between several months and one year; 18% reported using Skylight for 1-2 years and 13% reported using Skylight for 2 years or more. See: Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2016) *Crisis Skylight: Pathways to Progression* (Second Interim Report) London: Crisis for analysis of this process.

2 Crisis Skylight

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the six Crisis Skylight services that were the subject of this research over the course of 2013-2015. The chapter begins by describing the goals of Crisis Skylight, before moving on to provide a description of the Crisis Model of Change, which provides the framework for Crisis Skylight services. After outlining Crisis Skylight services, the chapter concludes by describing the homeless people using Crisis Skylight and the ways in which they engaged.

The Crisis Model of Change

Crisis Skylight exists to counteract the inequity, stigmatisation and marginalisation that may arise in association with single homelessness³. Crisis Skylight is designed to transform the lives of single homeless people. Transformation centres on social integration which in practice means progressing away from isolation, poor health, and a lack of structure and meaning to life, and the sustained worklessness associated with homelessness.

Crisis Skylight services are built around the Crisis Model of Change which has four domains.

- Promotion of *good health and wellbeing*, centring on good physical health and stable mental health, including management of problematic drug/alcohol use, healthy living and access to treatment.
- Working towards *employment and financial security*, including maximisation of benefits (welfare rights support), budgeting skills, financial literacy and, in particular, access to and sustainment of paid work.

- Enhancing *housing stability*, centring on securing and sustaining adequate, affordable housing with reasonable security of tenure.
- Enabling single homeless people to build *good relationships and social networks*, working to increase self-confidence and self-esteem and working with others.

Crisis Skylight services

Crisis Skylight is focused primarily on single homeless people, people at risk of homelessness within three to six months and people who have been homeless in the last two years. The people using Crisis Skylight are referred to as members.

Over the course of the research, the access criteria for Crisis Skylight tightened, with time limits being set on how recent history of homelessness could be and on how soon someone could be at risk of homelessness. Prior to these changes, Crisis Skylight was accessible to anyone regarding themselves as at risk of homelessness, or with any sort of history of homelessness⁴. This process was largely complete by the end of 2015.

The six Crisis Skylights covered by this research are Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, Merseyside, Newcastle and Oxford. Crisis Skylights also operate in Coventry, South Wales and South Yorkshire. Two further Crisis Skylights have also begun work in London, based in Brent and Croydon⁵. The six Crisis Skylight services covered by this research exist in two broad forms.

3 Dobie, S. et al (2014) *Turned Away: the treatment of single homeless people by local authority homelessness services in England* London: Crisis; Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 - 2010*. London: Crisis; Busch-Geertsema, V.; Edgar, W.; O'Sullivan, E. and Pleace, N. (2010) *Homelessness and Homeless Policies in Europe: Lessons from Research*. Brussels: European Commission.

4 See: Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) *Crisis Skylight: An Evaluation* (Year One Interim Report) London: Crisis and Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2016) *Crisis Skylight: Pathways to Progression* (Second Interim Report) London: Crisis for analysis of this process.

5 <http://www.crisis.org.uk>

- Building-based Crisis Skylights, which use a dedicated building to deliver services, operating in London, Newcastle and Oxford. These services also each have an on-site social enterprise, Café from Crisis, which provides training and work experience in catering.
- Outreach-based Crisis Skylights, providing mobile services to homeless people in supported housing, hostels, day centres and other venues. The three outreach-based Crisis Skylights are Birmingham, Edinburgh and Merseyside.

The specifics of the operation of each individual Crisis Skylight have been described in some depth in the previous reports produced by the research team over the period 2013-2016 (see Appendix 1). However it is useful to briefly note some of the broad characteristics of the six Crisis Skylights.

- London is the largest service and has the most extensive array of services available. A number of established arts-based services for homeless people, including *Streetwise Opera* and *Cardboard Citizens* (theatre group) work in coordination with Crisis Skylight London.
- Crisis Skylight Oxford shares a building with The Old Fire Station, a social enterprise and charity promoting engagement with the arts in Oxford, with which it works in close collaboration⁶.
- Edinburgh was not fully operational through much of 2013, which meant the scale of its early operation was smaller than that of the other five Crisis Skylights.
- Outreach-based Crisis Skylights have made increasing use of fixed-site classrooms and facilities and the building-based Crisis Skylights started

to provide some outreach services over the course of this evaluation. While the core of each model remains as originally designed, both have adapted to try to address practical issues that the authors reported in 2014⁷. These centred on the accessibility of a building-based service which required homeless people to travel and the limitations inherent in what sorts of education and training an entirely mobile service can provide.

- Birmingham – after encountering some early issues with engagement – re-orientated itself towards higher provision of short-run, accredited courses.
- While Crisis Skylight services are not uniform, there has been a steady movement towards greater consistency in service provision. All Crisis Skylights follow these service delivery key principles:
 - *flexibility*, emphasising listening to members and seeking to facilitate whichever route to progression they wish to take
 - *a respectful, non-judgemental, strength-based* approach to working with homeless people, emphasising their strengths and capacity, rather than focusing on their support needs
 - *positive encouragement without coercion*. Crisis Skylight is not a passive service model, it seeks to actively promote positive changes in the lives of single homeless people, but at the same time it is a service that is used only on a voluntary basis and which emphasises service user choice.

In practical terms, people joining Crisis Skylight as members can engage with the services and activities in multiple ways.

⁶ <http://www.oldfirestation.org.uk/>

⁷ Preece, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) *Crisis Skylight: An Evaluation* (Year One Interim Report) London: Crisis.

The research reported here showed there could be several trajectories through Crisis Skylight services and more than one route to initial engagement (see Chapter 3).

- Single homeless people may be remote from the experience of learning and training. The research showed that Crisis Skylight can respond by offering arts-based activities that build self-confidence and get someone used to working in groups with others. In turn, this could facilitate engagement with basic skills education, training and eventually job-seeking.
- Equally, if a homeless person is effectively work-ready when they seek help from a Crisis Skylight, the research showed they can immediately be provided with support for job-searching and attending interviews (see Chapter 3).
- Multiple paths to employment through different sets of support, education and arts-based activities can be delivered by a Crisis Skylight. If someone can make a living from the arts, the Crisis Skylight can support them, but the model is equally designed to enable someone to enter catering, train as a plumber, or learn the basics of office computing.

Crisis Skylight is best described as a network of services that operate following a set of core principles, centred on the Crisis Model of Change and a flexible, non-judgemental system of service delivery. The array of support and services offered differed between the six Crisis Skylights during the period 2013-2015 and more detail is available in the earlier reports listed in Appendix 1.

The package of services delivered by each Crisis Skylight was within a shared framework:

- participation and tutoring in creative and performing arts
- basic skills education
- training (vocational)
- one-to-one support with progression
- volunteering opportunities
- support with job-seeking
- support with housing
- support with health and wellbeing.

In practice, Crisis Skylight services included the following:

- *arts-based activities*; in both creative arts and performance. The arts are used to promote self-confidence, emotional literacy and to help some members adjust to structured, supervised activity. Art is used as a stepping stone towards more formal education, but can be an end in itself. A few members have developed careers in creative and performance art as a direct result of their engagement with Crisis Skylight⁸
- *basic skills education*; centring on English, Maths and Computer skills, all of which are accredited
- *training qualifications*; which in the case of London, Newcastle and Oxford can include work experience and training in a social enterprise Café from Crisis. Merseyside offers specific qualifications in building and decorating. Crisis Skylights also offer CSCS cards, ECDL and CLAiT qualifications⁹
- workshops, training and one-to-one support with *job-seeking*. This can include mock interviews, CV preparation and

⁸ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2016) *Crisis Skylight: Pathways to Progression* (Second Interim Report) London: Crisis for analysis of this process.
⁹ Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) see: <http://www.cscs.uk.com/> European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) see: <http://www.ecdl.com/> Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAiT) qualifications see: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/courses/types/earning/Pages/computerskills.aspx>

assistance with meeting the costs of attending and dressing for job interviews

- one-to-one support with *progression*. Essentially this involves working flexibly and collaboratively with Crisis Skylight members to help them pursue the activities, education, training and employment that they want to secure
- help with mental health issues is provided through specialist mental health coordinator services¹⁰. One-to-one progression support also provides practical and emotional support
- one-to-one *help with housing*, including access to the private rented sector, dealing with local authority housing options teams and help with housing problems, including threatened eviction. This is provided through dedicated housing coaches and by one-to-one support with progression
- facilitating *access to externally provided education and training* and to further and higher education, which is arranged through one-to-one support with progression and employment
- support with *wellbeing and life skills*, which can include yoga, sport, trips, wellness groups, cookery classes and 'renting-ready' programmes for living independently
- support with *volunteering*, both within Crisis Skylight and via external opportunities, which promote self-esteem and may help someone secure employment
- The *Changing Lives* grants which members can apply for to fund external

training or further education, or to facilitate self-employment.

The members of the six Crisis Skylights, 2013-2015

One attendance and the completion of a first contact form (which collects data on demographics, living situation, training and education, employment status, health and support needs) automatically provides membership of Crisis Skylight. The six Crisis Skylights in Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, Merseyside, Newcastle and Oxford worked with 14,922 people over the course of 2013-2015¹¹. Figure 2.1 shows the approximate¹² age and gender distribution as recorded by Crisis administrative data. Overall, 32 per cent of members in the period 2013-2015 were women.

Most of the members attending during 2013-2015 were White (67%), with Black and Black British people being the next largest group (16%), followed by Asian and Asian British people (6%). A wide variety of other ethnic backgrounds were reported among the remaining 11 per cent of members¹³. In Birmingham and in London, reflecting the diverse ethnic composition of those two cities, members were more likely to have an ethnic minority background.

Approximately¹⁴ 70 per cent of the people who attended a Crisis Skylight were recorded as homeless at first contact with that Crisis Skylight. This group included people who were in a homeless hostel, staying at a B&B because they had no other alternative, in direct access or night-shelter (ie emergency accommodation) and temporary supported housing services and people sofa-surfing, or temporarily staying with someone, because they had no home of their own (ie concealed

¹⁰ Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) *A Review of Crisis Skylight's Mental Health Services* London: Crisis.

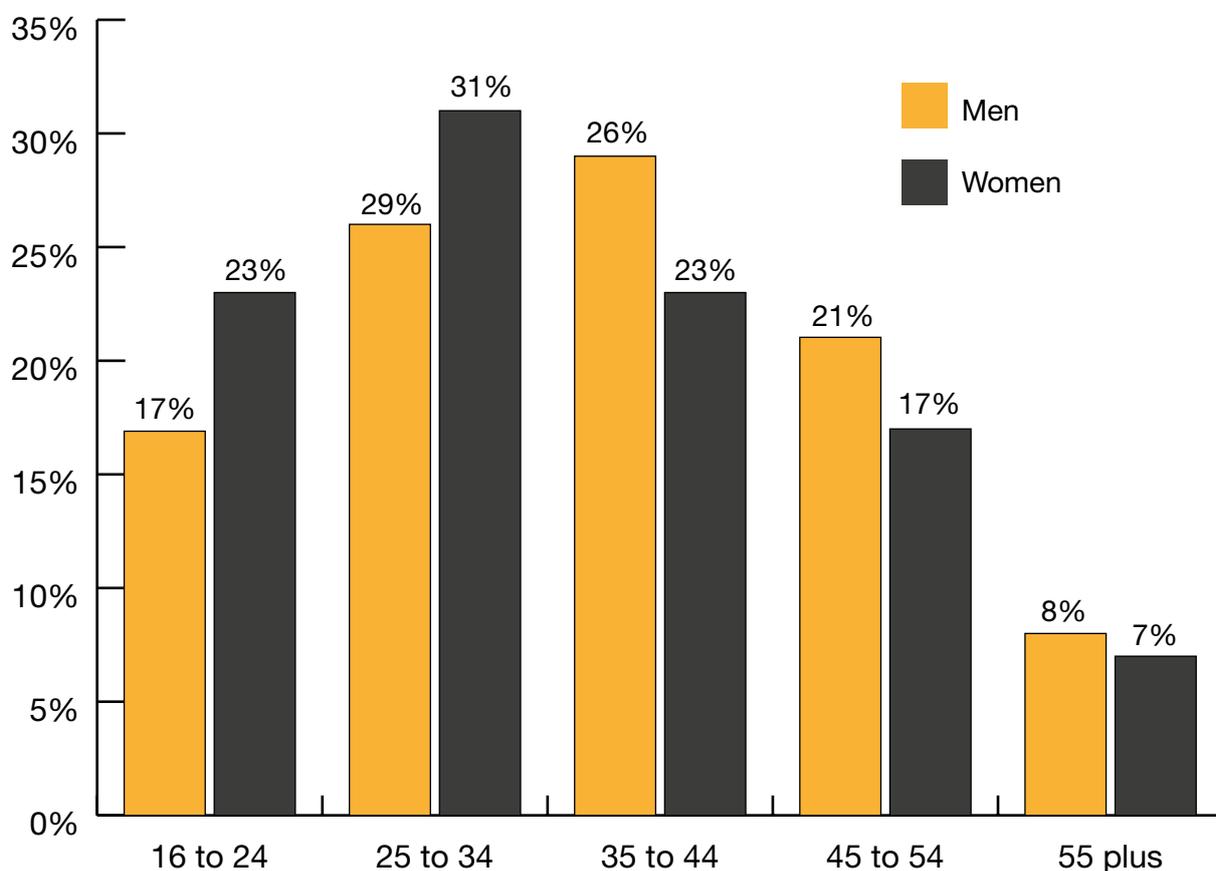
¹¹ Analysis of administrative data from 2012/13 can be found in Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) *Crisis Skylight: An Evaluation* (Year One Interim Report) London: Crisis.

¹² Data collection was voluntary and sometimes age and gender were not specified (see Figure 2.1)

¹³ Data collection was voluntary and not everyone chose to share their ethnic background with Crisis, these figures are based on 13,466 Crisis Skylight members during the period 2013-2015.

¹⁴ Data collection was voluntary and not everyone shared their exact situation, although everyone presenting at a Crisis Skylight is asked whether they are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Figure 2.1 Age and gender of Crisis Skylight members



Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members 2013 to 2015, (anonymised) age and gender were provided by 13,758 (92% of all members). Percentages are rounded.

or hidden homelessness). Also within this group were people squatting and living rough. A further 30 per cent of people were living in the private rented sector, social rented sector, or occasionally were owner occupiers, all of whom were people self-reporting themselves as being at risk of homelessness (Figure 2.2).

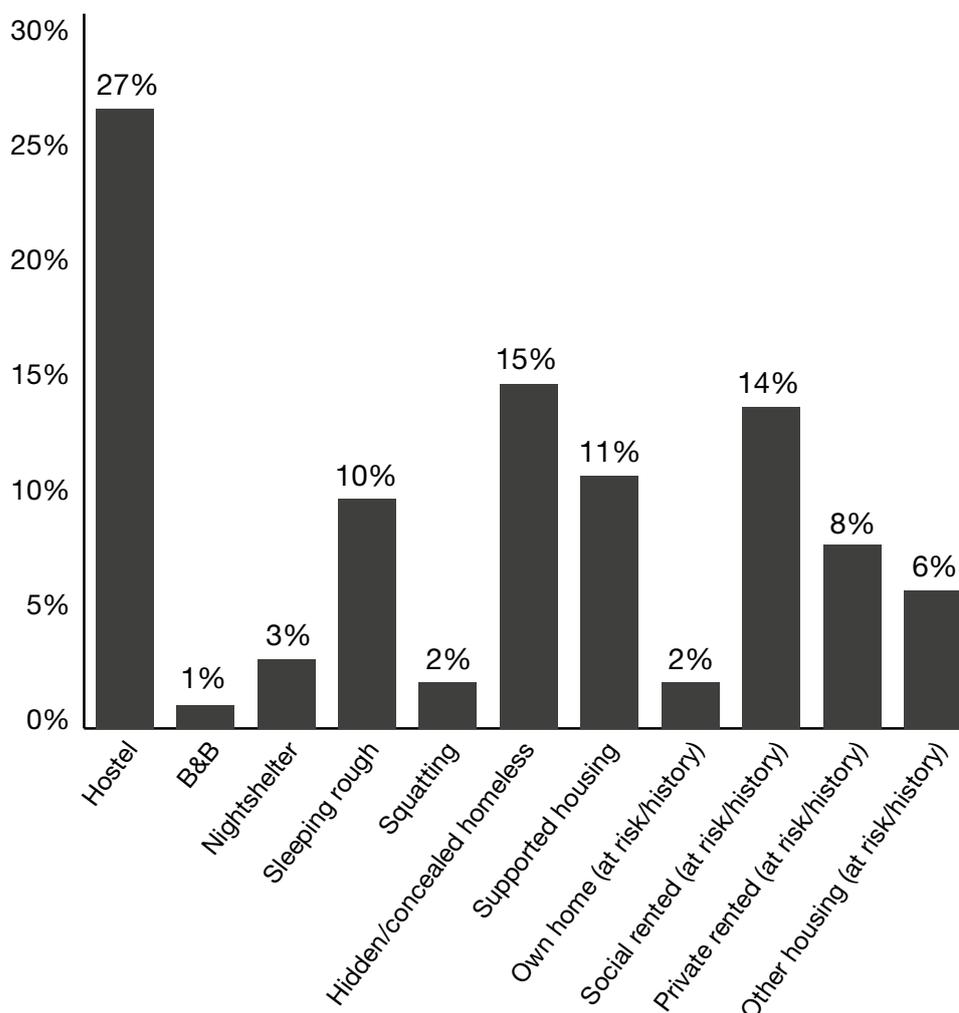
Self-reported support needs, recorded at the first contact with a Crisis Skylight, were high. A large number of members reported a limiting illness or disability (39%), with a further 33 per cent reporting a history of mental health problems and 27 per cent reporting problematic use of drugs and/or alcohol. One fifth reported they were former offenders

(21%), 13 per cent reported experience of domestic violence and 9 per cent had been in care as children. Experience of being in the armed forces was unusual (3%), but homeless veterans were present among the Crisis Skylight members (Figure 2.3).

The strong associations between domestic violence and women's homelessness have been documented elsewhere¹⁵. Seven per cent of men reported one or more experiences of domestic violence, compared to a much higher proportion of 26 per cent of women, at first contact with Crisis Skylight¹⁶. Both men and women who had experienced domestic violence were

15 Reeve, K. et al (2007) *Homeless Women: Homelessness Careers, Homelessness Landscapes*. London: Crisis.
16 Sig at $p < 0.001$

Figure 2.2 Housing status at first contact with a Crisis Skylight



Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members 2013 to 2015 (anonymised). Information on housing status was shared by 14,134 members. Percentages are rounded.

significantly more likely to report a history of mental health problems (64% compared to 28% of those not reporting an experience of domestic violence)¹⁷.

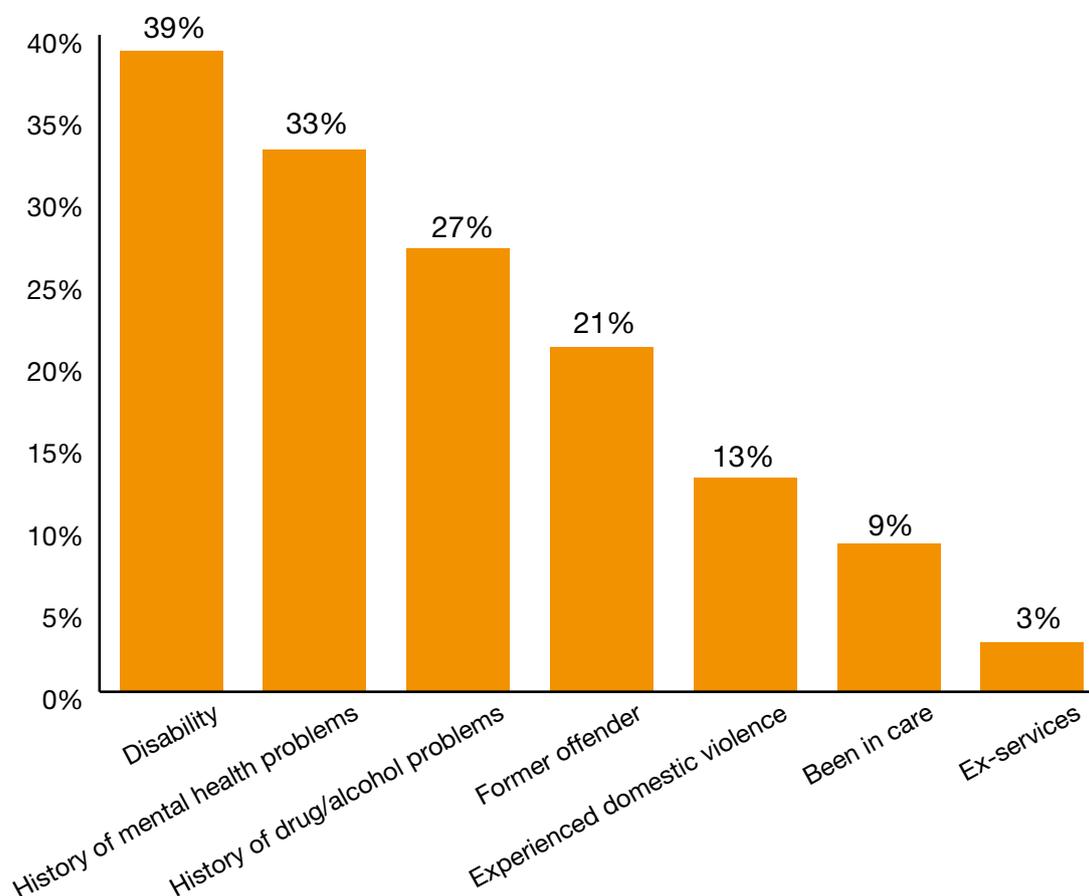
Administrative recording of the reasons why homelessness had occurred varied over the course of 2013-2015. The systems in place in 2013 to capture living situation at first contact evolved over the course of the evaluation to improve consistency. Therefore the results reported are from

2014-15 and should be viewed as a sample. (Figure 2.4).

The patterns here reflect the findings of earlier research¹⁸. Relationship breakdown predominates, with rent arrears and being discharged from prison (with nowhere to go) also being important. Eviction and the ending of assured shorthold tenancies also figured. Domestic violence was again reported as a cause of homelessness, as to a lesser extent were drugs and alcohol use

¹⁷ Sig at p<0.001

¹⁸ Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) op. cit.

Figure 2.3 Self-reported support needs at first contact with a Crisis Skylight

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members 2013 to 2015 (anonymised). Base: 14,922 (100% of members). Percentages are rounded.

and mental or physical health issues.

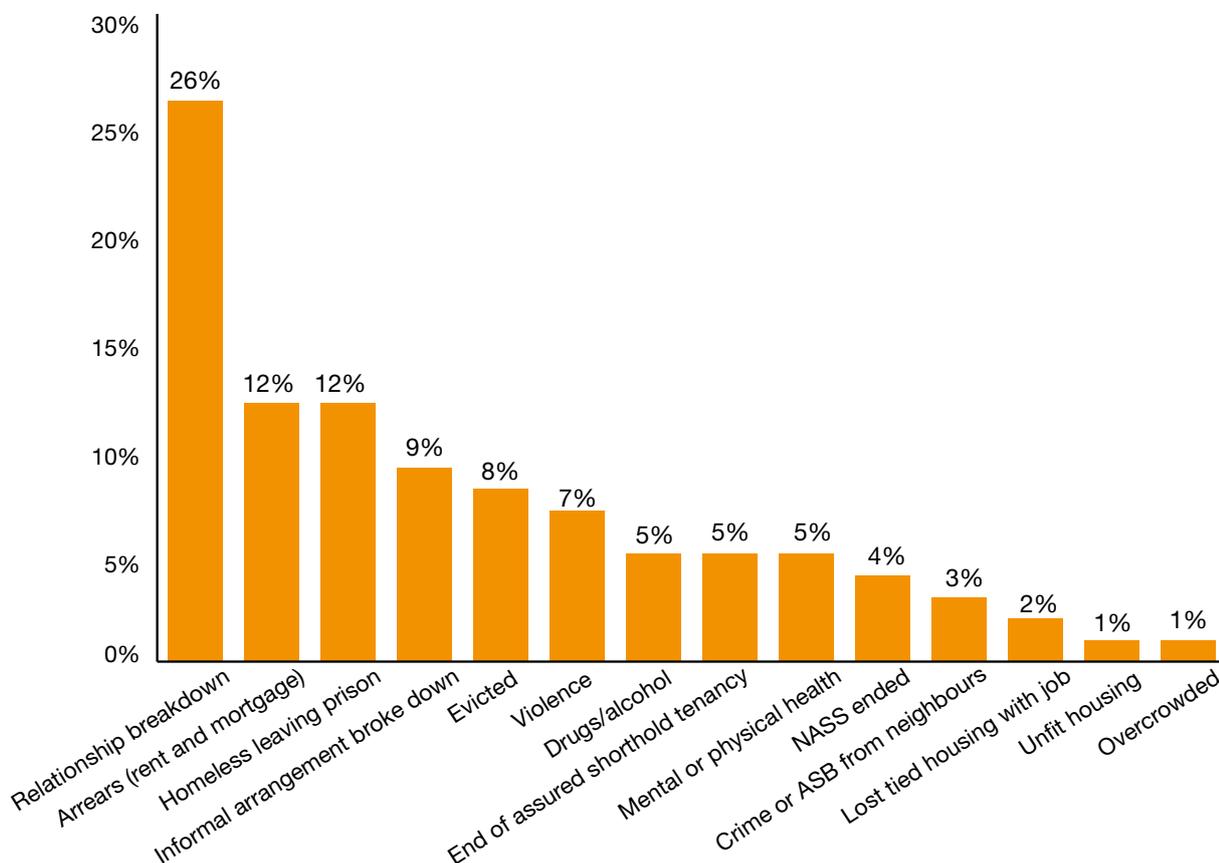
Data were again not complete, but the available administrative data showed that educational attainment was mixed at first contact with a Crisis Skylight. One fifth of members were without any formal qualifications (20%). Just over one third (36%) of members reported that their highest level qualification in the UK was no higher than GCSE level (Figure 2.5). Nine per cent of Crisis Skylight members reported having an undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree. A similarly sized group (11%) reported that A levels (or Scottish Highers) were their highest educational attainment at

first contact with a Crisis Skylight. A wide variety of other qualifications were reported.

There was some variation between the six Crisis Skylights. Edinburgh (27%) and Merseyside (26%) had a higher proportion of members presenting with no qualifications than Oxford (20%) or Newcastle (21%). Birmingham (18%) and London (17%) recorded the lowest proportions of members presenting without any formal qualifications.

Recording of unemployment levels indicated very high levels of worklessness at first contact. Results from the other fieldwork indicated unemployment at first contact

Figure 2.4 Self-reported causes of homelessness at first contact with a Crisis Skylight



Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2014-2015 (Base: 4,729 respondents, 31% of members). Percentages are rounded.

with a Crisis Skylight was near-universal at first contact.

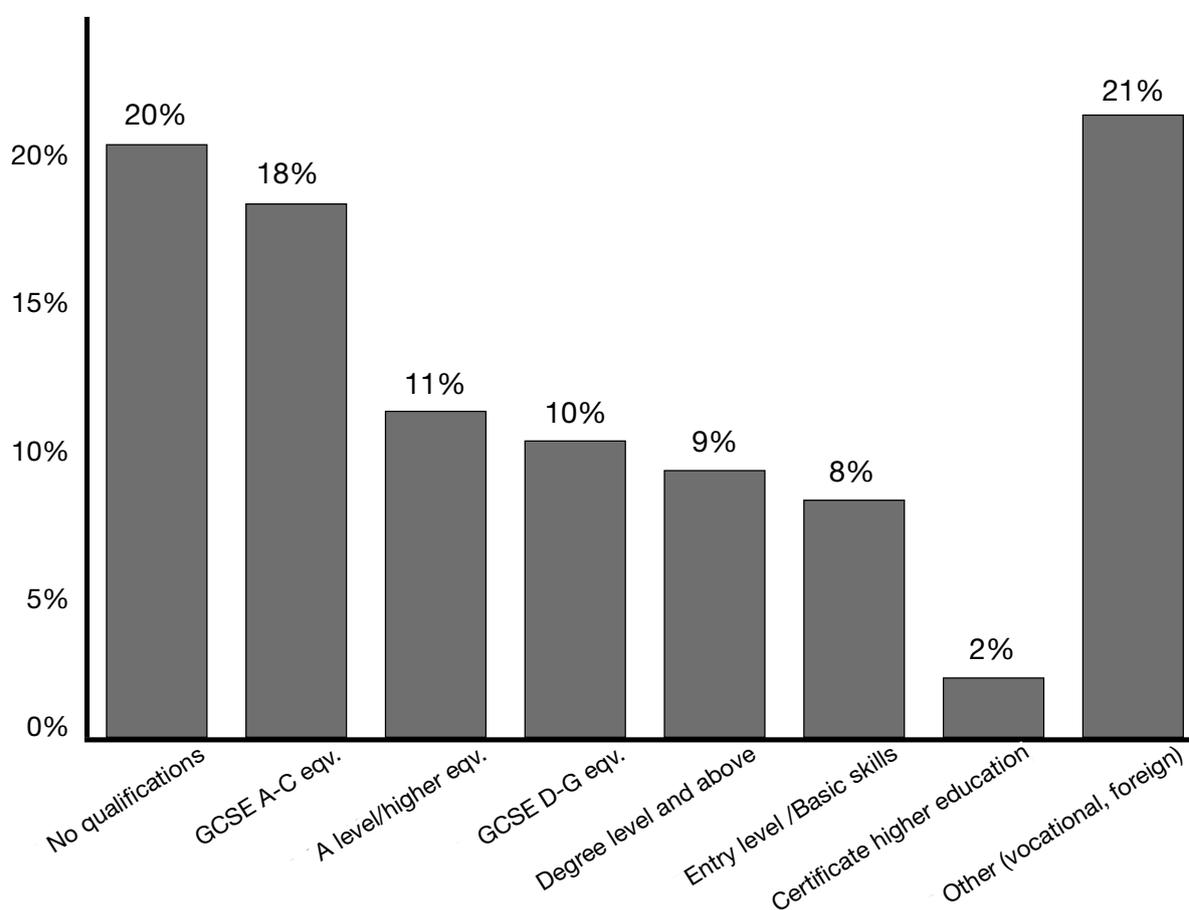
Service delivery in the six Crisis Skylights, 2013-2015

Referral routes to the six Crisis Skylights remained as described in earlier reports¹⁹. The three building-based services, in London, Newcastle and Oxford had a mixture of referral routes, based on links with other homelessness services, but were also set up to take walk-in self-referrals from homeless people. The three outreach-based services, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Merseyside functioned through joint working with an array of local homelessness services

and could also take referrals from other services and self-referrals.

Table 2.1 summarises the points at which members, who used the Crisis Skylights in 2013-2015, had joined. The more established Crisis Skylights had more longer term members using their services during 2013-2015 than those which were more recently set up.

Table 2.2 shows the duration of contact with Crisis Skylight over the three years covered by this research. The average duration of contact was, with the exceptions of Edinburgh and Merseyside,

Figure 2.5 Highest self-reported qualification at first contact with a Crisis Skylight

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015 (Base: 10,680 respondents, 71%). Percentages are rounded.

in excess of one year (52 weeks). The median duration was lower, indicating that the average figure was inflated by some individuals making use of Crisis Skylights for a considerable amount of time.

There was some evidence of contact with Crisis Skylights lasting less than a month, with 25 per cent of members recorded as using Crisis Skylight for under five weeks during the period 2013-2015²⁰. Another 25 per cent had contact for approaching half a year (22 weeks), with 25 per cent recorded as having contact for between 23 and 82 weeks. One quarter of the people using Crisis Skylight during 2013-2015 had been in contact for more than 82 weeks.

These data were not necessarily indicative of failure to engage or overlong engagement. As is examined in Chapter 3, Crisis Skylight members could in some instances be assisted within a period of a few weeks into education, training or paid work. While in others an eventual progression to work or education could be a much longer process.

Rates of shorter term contact varied between the Crisis Skylights over the period 2013-2015. Merseyside was the most likely to see members for fewer than five weeks (41% of members) and London the least likely (16% of members). In Birmingham and Oxford, the rates were the same (23%) with

²⁰ Contact may have occurred prior to or following this period.

Table 2.1 Points at which members using Crisis Skylight in 2013-2015 had become members

Crisis Skylight							
	Birmingham	Edinburgh	London	Merseyside	Newcastle	Oxford	All
2012 or earlier	17%	7%	33%	14%	30%	23%	24%
2013	25%	41%	22%	33%	30%	31%	28%
2014	26%	28%	24%	24%	23%	25%	24%
2015	32%	25%	21%	30%	18%	21%	24%

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013 to 2015.

Table 2.2 Duration of contact with Crisis Skylight 2013-2015 (weeks)

Crisis Skylight							
	Birmingham	Edinburgh	London	Merseyside	Newcastle	Oxford	All
Number of members	2,090	1,058	5,050	2,490	2,555	1,596	14,839
Average duration of contact (weeks)	38	29	82	31	67	57	59
Median duration of contact (weeks)	17	10	40	9	18	32	23

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015.

Edinburgh (36%) and Newcastle (35%) being somewhat higher. The possible relationships between duration of contact and outcomes are explored in Chapters 3 and 4.

Arts-based activities

A large group of Crisis Skylight members participated in arts-based sessions. Across the six Crisis Skylights during the course of 2013-2015, 33 per cent of members participated in one or more arts-based sessions. Birmingham, Newcastle and London (25%, 24% and 30% of members) had the lowest participation, with Edinburgh, Merseyside and Oxford recording higher figures (38%, 46% and 37%)²¹.

Figure 2.6 summarises the activities of the Crisis Skylights in providing creative

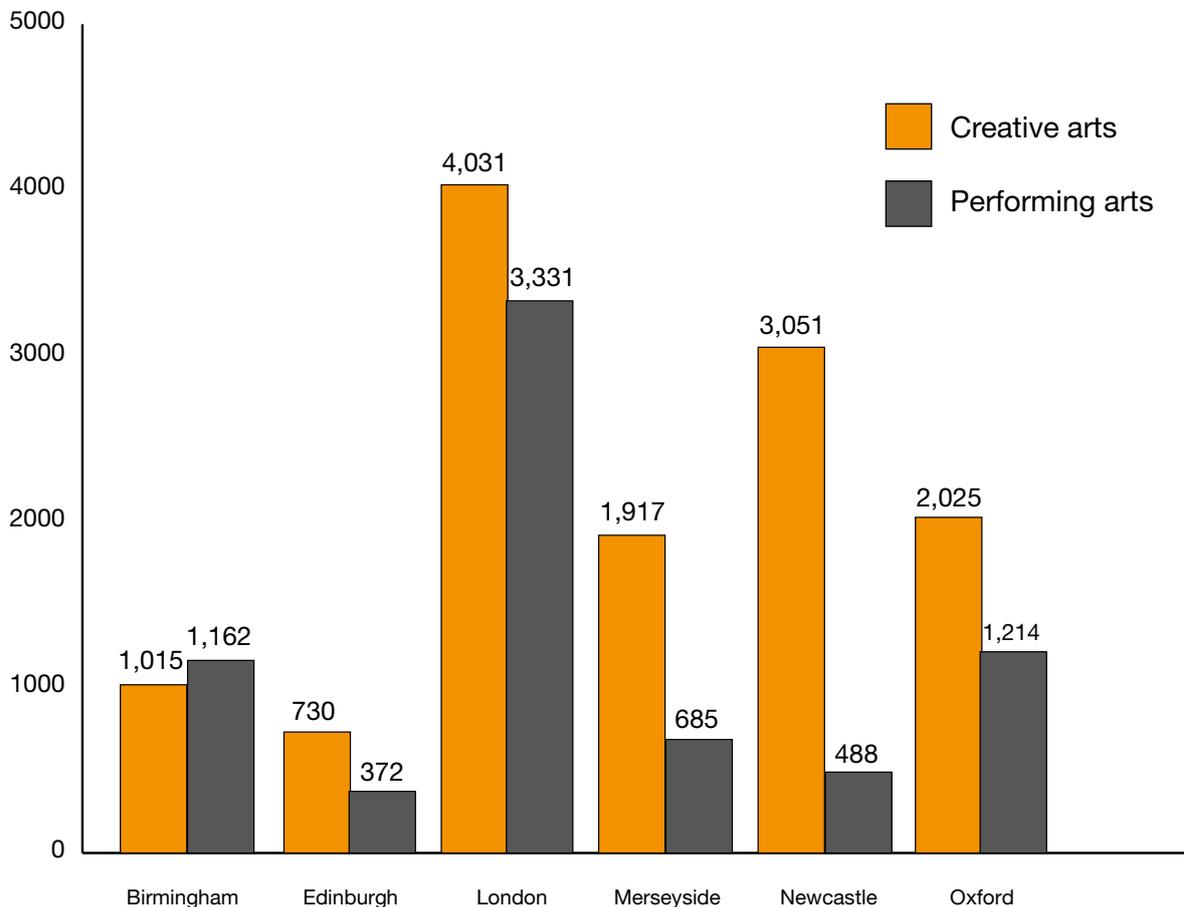
and performing arts-based activities over 2013-2015. The figure shows the number of attendances at creative and performing arts sessions by Crisis Skylight members. Taking Birmingham as an example, 1,015 attendances at creative arts activities took place and 1,162 at performing arts activities. In total, 363 members in Birmingham participated in creative arts sessions, an average of three times, over the course of 2013-2015, with 271 members participating in an average of four performing arts sessions²².

Crisis Skylights tended to be focused on both the creative and performing arts, with the partial exceptions of Merseyside and Newcastle, where there was more emphasis on creative arts. Overall, 3,773 members of the six Crisis Skylights participated in an average of three sessions of creative

²¹ See Chapter 1

²² Rounded figures, average participation in creative arts was 2.8 sessions and in performance arts 4.29 sessions.

Figure 2.6 Number of attendances at creative and performing arts sessions at the Crisis Skylights 2013-2015



Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015.

arts and 2,289 members participated in an average of three sessions of performing arts, during the course of 2013 to 2015²³.

Support with education, training and employment

Collectively, the Crisis Skylights provided basic skills classes in English, Maths and Computing (IT skills) which were used by members 15,930 times in 2013-2015.

Figure 2.7 shows the patterns of service activity around employability, personal development, and vocational and basic skills training across the six Crisis Skylights. Oxford, for example had 61 per cent of these kinds of activities focused on basic skills education, 14 per cent on vocational training, 5 per

²³ Rounded figures, the average for creative arts was 3.38 and for performing arts it was 3.17. Collectively, the six Crisis Skylights reported 12,769 attendances at creative arts sessions and 7,252 attendances at performing arts sessions.

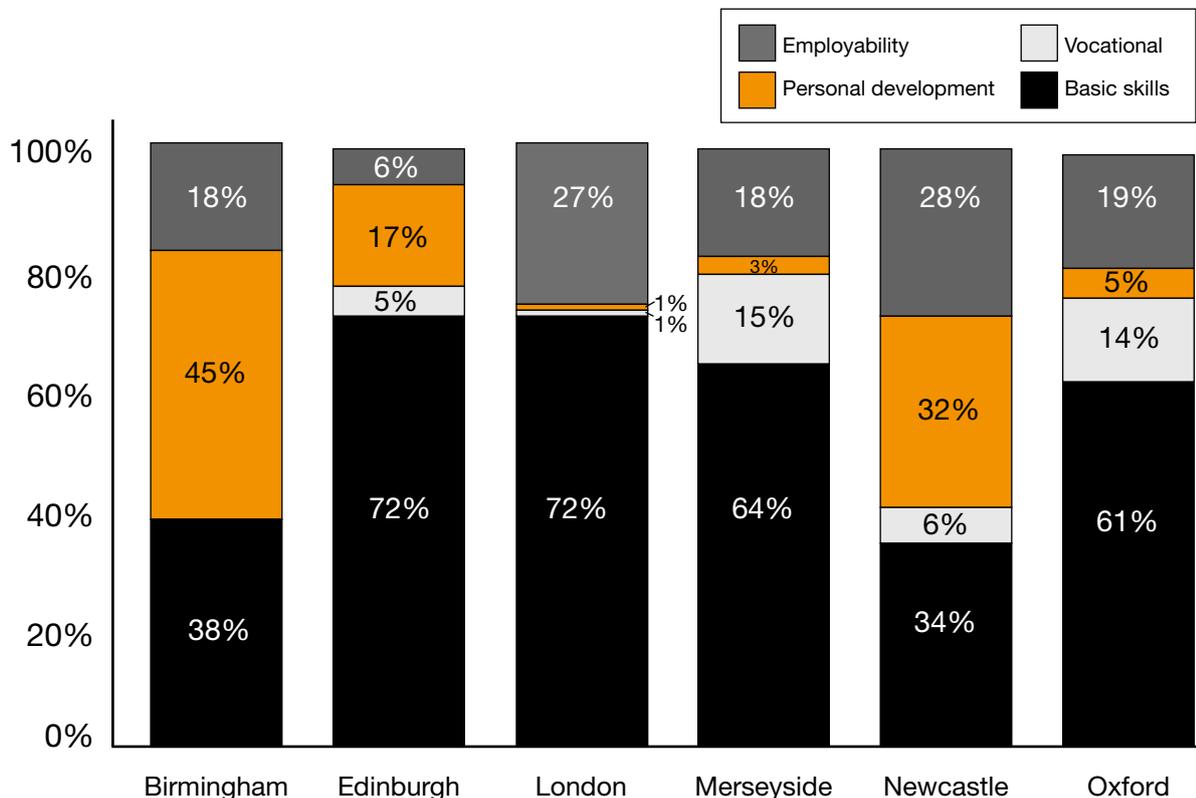
cent on personal development and 19 per cent on employability. London was heavily focused on basic skills and employability, while Newcastle had a more mixed pattern of service delivery. One-to-one support with basic skills education was provided by Smart Skills tutors in Merseyside and Birmingham. Over the course of 2013-2015, 481 members received individual tuition in Birmingham and 186 in Merseyside.

As is shown in Figure 2.7, the Crisis Skylights did not provide identical service packages in relation to support with education, training and employment. In part, this was adaptation to the particular circumstances in which the Crisis Skylights were working. Although it also related to differences in their structure, such as size and whether they were building-based or outreach-based. These variations also reflected, for example, the

heavier focus on personal development in Birmingham and Newcastle and the higher provision of vocational training in Merseyside. These variations must be seen in the wider context of a Crisis Skylight-wide emphasis on activity that was designed to directly and actively promote employment. This emphasis on improving employability was strongly evidenced by the fieldwork conducted for this research.

One difference between the building-based Crisis Skylights and the outreach-based Skylights was the presence of the Café from Crisis social enterprises at London, Oxford and Newcastle. This research did not specifically evaluate the cafés, but did include participants who had undertaken training in food hygiene and other aspects of catering at the cafés. In total, 63 members in London, 25 in Newcastle and

Figure 2.7 Proportion of education, training and employment service delivery focused on basic skills education, vocational (training) activity, personal development and employability, 2013-15



Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015.

21 in Oxford received training in the cafés during 2013-2015.

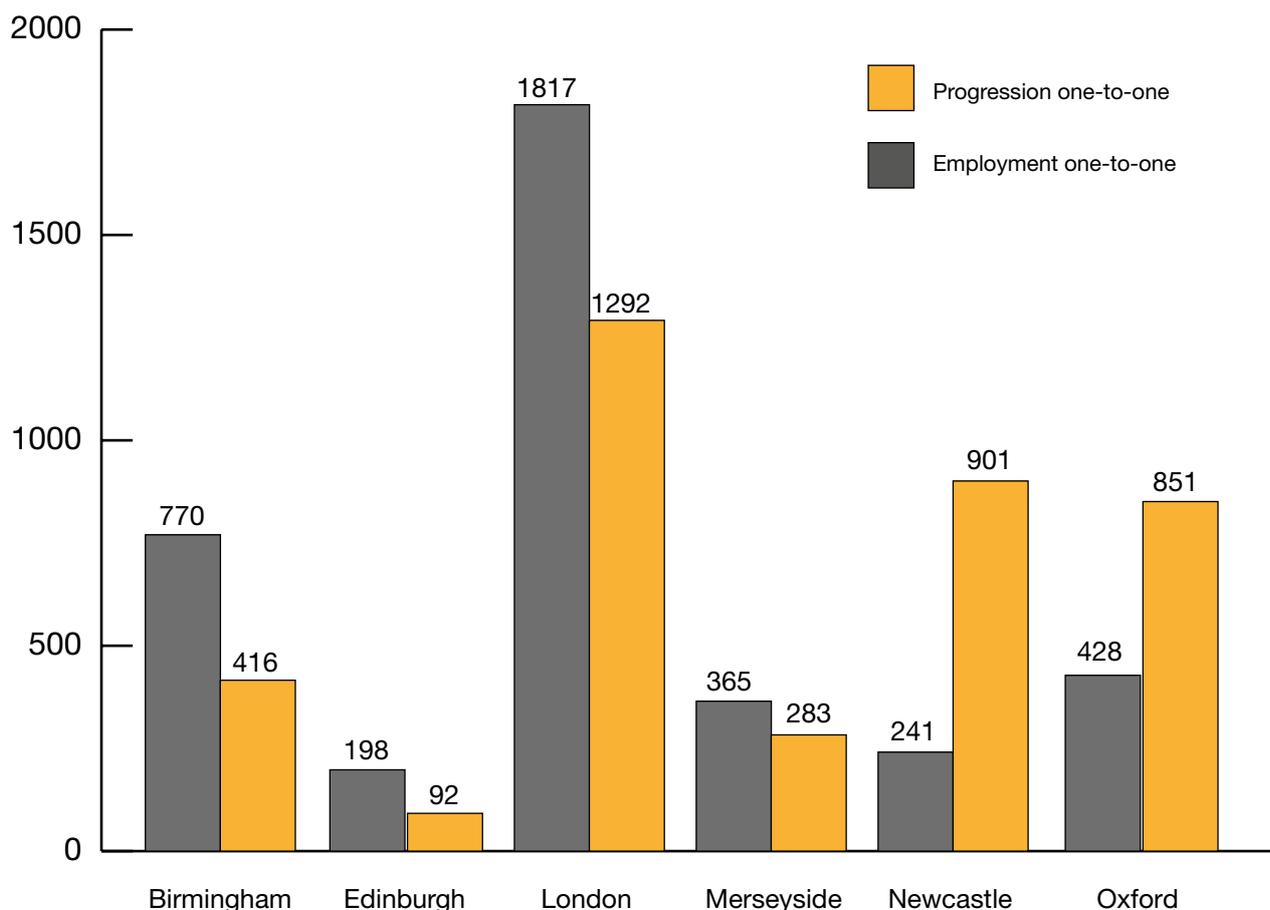
One-to-one support Support with progression and employment

One-to-one support with progression and with employment was widely provided by the six Crisis Skylights. In overall terms, 3,819 members received one-to-one support with progression, with 3,835 receiving one-to-one support with employment²⁴ (Figure 2.8).

Support with health, wellbeing and housing

Attendance at health and wellbeing sessions varied across the Crisis Skylights. Some, such as Edinburgh and Merseyside, were still in the process of developing these activities over the course of 2013-2015. Others had established mental health coordinator services, which the authors reported on in 2013²⁵, which facilitated counselling sessions and group activities centred on promoting mental health. Alongside these sessions, Crisis Skylights

Figure 2.8 Summary of Crisis Skylight activity (number of members receiving one-to-one support with progression and/or employment) 2013-2015.



Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015. Data refer to the number of members receiving one or more sessions of one-to-one support with progression and/or employment.

²⁴ These figures include those who received both forms of support, totalling 1,485 individuals.

²⁵ Preece, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) *A Review of Crisis Skylight's Mental Health Services* London: Crisis.

provided varying types and levels of activity centred on promoting health and wellbeing (see Chapter 1).

Use of one-to-one support from mental health coordinators varied across the Crisis Skylights. Birmingham, London, Newcastle and Oxford had established mental health coordinator services, prior to the service in Merseyside being developed, so inevitably saw higher total activity over three years. Edinburgh did not have this service during the period covered by the research. In total, 1,685 members received one-to-one support from a mental health coordinator over the course of 2013-2015 (see Chapter 4).

Support with housing took various forms. It was possible for members to get help with housing through a progression coach or someone else providing them with one-to-one support. Crisis rolled out housing coaches, with a specific function to prevention eviction and facilitate access to the private rented sector, through the course of the three years covered by this research report. In total, 904 members of Crisis Skylight were recorded as being assisted by housing coaches during 2013-2015 (see Chapter 4).



3 Journeys through Crisis Skylight

Introduction

This chapter draws on the large scale longitudinal qualitative cohort research described in Chapter 1, in which the trajectories of 158 Crisis Skylight members were explored using in-depth interviews.

The chapter begins by exploring who the cohort members were, looking at the characteristics, what their experiences had been and how their lives had been influenced by contact with Crisis Skylight. This is examined by looking at the nature of their journeys through the services, analysing the differing ways and varying extents to which the goal of progression, grounded on the Crisis Model of Change, had been achieved.

The cohort members

The experiences of the cohort members varied from being brought back into a mainstream economic and social life that they had recently been a part of, through to leaving long-term homelessness via their contact with Crisis Skylight. There were those who did not progress as far as others or whose contact with Crisis Skylight did not result in many changes.

The characteristics, needs and experiences of the members were described in *Pathways to Progression* (2016)²⁶, but are briefly revisited here. Thirty per cent were women and 61 per cent were aged in their 30s and 40s. Older men, aged 50 and above, outnumbered older women (26% of men compared to 15% of women). Sixty-eight percent were White European, with the next largest ethnic group being Black/Black British people (18%).

The cohort was not representative of Crisis Skylight members as a whole. They were

selected on the basis that they had quite sustained contact with Crisis Skylight services. This reflected the main focus of this research, which was on the experience of using Crisis Skylight. In comparison with members as a whole, the cohort members were more likely to report a history of, or current, mental health problems (53% compared to 33% of all members). Drug and alcohol problems were reported at similar rates to members as a whole (31% compared to 27% of all members) as was any history of criminality (16% compared to 21% of all members) (Figure 3.1). Experience of domestic violence was reported by some women, the rate again being equivalent to reported levels of 26 per cent recorded among all women members²⁷.

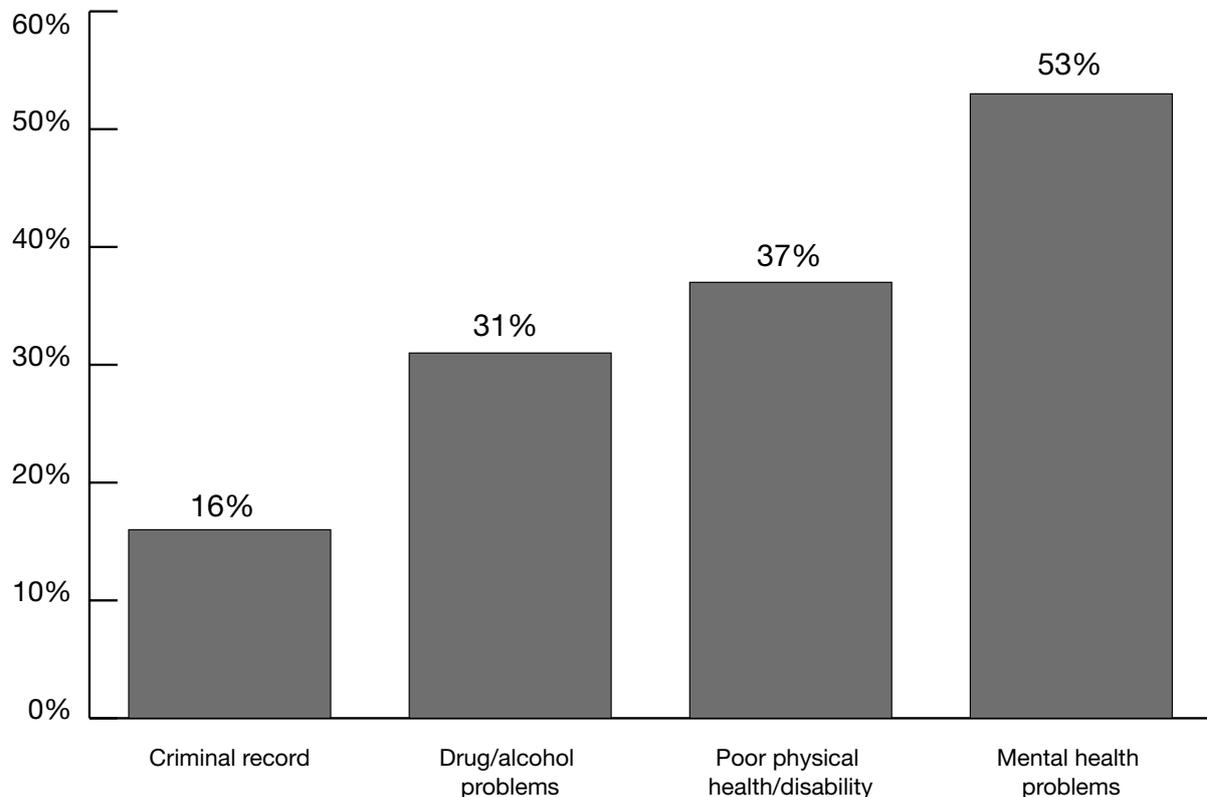
At their first contact with Crisis Skylight, 41 per cent of the cohort members reported that they were homeless. Only a small proportion of the cohort were at risk of homelessness when they first made contact (15%), with a larger group reporting they had had a history of homelessness when they first started using Crisis Skylight (44%).

Routes into homelessness were diverse among the cohort. In many studies of single homeless people, particularly where the emphasis is on statistical data, there is a tendency to look for patterns of characteristics and experiences, to explore homelessness causation. This can give a broad picture of associated factors, but there is the risk that certain questions will be overemphasised or underemphasised. This is evidenced, for example, in relatively recent misunderstandings about the extent of severe mental illness among single homeless people. This arose from over-reliance on

²⁶ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2016) *Crisis Skylight: Pathways to Progression* London: Crisis.

²⁷ There was some imprecision in this element of the fieldwork, cohort members sometimes volunteered this information, but were only asked to say what they felt comfortable talking about in terms of their routes into homelessness.

Figure 3.1 Self-reported characteristics of cohort members



Base: 158. Source: University of York interviews with cohort members.

cross-sectional methodology²⁸. Ethnographic studies of homelessness give a greater degree of insight into the nuances of the experience of single homelessness, but tend to concentrate on only quite small numbers²⁹.

The focus of cohort interviews conducted for this research was on the experience of using Crisis Skylight and what it meant to single homeless people. Over the course of several interviews, the research team were able to build up a picture of the lives of the cohort members, their experiences and how these related to the ways in which they engaged with Crisis Skylight.

There were examples of routes into homelessness that reflected the results of earlier research and popular understanding of what single homelessness is. For example, where homelessness had arisen as a consequence of severe mental illness or a drug or alcohol problem, it was difficult to sustain existing housing. Equally, there were examples of a sudden loss of economic position, a job loss leading to problems with sustaining housing, and homelessness resulting from relationship breakdowns, at least some of which had been violent.

The overall impression from the cohort members was often one of precariousness

²⁸ Busch-Geertsema, V. et al (2010) op. cit.

²⁹ May, J. (2000) *Of nomads and vagrants: single homelessness and narratives of home as place*. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 18(6), 737-759; Hoolachan, J.E., (2016) *Ethnography and homelessness research*. International Journal of Housing Policy, 16(1), 31-49.

in terms of economic position, of housing security and of relationships with other people before their contact with Crisis Skylight. These experiences did not just characterise their lives during homelessness, but had often been there before and had often remained, to an extent, after homelessness.

Unemployment, social isolation and a lack of a settled home had been central to the lives of many of the cohort members for some time prior to their engagement with Crisis Skylight. Another group had been in a relatively secure and settled position until combinations of ill-health, disability and various factors leading to homelessness had undermined their economic and social position.

Alongside this group, were a small number of cohort members who had experienced periods of relative stability and of homelessness in succession. Finally, there was another smaller group, whose lives had been characterised by sustained homelessness and residence in homelessness services, or by sustained worklessness and disability and ill-health.

Street homeless. And the reason I became homeless is because I lost my job, I lost where I was staying. I stayed with some friends and that for a little while but then it just became too much, imposing myself on people, I didn't like that. So I went to the homeless place in [town] and I asked for help, and because I wasn't a priority, ie I wasn't an alcoholic or a drug addict or anything like that, then they couldn't help me at all. So they said there was nothing they can do for me.

Cohort member, interview 1.

I was homeless in 2012 for about six months. Then I ended up in a shelter in the [service] housing scheme, and then after that I was in a women's hostel for 12 months in [town]. And through the women's hostel in [town] I started to

come here.

Cohort member, interview 1.

I was working, on contract, but I lost my job, and I ended up homeless. Just a vicious cycle, get a job, get a flat, lose the job, lose the flat. Then being homeless, sleeping in parks and in sheds.

Cohort member, interview 1.

I've been homeless since.... When I was 14 and then from being homeless... to going back to my family home, to being homeless again, to sofa surfing, to privately renting when I was working, to being homeless to, to prison, to this, that, the other and then I was homeless, and then, and then I finally got somewhere... but its, what do they call it? Like inadequately housed...

Cohort member, interview 1.

...yeah, I have a history of homelessness which goes back maybe 20 years actually, but it did start from early age drinking and drug taking...in later life on and off homelessness, problems in not staying in employment, things like that.

Cohort member, interview 1.

Educational attainment among the cohort members varied, but 41 per cent had not completed formal education ie they had left school without any qualifications. 32 per cent had finished school and the remaining 27 per cent had reached, although not in every case completed, further and higher education. Disruption to further and higher education had more commonly occurred due to the onset of mental health problems or physical illness, rather than being caused by homelessness, although homelessness had disrupted education in some cases. Unemployment was universal among the cohort members at the point of their first contact with Crisis Skylight services, though contact with Crisis Skylight was later to bring employment for 25 per cent of the cohort members.

Almost all the cohort, when they first approached Crisis Skylight, had a lack of predictability, security and also reported feeling that their lives lacked clear direction and purpose. Their motivations for using Crisis Skylight, the reasons why they engaged with Crisis Skylight, often centred on trying to find a way into the social and economic mainstream, seeking the same ontological security as other people.

Working with Crisis Skylight is entirely voluntary, requiring the initiative to approach Crisis Skylight staff to begin with, in terms of outreach-based services, and to walk into the buildings from which London, Newcastle and Oxford delivered the bulk of their services. To get something tangible from Crisis Skylight requires coming back, a commitment by an individual. The incentives for continued engagement among many cohort members centred on what Crisis Skylight had to offer and in the way in which services were delivered, with what was often seen as empathy, understanding and respect.

One good thing with Skylight, you get a recognised qualification. And, that was something that gives me that incentive to keep going, knowing that the end of a term, end of the 12 weeks, you get a recognised qualification. And also, the other thing that kept me coming back was, meeting new people, learning new skills, acceptance and being willing and able to change.

Cohort member, interview 1.

...when I was in hospital earlier this year and he called me, and just the fact that someone called me to see if I was ok, meant a lot... just, you know, felt like... said, you know, everyone here is missing

me and they were looking forward to me coming back and that made a huge difference to me... completing a course and being more confident because I just lost all confidence in my ability to do anything, so that meant a lot to me. Just to be able to engage and complete something, and get recognition for it.

Cohort member, interview 1.

Well what keeps me coming back here is that, is that, is that I've seen myself progress tremendously you know, I mean I'm in a completely different places as to where I was a year ago...its enabled me to, to do other things off the back of feeling slightly more positive.

Cohort member, interview 1.

Yes, it has, especially when I was living rough. I didn't have a sense of purpose whatsoever till I came here [Crisis Skylight], or I felt, so yes...I just felt like being outside I was just drifting away because obviously you spend all the time by yourself. I just thought I was no longer part of society so I really wanted to integrate before it was too late, if you know what I mean?

Cohort member, interview 4.

Research has been reporting for some time that homelessness can be viewed as an absence of ontological security, the physical safety, social support and predictability that most people take for granted³⁰. Johnson and Wylie, writing about the experience of single homelessness in Australia, have described this ontological insecurity in the following terms³¹.

In order to feel secure we need to have a safe roof over our heads, and the reassurance that we won't lose our home

³⁰ Padgett, D.K., 2007. *There's no place like (a) home: Ontological security among persons with serious mental illness in the United States*. *Social Science and Medicine*, 64(9), 1925-1936; Pleave, N. and Quilgars, D. (2013) *Improving Health and Social Integration through Housing First: A Review DIHAL*.

³¹ Johnson, G. and Wylie, N. (2010) *THIS IS NOT LIVING: Chronic homelessness in Melbourne*. Melbourne RMIT University., 4-5.

at any time. We need to feel in control of our social and material environment and have power over who enters and leaves our home. We need a safe and private haven that we can return to and escape from the unpredictability and uncertainty of the world around us. Our homes are just one, albeit important, source of ontological security. We also need to have a secure and positive sense of who we are, what our purpose is and where we fit in the world. We need to engage in meaningful social activities, have stable, reliable social networks and feel accepted by others. It is important for all of us to feel socially connected and trust the people around us.

There are parallels between the arguments in homelessness research which has highlighted ontological security and the ideas underpinning the Crisis Model of Change, which emphasise housing stability, financial stability and employment, health and relationships (see Chapter 2). The concept of ontological security is perhaps broader, but the idea that the solution to homelessness rests with providing ontological security, which is at the core of the design of the more innovative homelessness services, has clear parallels with the logic of the Crisis Model of Change.

Engagement with Crisis Skylight could reduce the level of ontological insecurity being experienced by members of the cohort. It is important to be careful about this, as relative improvements in stability and predictability of life, such as being in a more settled accommodation, or being recently re-housed, had sometimes preceded contact with a Crisis Skylight. The removal of immediate pressures inherent in coping with the day to day reality of single homelessness³² could mean someone had begun to look for new directions and opportunities and started using Crisis Skylight. In other cases, Crisis Skylight itself was the starting point from which someone was able to begin to move towards greater ontological security.

...they've [one-to-one worker] literally changed my life around. I didn't believe in myself. Confidence and stuff. Yes, there is certain areas in my life which I'm not really confident but with them, with their help, they've really, really uplifted me... All doors were closed and just having this opportunity and being recognised by

Regaining progress: Alison

Over the last couple of years, even beyond that, actually, I would say over the last four years, I've been very fortunate in that I came out of treatment and was able to engage with Crisis in many ways. They were incredibly supportive with me...

Alison had experienced the loss of her career and eventually the loss of her home as a result of the onset of severe mental illness and a range of other factors. She was homeless, unemployed and in her mid-40s at the point she first had contact with Crisis Skylight. She was provided support with housing, her mental health and one-to-one support with progression. The Crisis Skylight also referred her to a specialist external agency. This agency, in combination with Skylight, enabled Alison to enter full time, permanent work.

It was through the way that Crisis worked with me and the staff at Crisis being patient and then giving me opportunities, if I hadn't had that, I would not have made the links that I've made after that. So it's absolutely critical, it really is, in that step from treatment back into normality, for want of a better description. Crisis played an absolutely essential part in that.

At the point of her fourth and final interview with the research team, Alison regarded her experiences of homelessness as being behind her.

I've had some fantastic support in order to get me where I am at the moment. I've been very, very lucky. I feel very fortunate.

³² Nicholls, C.M. (2009) *Agency, transgression and the causation of homelessness: A contextualised rational action analysis*. European Journal of Housing Policy, 9(1), 69-84.

Crisis, it's been brilliant.
Cohort member, interview 4.

This is the first time that I've had something...that's actually offering something and is going somewhere, for years. It's the first time in years. It's thanks to Crisis...

Cohort member, interview 4.

I think Crisis have given me an alternative... they made it possible for me to get back to where I was, not back to where I was, but back to a job that I know I could do...You need these qualifications or these vocational qualifications to say that you are capable, fit and safe to work in these environments and the people at Crisis as I've already said to you, they paid for that. Nobody else would have paid for that...[Crisis Skylight] changed the map for me, it gave me a new direction to go in, it gave me a bit of optimism...It changed everything.

Cohort member, interview 4.

The journey through Crisis Skylight

The second interim report of this study, *Crisis Skylight: Pathways to Progression* (2016)³³ looked at the experiences of members in detail and identified four trajectories among Crisis Skylight members:

- *Regaining progress*
- *Moving forward for the first time*
- *Punctuated progression*
- *Limited progress.*

These trajectories were arrived at through detailed analysis of the results of the interviews with the respondents, exploring their life stories and the ways in which they

had interacted with Crisis Skylight. While the detail of every case differed, through use of qualitative analysis software³⁴, the research team were able to look for similarities and differences between the cohort members. Categorisation was not complex, merely summarising the extent and nature of progression each cohort member had made, during which process the similarities between four groups of cohort members became evident.

The second interim report, *Pathways to Progression*, focused on the trajectories taken by the cohort members. This analysis was revisited for this final report, to ensure that the four groups had not undergone any changes or that any new pattern had emerged, but each member was found to be in the correct group.

The four groups are defined in terms of pathways through Crisis Skylight, a service with a strong emphasis on promoting economic integration. Previous research with single homeless people has shown that economic integration both supports and is, in turn, supported by wellbeing, community integration and social networks, so that progress towards one goal can reinforce progress towards others, each aspect of improvement contributing to overall levels of ontological security³⁵.

Regaining progress

Members who regained progress were people whose normal working life, or whose progress through further or higher education, had been disrupted by homelessness. Homelessness had often arisen in association with experience of mental health problems or severe mental illness. Contact with Crisis Skylight enabled members in this group to re-orientate themselves, enabling a return to paid work or the resumption of an earlier

³³ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2016) *Crisis Skylight: Pathways to Progression* London: Crisis.

³⁴ Nvivo.

³⁵ Padgett, D. (2007) op. cit.

trajectory towards paid work. The cohort members were not intended to act as a statistically representative sample³⁶. However, to give an idea of the patterns found, 41 per cent could be categorised as regaining progress as a result of contact with Crisis Skylight. Within this group, 36 per cent of the members had got one or more paid jobs.

[Crisis Skylight] helped me out a lot with my CV and my job hunting and stuff like that...very useful. A lot more useful than the Job Centre....I mean all the staff are Crisis are brilliant, they really are...I was living in a hostel, I had no job, I had no prospects. Now everything has completely changed, I've got my own place, I've got my own job. Money in my pocket, so what could be better? That's all anybody wants. Cohort member (regained progress, re-entered work) interview 4.

They were very supportive and, obviously, they put me in the right direction to get a business loan, a start-up loan, when nobody would lend me any money, obviously, because of my past and so on which enabled me to buy the vehicle for the business and tools for the business. I also went on some courses with them: a joinery course, which all helped. Cohort member (regained progress, re-entered work), interview 4.

Moving forward for the first time

Those members moving forward for the first time because of Crisis Skylight were people who had very limited – or often no – work experience and whose formal education tended to be incomplete. This group could be characterised by high support needs, but their main characteristic was systemic disadvantage – their already poor labour market position exacerbated by homelessness. Again, the cohort participants were not a sample of all Crisis Skylight service users, but it was found that 32 per cent could be described as ‘moving forward for the first time’, of whom 33 per cent had secured paid work.

Moving forward for the first time: Ronald

This Crisis, I've stuck with this for the last four and a half, four, nearly five years. They've never let me down, never disappointed me. Everything they've said, they've done it.

Ronald had a history of homelessness that stretched back years. He had physical health problems, had rarely worked and had never completed formal education. He had been in contact with other homelessness services in a city where a Crisis Skylight was based for many years. When he first made contact with Crisis Skylight he was in his 50s.

Engagement with arts-based activities, basic skills education and volunteering had helped Ronald to the point where he had secured part-time work. Not every issue that Ronald was facing had been resolved when the University of York team conducted their fourth and final interview with him in 2015. He still faced some issues around his housing. Although it was stable, it was not good quality. However, support with moving was being provided by Crisis Skylight and other agencies. His physical health still gave him some problems, limiting the work he could do, which meant part-time piece work at a low rate of pay. Yet Ronald was housed, was working, and thought he had come a long way.

I've done things with Crisis that if you'd have said to me five years ago you'll write stuff and you'll have it printed in a magazine ... I'd have laughed at you. I'd have thought you were off your bloody rocker. I've done things with Crisis that I wouldn't have dreamed of doing, karaoke. I never sang in my life. I can't sing. I've done the art...

Ronald had also begun a process of transition which ultimately meant a movement away from Crisis Skylight and homelessness:

...it's time to move on. I want to get something long-term, if I can... It's time to move on...With Crisis, it's for the homeless. Well, I'm not homeless.

³⁶ See Chapter 1, the focus of the cohort study was to explore the lived experience of people using Skylight and particularly, to look at how Skylight influenced their lives after contact with Skylight services ceased. To this end, people who had engaged for at least one term were selected as participants. Full administrative data on everyone using Skylight were also available to the research team.

Skylight has been incredibly helpful because there was a time when I came when I was very, very low, when I came to [Crisis Skylight]. I didn't have anybody. I used the counselling service, they were excellent...What Crisis does is they help people to come out of their shells, to start enjoying life, especially if they've been through a difficult and sad period. It helps them to communicate with others and do things that you've never done before, no matter how small...It helps you to enjoy yourself and enjoy life a little bit rather than just worrying about your circumstances or your situation.

Cohort member (making progress for the first time, got work) interview 4.

It was a massive impact just for someone to sit there and listen and take me in, and then to offer me the help that I needed. They didn't just sit there and listen. They offered me ways out of my situation and they tried to help... when I found Crisis, I found myself engaging. I took an art course. I took an IT course. I was engaging with people in those classes, and I found myself here every day... without that I think it would have just, oh I hate to think what would have happened to tell you the truth. I would have just gone in a downward spiral...

Cohort member (making progress for the first time, got work) interview 4.

...basically you've got to help yourself. And it was while I was there, I got talking to someone and he told me about Skylight. I came on a Monday morning and I went for an induction, and they explained what I had to do to become a member. I had to take two classes. So I enrolled in IT and art. And I was doing that for a couple of weeks, and then I got a progression worker [Crisis Skylight]. You probably know him. And well, he's helped me so much, I mean, they all have here.

Cohort member, interview 1.

Punctuated progression: Jessica

Jessica was in her late 30s when she began working with Crisis Skylight. Her interests centred on art. She demonstrated sufficient skill in the accredited arts-based courses offered by Crisis Skylight for there to be discussions about her using her skills as the basis for her own business. Jessica had dyslexia and dyscalculia which created challenges around setting up a business of her own and so she sought work elsewhere. She found a range of volunteering opportunities which she took up, but what looked initially like steady progress towards paid work had not, by the time of her fourth interview, resulted in a job.

Well, I'm working, I'm volunteering but I'm not getting paid. So many people are asking me to do work for them, which sounds great, not one of them wants to pay me. 'We love your work', thank you, it took me four months. 'Will you do me one?' No! If you're paying me, yes, and this is the problem, so I'm still stuck in that poverty trap. I'm still trying to get out of it all.

Exploring options in relation to further education and other forms of work had not yet proven successful. An additional problem Jessica faced was that her rent (social rented housing) was too high relative to what some of the possible job options open to her would pay, ie she would earn enough to disqualify her for benefit, but not enough to live on after rent. Jessica had, however, remained engaged with Crisis Skylight and was still actively seeking work and also a means to pursue her preferred career.

In terms of progression...I haven't stopped, I'm still on the ladder and I'm not going to get off it.

Punctuated progression

A smaller proportion of participants in the cohort study could be described as experiencing punctuated progression. Here, progress was being made as a consequence of contact with Crisis Skylight, but was interrupted and underwent at least a partial reverse. Overall, 10 per cent of cohort members were within this group, none had sustained paid work over the course of 2013-2015.

Punctuated progression could be a result of the onset, or re-emergence, of physical or mental health problems that were beyond an individual's control.

I'm not fit, I'm not well and things are not going fine... there was support there, they [Crisis Skylight] kept in touch, they offered to come a couple of times to visit me, but walking around with a walking stick... Cohort member (punctuated progression) interview 4.

...having to go into hospital and having the rather upsetting news about my health has kind of put things into perspective. at the time it was like...you're walking out the front door somebody hits you between the eyes with a baseball bat, but afterwards I just thought, well, you know. It happens. So I've just been getting on with things. Cohort member (punctuated progression) interview 4.

Circumstances could also change. For some Crisis Skylight members, one temporary job was lost and then another secured, so their progression was not actually interrupted, ie they were not in the punctuated progression group because the process of progression continued. To be within this group meant a loss of progress, where the achievements of having secured work, entered into further education, externally provided training or volunteering being reversed. This was characterised by a period of at least several months, in which no progress was being made.

It is important to note that punctuated progression was most accurately characterised as Crisis Skylight members encountering obstacles in their path. These single homeless people had engaged and continued to engage with Crisis Skylight because they were seeking paid work.

Women could experience punctuated progression due to domestic violence. This was not widespread in the cohort, but there were women whose experience of violence from a partner or ex-partner had disrupted their lives and progression towards paid work.

Members experiencing punctuated progression include people who had reached a point where they had completed all the steps to work, which might include basic skills education, training, volunteering and getting help with job-searching, but had not yet been able to find work.

Yes, it's easier to find work when you're in work I think, rather than to say I'm out of work because then you go to interviews and say, 'Yes, I've got a job but I'd much rather be doing this.' Cohort member (punctuated progression) interview 4.

Limited progress

Finally, 17 per cent of the cohort members had experienced limited progress. This was broadly associated with low rates of contact with Crisis Skylight services. In a small number of cases, members had engaged at a fairly low level – particularly in the more informal arts-based activities – for a sustained period, but had not moved closer to work. It is important to note that this group of members was not necessarily characterised by a total absence of progression, but they had sometimes plateaued after advancing a little distance.

Well, coming here in the first place was just for an understanding about what homeless was, for me. Then to be able to take part in drama activities and singing

Limited progress: Luke

Luke had been in contact with Crisis Skylight for a couple of years when he was first interviewed by the research team in 2013. Sustained experience of severe mental illness and a lack of access to formal and informal support had resulted in Luke spending a considerable amount of time living in homeless hostels. Contact with Crisis Skylight produced some very positive results over the course of 2013-2015. Luke was stably housed and in treatment for his mental health problems at the point of his second interview. He continued to make progress and did some volunteering with Crisis, bringing to a point where he reported considerable progress.

My biggest achievement was with Crisis when I did the voluntary. Looking back at my situation, on my life [before] that time...I told myself, you know, begin on these antidepressants and antipsychotics for the rest of my life, so I thought there's no life here. I was isolated at that time. I used to lock myself in a room in the dark and just sit in the corner.

However, Luke's upward trajectory had been interrupted by a sustained deterioration in his mental health.

Progress in respect of volunteering faltered and at the point of his fourth interview in 2015, Skylight was helping him maintain treatment and his housing, but progression towards paid work had –effectively – ceased.

[The future]...it's too difficult at the moment...you know. there's still things in life out there...[But] I don't know.

activities...this is something I wanted to do. So I was more positively making new friends that I would never have met before. I've learned some skills that increased my confidence.

Cohort member (limited progression) interview 4.

...that's where I am at the moment. I mean, just like I said, I've just come from college. I started a college course in the last year... for me the frustration is that, you know, that I've just come through a three month period of not being able to do anything, not being able to, because I got ill and it's really hard to sort of pull myself up
Cohort member (limited progression) interview 3³⁷.

The reasons for sustained engagement without progression to the point of further education, externally provided training, volunteering or paid work were varied. They were quite often linked to poor mental and physical health, particularly conditions that could only be mitigated by treatment, or which were progressive.

Getting work

Overall, 25 per cent of the cohort study participants secured one, or more³⁸, jobs during the period of their contact with the research team. A pattern in experience was evident from the in-depth interviews.

- Those who were regaining progress were the most likely to have secured and sustained work (36%). Those who were not working had engaged in education, further/higher education or training (including externally provided courses) or were seeking work. They were the most likely to have disengaged from Crisis Skylight over the course of the research.

³⁷ This situation was ongoing at the fourth and final interview.

³⁸ More than one part-time job and/or more than one temporary job.

- People moving forward for the first time were also more likely to have secured and sustained work (33%). Those who were not working were in education or training, or were advancing through arts-based activities towards more formal activities.
- The small group experiencing punctuated progress had engaged with education and training at high rates, and some had secured work. However, this progress had been disrupted, often by illness, sometimes by loss of temporary employment and sometimes because engagement in training, education, volunteering and job searching had yet to result in paid work.
- Only a minority of those members characterised by limited progress had sustained contact with arts-based activities provided by Crisis Skylight. Most had limited engagement, sometimes by choice, sometimes as a result of their circumstances. None had secured work when last in contact with the research team.

Rates of contact with one-to-one support with work and learning, progression and employment³⁹ were generally quite high among the cohort. While the cohort was not statistically representative, a broad pattern was evident.

- Cohort members who had secured employment had very high rates of contact with one-to-one support, 92 per cent reporting they had used these services (compared to an overall average of 75 per cent across all members).
- Cohort members who had not progressed to paid work had a lower rate of contact (60%) with one-to-one support, within a broad pattern for very long or sustaining contact or at a low level.

Crisis Skylight members who had secured paid work, or gone on to externally provided further/higher education and training and entered volunteering, tended to praise the quality of the Crisis Skylight services. One-to-one support, internally provided education and training along with support with accessing externally provided education and training, were generally viewed very positively.

I wouldn't actually ask anybody for any more but the support [one-to-one support] they've given me was tremendous and that support is brilliant support.
Cohort member, interview 4.

Yes, I see my coach, yes. Often, very often; and sending email as well, which is very good. I think it's been very helpful.
Cohort member, interview 4.

It was always [Crisis Skylight staff member] that I had contact with. She helped me a lot with job applications. When I was going for the [name of job] job, I phoned [staff member] for a bit of advice. I've always just phoned her now and again just to look at applications. She actually met me for a coffee and just did a mock interview. She looked for similar jobs and she said, 'This is the sort of stuff you might get asked.' We just spoke about it and she actually did that little mock interview and it went quite well. So she was involved in my getting the job...
Cohort member, interview 4.

Three further patterns were evident within the cohort study.

- Light positive contact was evident among some of the group who regained progress and then secured work. In these cases, contact with Crisis Skylight was not sustained, or intensive. Broadly speaking,

light positive contact was associated with people who had recently been in work, did not have high support needs and had limited experience of homelessness. This is not to say that the support provided by a Crisis Skylight had not made a difference – indeed people within this group tended to view Skylight positively. But there were fewer barriers between employment and people in this group and other Crisis Skylight members. In some cases, these members may have eventually been able to secure work on their own, or by using mainstream services. If someone in this group secured temporary work, they appeared more likely to be able to secure their next job without assistance from Crisis Skylight.

- Sustained positive contact involved what could be a prolonged process of progression. In these cases, a Crisis Skylight worked with someone who faced multiple barriers to employment, education and training and/or who had no or limited work experience and had not completed formal education. This contact could be for several months, or sometimes years, but helped members in this group towards entering volunteering, further/higher education, training and also paid work. Members of this group were all characterised by moving forward for the first time.
- A requirement for ongoing support was evident among some cohort members. This could be as simple as a need for additional support when a temporary contract came to an end and they needed some help finding a new job. However, Crisis Skylight members could experience deteriorations in health or other problems.

Evidence from the fieldwork, including interviews with staff, the focus groups with Crisis Skylight members and the results of the cohort study, showed different attitudes towards labour markets. In London and

Oxford, cohort members generally thought jobs were available, but the affordability of housing was a concern, particularly as work was often part-time, on a zero-hours contract or only temporary. In Newcastle and Merseyside, there was less optimism among cohort members that work was readily available, but without the same level of concern about whether, once working, housing could be afforded.

Volunteering

53 of the members who were cohort study participants (33%) had volunteered for Crisis Skylight, acting as member representatives and/or helping with activities. In a few instances, volunteering had led to work within a Crisis Skylight, with members moving from a volunteer classroom assistant to a paid tutor.

40 members (25%) had taken up external opportunities for volunteering. External volunteering had typically been arranged with support from a volunteer coordinator or one-to-one support from another staff member. Some members had also sought and secured volunteer activity on their own. 18 members had volunteered both for a Crisis Skylight and externally during the course of the research.

Volunteering, particularly when external to Crisis Skylight, was seen by most cohort members as a pathway towards employment. Keeping to a timetable, proving oneself reliable, showing what one was capable of and building up a list of referees were all seen as advantages stemming from volunteering. When volunteering led directly, albeit not always very rapidly, to paid work, members of the cohort study could see paid work as a kind of dividend for investing their time and effort as a volunteer. In other cases, volunteering was undertaken for altruistic reasons, this was particularly the case for some of the members who volunteered for Crisis Skylight, expressing a wish to 'give something back'.

I started volunteering. I'd never got an interview at the university before but as soon as I started volunteering in the library, interviews started rolling in.

Cohort member, interview 4.

I've just finished volunteering in the office because I did the members' forum for just over a year. So that's come to an end now. I'm looking to go on to external volunteering.

Cohort member, interview 4.

That's another reason I want to do the volunteering. I want to give something back...it's just something I want to get involved in.

Cohort member, interview 4.

Although volunteering outside Crisis Skylight was seen as contributing to employment chances, there was no clear pattern associating such volunteering with finding paid work among the cohort members.

Arts, education and training

To give an idea of how engaged the cohort members were with the arts-based activities, education and training offered by Crisis Skylight, 37 per cent had gained one or more certificates/examination passes and 35 per cent had gained work-related training qualifications⁴⁰.

The results of the cohort study showed that members often linked one-to-one support with success in completing basic skills education and accredited arts-based courses and the training Crisis Skylight provided in-house. One-to-one support tended to be identified as a catalyst to education.

...they said, 'Do you want to try volunteering in one of the workshops'. I said, 'Yes, why not?' [staff member] was the progression coach at the time, and

she said, 'Well, I'm after a volunteer in my art class downstairs, sculptures, do you want to come in with me for a while and see how we do it?' And I've been [volunteering] there for three years now.

Cohort member, interview 4.

We meet once a week to find out how I'm doing...She's set goals and that's been really good. Then, education-wise I've been speaking to [Crisis Skylight staff worker] about what I can do. She's helping me towards getting into college, hopefully, in January.

Cohort member, interview 4.

While a few members of the cohort were critical of the education and training offered by Crisis Skylight, the majority were very positive about their experiences of the courses on offer. Throughout the three years of the research, as recorded in a series of previous reports (see Appendix 1), the quality of the education, training and accredited arts-based activities offered by Crisis Skylight was consistently praised by cohort study members.

I did the jewellery, how to make the jewellery, many classes. I did art, sculpture. I worked with the materials, that was very interesting. Yoga, the course was free and is very, very good. That helped me. Some other classes, oriental dance; because I used to dance oriental. What else? Also Pilates. I did a bit of everything.

Cohort member, interview 4.

Well, because when I come to Skylight about two years ago I was really, really down. I didn't know people like Skylight exist so they could help me and I come to them...the courses and then my confidence, being able to meet with people, being on their programmes. They're fantastic.

Cohort member, interview 4.

⁴⁰ The cohort were not a sample of Crisis Skylight users and therefore should not be seen as necessarily representative of Crisis Skylight members as whole, meaning that these percentages describe the cohort, not everyone using Crisis Skylight.

Criticism, when it arose, tended to be focused on the level of courses available. Much of what Crisis Skylight offered was, entirely intentionally, designed to provide basic skills or a grounding in a subject, or arts-based activity. If someone was educated, basic skills offered little, although more educated individuals tended to be offered support with accessing further and higher education, external training or went directly to receiving help with job-seeking, not offered classes below their own level.

The duration of classes, for example when someone was working on an arts project, was sometimes criticised, because only a few hours a week were available to work on something. These issues, which were not common, have been discussed in the earlier reports from this research (see Appendix 1).

Access to further education and training

One third of cohort members had progressed to further or higher education, and/or externally provided accredited training at last contact with the research team⁴¹. In most cases, access to externally provided education and training had been facilitated by one-to-one support from Crisis Skylight.

They started me off very, very good because by then, by the time I joined Crisis I was so depressed. I was so down. I was so low, but then they diverted me with different ways of how I can be myself, or be happy or talk to people. I never used to talk to people, like I'd be quiet, and they were concerned about that. I think they gave me a good push up and confidence... if I didn't get no help from Crisis I don't know what kind of shape I would have been, because they're the ones that led me into every [externally provided] course.
Cohort member, interview 4.

They gave me confidence because when I started that place, I didn't have no confidence at all. They introduced me to [College] as well and then I grew from there. Because when I did go to [College] I was very emotional. Skylight they made me as I am today really. If I didn't get introduced to them I don't know if I would be like as I am today, really, yes.
Cohort member, interview 4.

Criticism of the support given to access further and higher education or training was not common. However, a few members did report that they wanted more ongoing support from Crisis Skylight.

So there is some with my personal coach, but beyond that it's very limited, an awareness of that I still need ongoing support basically. It's expected that, well you know, you're at university they can support you, which obviously they can't, and they don't really have experience with homelessness.
Cohort member, interview 4.

While those engaging in further and higher education were less numerous than those who had secured paid work, a striking finding was the diversity of directions that these cohort members had taken. A few members had either entered higher education or restarted degree courses that had been interrupted. Other directions taken by cohort members included plumbing, stonemasonry, catering, hairdressing, acting, becoming a musician and entering the fashion industry.

Crisis Skylight had also provided support to cohort members through the system of Changing Lives grants which could be used to fund external training, further education, or to buy equipment and supplies for becoming self-employed⁴². 24 (15%) of the

41 30 members had accessed further education, 32 externally provided training and five had entered or re-entered higher education. There was only a limited cross-over between these groups, only four members were involved in one or more externally provided forms of education and training.

42 See Chapter 2.

cohort members reported receiving this form of financial support and for most, it had enabled access to further education and training.

Crisis footed the bill for it. It was quite an expensive one as well, it was about £780 plus VAT I think, it was really expensive and they foot the bill, and that's been the thing that's made the biggest difference... you need to have it for health and safety reasons to work in that industry. They got it for me and that's made the biggest difference.

Cohort member, interview 4.

Health and social relationships

Mental health

Previous research showed improvements in health and wellbeing were being delivered by the mental health coordinators based in Crisis Skylights⁴³. Alongside providing emotional support, the mental health coordinators facilitated access to the NHS, serving as advocates for members seeking a diagnosis, treatment and support. Overall, 21 people in the cohort (13%) reported receiving support from a mental health coordinator, only one of whom reported anything negative about using the service from their perspective.

Well, it's brought my self-confidence back up. Really Crisis [Skylight] itself has brought my life back together in a sense. Where I know I keep on hitting these brick walls and things like that, I'm keeping Crisis around us at the moment even though I'm branching out. Even my doctor says, 'Don't break away from there completely. Branch out bit by bit.' Eventually I might not need Crisis because I'm branching out all over now. It's helped me to do that.

Cohort member, interview 4.

...helped me to build up my confidence. She [Crisis Skylight staff member] helped me to get accommodation. I start living completely – my world changed completely and [staff member]...helped me with the Job Seeker Allowance because I struggled, the accommodation and the situation...helped me to get it.

Cohort member, interview 4.

So normally if a person goes into an art class, he's not performing or he's lacking in confidence because what it is, to admit something, it's a big ask, for a male or a female. When you're in that kind of a condition, for somebody to admit it, it takes a lot of a battle for the person to admit that I'm ill, I've got some issues... Crisis can work along with it, to speak with the local NHS or if he's having problems at home, you know, some domestic violence or anything. So Crisis can deal with it.

Cohort member, interview 4.

Use of other supports around health and wellbeing was not very widespread among the cohort members. A few attended classes on healthy eating, yoga sessions and the occasional football match put on by a Crisis Skylight, and these services tended to be viewed positively.

Self-confidence and social relationships

There was strong evidence, collected throughout the course of the three years of the research that Crisis Skylight could enhance self-confidence and self-esteem, both of which are positively associated with better mental and physical health⁴⁴. The ways in which Crisis Skylight could achieve this can be summarised as follows.

- A sense of being listened to and respected, particularly with respect to Crisis Skylight operating on the basis of trying to enable members to pursue the

⁴³ Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) *A Review of Crisis Skylight's Mental Health Services* London: Crisis.

⁴⁴ Cohen, S. and Wills, T.A. (1985) *Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis*. *Psychological bulletin*, 98(2).

career of their choice, rather than being forced into any work that was available.

- A sense of achievement in completing courses and earning exams and certificates.
- A sense of achievement from participating in arts-based activities.
- The emphasis of Crisis Skylight on positive change being possible, so that individuals did not feel they were being responded to as a set of support needs or problems to be addressed, but as someone who had capacity to achieve things.

Interviewer: *What has it meant to you, your involvement with Skylight? Has it stopped you being bored or built your confidence?*

Crisis Skylight member: *Well, both really. I went through a period when I was, well, it was depression really but I was just sort of sitting and moping. I find that actually having something to do, a reason to get out of bed in the morning basically. Just get up, come down to Crisis or here because I know that I'm going to be doing something and if I'm helping somebody as a volunteer, great, if I'm not, I'm just joining in. It just keeps me occupied, so I don't get a chance to worry.*
Cohort member, interview 4.

When I first did Skylight I attended a music class. To be fair, at that time, I was very low on confidence. I wasn't interested in anything to be fair, at all. From there I went on to volunteer with them, as I said, I went on to chair their members' meeting forum. As I say, I went to IT, I went to communication. I've been involved in drama. It's made a massive difference to me.
Cohort member, interview 4.

These feelings were not universal. A few cohort members over the years covered by the research became disillusioned with Crisis

Skylight, particularly in situations where initial achievements, which bolstered self-worth, did not result in further positive changes.

During 2013-2015, Crisis Skylight delivered a range of education, arts-based activities and training, alongside facilitating job seeking, enabling access to external education and training and volunteering opportunities. The primary purpose of Crisis Skylight was on focused activity and support, it was not designed to provide an environment for socialisation, indeed the building-based services at London, Newcastle and Oxford discouraged members from being on-site between classes. Yet the arts-based activities and classes did create opportunities to socialise and to form relationships. The ways in which Crisis Skylight could help promote self-confidence and self-esteem, encouraging some members to socialise and interact with each other, were also valued by members in the cohort study.

I've enjoyed it immensely. I've made a few friends here as well.
Cohort member, 4th interview.

I mean if I was stuck in the house 24 hours a day, I would be going up the wall... Crisis Skylight provides me with...meeting people. Having friends...Yes, well coming here, having good friends.
Cohort member, interview 4.

Of course, members did not always get along. Some could be put off attending classes if there was someone they took a dislike to, or who took a dislike to them, but this was unusual among the cohort members.

Housing

In Oxford and London, members of the cohort study reported that finding and sustaining housing was challenging. Rents were high in the private rented sector and security of tenure was low. Social housing was, for the most part, seen as effectively inaccessible. When work was secured, particularly if temporary, part-time or offering inconsistent hours (zero

hours contracts), there were concerns around whether housing would be affordable.

It was helpful to get the job. Obviously money has improved but times like this it's not so good especially when you're stuck in limbo and I'm stressed out about my rent and stuff. My rent is high to start with. It's £103.50 a week.
Cohort member, interview 4.

Elsewhere, access to housing was less challenging, as housing markets were less pressured and there was at least limited access to social housing. This did not always mean that finding or keeping suitable housing was unproblematic, but problems were not reported to the same extent as in Oxford or London.

Outside London and Oxford, only a small number of cohort members had received housing-related support from a Crisis Skylight, either in terms of enabling them to access housing, or to sustain current housing that was at risk. One reason for this was that many members were in contact with other services that were designed, at least in part, to provide them with a route to housing. The three outreach-based services, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Merseyside, all delivered their services to other homelessness services, where assistance with finding housing was a core function. In Newcastle, relatively low pressures on housing supply meant that most members did not report housing issues.

Within London and Oxford, mixed results were reported by cohort members who had sought help with housing. Some members viewed ongoing housing problems as arising from the context in which they were seeking housing, rather than seeing their situation as a failure of Crisis Skylight services. Others were more frustrated that progress had not been made. Negative experiences, with both private and social landlords, were reported by some members in the cohort study.

I know I did use them [Crisis Skylight] when I'm buying the house... it was through one of the [staff who said] "if you want to look at it on a long-term, why don't you look at buying rather than renting?"
Cohort member, interview 4.

I've got my progression coach, she always makes sure that everything's okay for me. Then they help(ed) me to get a house, somewhere temporary as well...
Cohort member, interview 4.

No, the housing, there have been a lot of problems. We had no hot water for six months, well I had no hot water for six months... There have been loads of issues there. I was really, really stressed because I was challenging [organisation], the housing association, and it's like banging your head off a brick wall, because they just don't listen.
Cohort member, interview 4.

Using other services

Contact with other homelessness services was almost universal. There was hardly anyone in the cohort using the six Crisis Skylights who had not had contact with at least one other service. Almost everyone who had made use of the services and courses offered by the three outreach-based services had originally got in contact with Crisis Skylight via another homelessness service and, in many instances, their courses and support were delivered in another homelessness service. For the building-based services too, referrals and information about Crisis Skylight had also come from other homelessness services.

For the outreach-based Crisis Skylights, relationships with other homelessness services were important, since this provided the spaces and opportunities for engagement with single homeless people on which the Crisis Skylights in Birmingham, Edinburgh and Merseyside

relied. Over the course of this research, Merseyside and Birmingham moved towards a more hybrid model, providing some classrooms and spaces for delivering support themselves, but cooperation with other homelessness services remained fundamental to their operation.

Sometimes progression could not be wholly or largely attributed to Crisis Skylight. For example, if someone said another service had been instrumental in getting them into work and that Crisis Skylight had played little or no role, this was not a job that Crisis Skylight had helped someone secure. Equally if someone was housed, or had accessed treatment because of another service, neither of these elements of progression could be attributed to Crisis Skylight.

Crisis Skylight also worked in concert with other services. Regarding further and higher education and more elaborate training courses, it supported some members to access externally provided courses. Through Changing Lives grants it also paid for some externally provided courses. Progression, when it included moving on to this sort of education or training, relied on these other services, such as colleges of further education and on occasion universities, to help complete the process.

However, while contact with other services was extensive, Crisis Skylight was very often highlighted as delivering a higher degree and a better quality of support than other homelessness services. Some other homelessness services were seen as being under pressure, limited in what they could offer, albeit that they were seen as well intentioned or as offering quite restricted support. Cohort members were more likely to be directly critical of other services, such as Jobcentre Plus and sometimes the NHS, than was the case for other homelessness services. Crisis Skylight was often seen as more flexible, more understanding and better resourced than other services.

Probably because the first time in my life I've come to a place [Crisis Skylight] and people treat me like a human being... It doesn't feel that I'm any sort of less a human being whereas everywhere I've been in my life, institutions for most of it, I've just been treat like a piece of shit.
Cohort member, interview 1.

This is a completely different set up to what the Jobcentre or anything like that; there's no comparison actually. I'm actually leaps and bounds and miles ahead of where I would've been if I had just relied on the Jobcentre's services.
Cohort member, interview 1.

You can't compare because Crisis is different from this [other homeless service]. It's far better, because they don't do any courses. It's actually good to socialise, but you have to think about...try to do something for the future as well, you know. So they don't do anything like that.
Cohort member, interview 1.

I still use Skylight and it's really important to me...[other service] it's not very good. It's there to help people with a huge range of difficulties and really just be a bridge for people when they come out of hospital and they're not really capable of doing anything except drinking tea and complaining.
Cohort member, interview 2.

A key finding, when cohort members were talking about their relationships with Crisis Skylight and how these compared to other services, was the extent to which Crisis Skylight was highlighted as being their predominant source of support, or as the most important of the services which they had used. This research has produced a large number of reports, all of which have presented the evidence of the degree to which Crisis Skylight services are viewed very positively by their members (see Appendix 1).

Summarising the opinions of the cohort members is possible and 76 per cent reported a very positive view of Crisis Skylight at their last interview. A smaller number were positive in overall terms, but also directed some criticisms at Crisis Skylight (12%), some became less positive over time (9%) and a few were critical (3%). The views of those who were less positive about Crisis Skylight are discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

Moving on

For most of the cohort members, moving on from Crisis Skylight was a positive experience, a part of the process of progression. Progression of this sort did not always mean an end to contact between members of the cohort and a Crisis Skylight. Some opted to maintain a role as volunteer, while others had returned, seeking more support, when something had gone wrong or because they needed help.

A minority of the cohort members reported that disengagement with Crisis Skylight was not something they welcomed, but had occurred following a decision that they had been using services for some time, occasionally years, and were not going to progress beyond the point they had reached. Another small group did not regard their experience with Crisis Skylight positively, and had opted to stop using the service because the service had ultimately not suited them, or they had not been happy with one or more aspects of the support or activities on offer.

Progression

For those cohort members who had entered full-time work, finding the time to continue working with Crisis Skylight was often difficult. For some of these cohort members, regular connection with Crisis Skylight did not necessarily come to a formal end, but they stopped attending classes and stopped using the support and over time, lost all connection with Crisis Skylight. Some cohort

members reported the view that, although often grateful to Crisis Skylight, they wanted to put it, and everything that reminded them of homelessness, behind them.

In my experience, I think that some people want to forget the situation that they were in, so they want to leave that in their past so to speak. They don't want to remember being homeless, and even though Skylight did help them they don't want to remember...

Cohort member, interview 4.

A small number who were working maintained a connection, through volunteering, sometimes at Crisis at Christmas, occasionally within the Crisis Skylight itself. There was a sense, although it was not really possible to demonstrate clearly because the numbers were small, that those whose progression had taken some time and who had made most extensive use of Crisis Skylight, were the most likely to want to volunteer or offer support in other ways.

Those whose progression was punctuated, for example they got a short-term job, but then needed help to get another one, or who ran into problems due to declining health, did quite often come back to Crisis Skylight. This sense that the Crisis Skylight would be there if required again, was viewed positively by those members who had come back for additional support.

...the idea of Crisis is that you move on, I mean, I think. I know some people do stay around for a long time, and that's fine, but the idea with the progression team is that you're actually going somewhere. And for your own sake, you don't want to become a piece of furniture.

Cohort member, interview 3.

I haven't been doing anything involved with them [Crisis Skylight] but I'm still in contact with [Crisis Skylight staff member] because she was the person that I was

with from [being homeless] until now. So yeah, I'm still in contact with her and giving her updates and she's given me information about certain stuff as well. So I'm not completely away but I'm kind of independent...yeah.
Cohort member, interview 2.

I'm not looking at coming to Skylight much more, but looking at progressing on. You don't come as much...It's just a progression...I'm not saying that you don't need the support. You've moved on from the support. The progression, you work to progression, you're working towards independence.
Cohort member, interview 4.

Bringing contact to an end

Parting from Crisis Skylight was not always a process of mutual agreement, or the result of increasing independence and external responsibilities, such as paid work or full-time externally provided training or further education. While most of the cohort members who had moved on viewed Crisis Skylight positively, indeed often very positively, a few had felt that their support had come to an end rather abruptly.

I haven't been using Skylight services...the sense I've got is that because they knew I was going to university, there wasn't really, I don't know what's the right word, I don't want to make it sound too harsh, but I've kind of been dropped and like moved on.
Cohort member, interview 4.

There were a small proportion of the cohort members who, as described above, only made limited progress. The building-based services offered a safe, familiar environment with activities that some members wanted to engage with on a long-term basis. It is important to note that when this happened, which was not frequently, it was not simply a question of mindset. Some of the cohort members who engaged in this way tended to have a limiting illness or recurrent mental health problems; they could manage the

lower level activities offered by Crisis Skylight, but not necessarily much more than that. When these relationships were brought to an end by Crisis Skylight, it could be difficult for the member concerned, who had lost what for them was something they valued. They did not always see Crisis Skylight as a service with a specific focus on progression, but as a source of activities.

Well, there's nothing I can do here anyway. It's only – used to really enjoy the woodwork. Because I was doing woodwork I was doing art, where I was finishing it off, all the back ends and everything...but now, because I've – you're only meant to have one term in woodwork because it's a popular subject, and I ended up doing nearly a year. I was told I can't go back in now...there's nothing else I want to do. I've tried computers and I can't get on with them. I've done my English and maths, and that's it. I'm not interested in drama or bikes because I can't ride a bike so it's pointless me fixing one. So it's all pretty pointless to me.
Cohort member, interview 3.

Dropping out

Through the work with the cohort it was possible to explore the different aspects of drop out among Crisis Skylight members. The loss of members prior to a process of progression being complete, or just after one or two contacts, was an issue for all six of the Crisis Skylights. The cohort interviews and also the focus groups conducted with other members of Crisis Skylight, who were not part of the cohort, all suggested the same four issues could be important in explaining why members were quite frequently lost before progression took place:

- A change in circumstances that took them physically away from Crisis Skylight services. Among the cohort members, this was thought to be quite a widespread issue. For the building based services, at London,

Oxford and Newcastle, being re-housed or moving to another part of town to access a different homelessness service could take someone out of affordable or practical reach of a Crisis Skylight. For the outreach-based services, moving out of and away from homelessness services where courses were provided could have the same effect. Connections with Crisis Skylight, among the cohort members, had sometimes stopped because someone was re-housed, or left a specific service and it became problematic to maintain contact.

...because I live down there now, whereas when I was just living round the corner I could come here. Now I'm living miles away I can't afford £4 a week to come here, do you know what I mean? That's just for one day.

Cohort member (limited progression), interview 3⁴⁵.

- The focus of Crisis Skylight was also thought by members to be a disincentive for some homeless people. The range of classes and support on offer and the emphasis on progression was not what some homeless people, according to some of the members interviewed for this research, wanted from a service. Sometimes, this seemed to centre on a wish only for assistance with housing, or related issues such as welfare rights (help with benefits and sanctions), rather than necessarily wanting help with education, training or to access arts-based activities.
- Someone might have unmet support needs that were too acute to allow engagement with Crisis Skylight, or they did not engage for long enough for one-to-one support to help address those needs.
- There was also some evidence that some people simply did not like Crisis Skylight,

in terms of the environment within the buildings, the way staff or tutors behaved, or sometimes the behaviour of other service users.

Directly talking to people who had engaged with Crisis Skylight for only a very brief period, or simply come along to one class or had one meeting with a worker and then not come back, was not feasible within the resources available for this research. However, it was possible to talk to cohort members and members about why this happened and what the reasons were for it. Sometimes, as noted, members thought the nature of services on offer were not what all single homeless people wanted. Some cohort members also reported that some single homeless people might have mental health or other support needs that were too acute for them to manage engaging with Crisis Skylight. While Crisis Skylight could, through services like the mental health coordinators, potentially help address some of these needs, engagement might not be long enough for this to happen.

...but this isn't like a day centre as such. It is an activity centre, isn't it? So, you can't really come here to have a seat and a coffee, they like to be seeing you doing things. No, it wasn't a problem for me but, yes, I can imagine some people would be put off by that, yes.

Cohort member, 4th interview.

I do occasionally hear people say, 'Oh, I can't put up with so and so, or this.' I've never really understood why. Let's be honest, a lot of the people do have slightly deeper mental health issues, so fair enough but speaking personally, I just seem to fit in.

Cohort member, interview 4.

⁴⁵ Again this situation was ongoing at the fourth and final interview.

A few cohort members who had ceased to engage with Crisis Skylight after a relatively short period (one term) did stay in touch with the research team. Among this small number of respondents, the reasons for disconnecting with Crisis Skylight varied, but a few reported that what Crisis Skylight offered was not what they thought they needed.

It wasn't I didn't want it, if I don't need their services I won't use them. But if there comes a time in the future where I do need their services then yes, I will use them.
Cohort member, interview 4.

In a few cases, someone in the cohort reported experiencing problems with Crisis Skylight services, which had led them to disengage.

I've done work for a decade or so and also I've studied as well. I'm sure there are a few people who've done BAs and MAs and they fall through the net as well, like me, but I sometimes feel that I'm not understood... I'm not saying they're patronising but it's just it feels...well, we've got a wide spectrum of people who don't have skills and there are people who do have skills and how can we help or push them in certain things, push them in different ways, they have different needs...
Cohort member (limited progression)
interview 4.

Well this is it, because each progression coach, I think, can only have up to ten clients per progression worker and, like I said, I think there's a breakdown of communication between the progression workers or the other members of staff. I did try to request a new progression worker before, but my progression worker said there's none available.
Cohort member (limited progression)
interview 4.



4 Service wide outcomes

Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview and commentary on the overall performance of the six Crisis Skylights by drawing on anonymised management information data provided by Crisis.

Housing

Improvements in housing situation were reported by 8 per cent of the Crisis Skylight members during the course of 2013-2015. Sixteen per cent of people sleeping rough at first contact reported improvements in their housing situation, as did 17 per cent of those in night shelters. Other members were not significantly more or less likely to report improvements in their housing situation. Services focused on housing did increase during the period covered by the research, but data were not available on when exactly improvements to housing had occurred, other than within the 2013-2015 period.

Employment

Administrative data, on all members of the six Crisis Skylights during 2013-2015, showed that Crisis Skylight had helped 1,452 members to secure paid work. The actual number of jobs secured was greater, reflecting the often temporary and part-time nature of employment. Previous attempts at securing access to paid work for single homeless people have often met with less success.

The results of the cohort study suggested that more sustained contact with Crisis Skylight, particularly if it involved use of one-to-one support linked to progression, education or employment, could result in higher rates of employment. It was possible to explore duration of contact with Crisis Skylight in relation to employment (Figure 4.1)

and look at patterns of engagement with one-to-one support.

Average (mean) and median duration of contact, measured between the first contact and the last recorded contact (up until 31 December 2015), showed that those members who had secured paid work tended to have been using Crisis Skylight longer. This was in line with the findings from the cohort study.

Table 4.3 shows the contact that members who had secured paid work had with one-to-one support. It was unusual for members who had secured work to have had no contact with one-to-one support (10%, compared to 56% of all members). Cross tabulation did however indicate a possibly strong relationship, with 62% of all those who secured paid work receiving five or more sessions of one-to-one support from Crisis Skylight⁴⁷ (Table 4.3). Again, this finding was in line with the results of the cohort study.

There were some differences between the rates at which Crisis Skylight members had secured work over the course of 2013-2015. Rates were higher overall in London and Oxford, which may be due to relatively more jobs being available in those areas during this period. The perception of cohort members in Oxford and London (Chapter 2) was that work was available in these areas, whereas those in Merseyside and Newcastle were more likely to view their employment options as limited. Many variables may potentially influence whether or not someone is able to secure work in a particular area, including small variations in labour market characteristics.

46 Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) *Crisis Skylight: An Evaluation (Year One Interim Report)* London: Crisis.

47 Sig at p<0.001.

Figure 4.2 shows the rates at which the Crisis Skylights reported achieving employment for their members over the course of the evaluation. These data may indicate, as the cohort study and earlier pieces of work in this research have suggested (see Appendix 1), that contextual factors may have had an impact on Crisis Skylight outcomes. Unemployment rates have been consistently lower in London and the South East than in the areas where four of the Crisis Skylights operated.⁴⁸

More sustained contact with Crisis Skylight services appeared to be associated with the likelihood of securing paid work. Members who joined in 2015 had secured work at a lower rate (7%) than those joining in 2013

(10%) and 2014 (11%). This pattern was evident across all the Crisis Skylights, with paid work being secured at slightly lower rates for members joining in 2015 than for other members. This may have reflected shifts in labour market conditions, but may also have been the result of it taking time to help prepare members for paid work and with job-seeking.

Long-term unemployment is usually associated with multiple barriers to work, suggesting that the Crisis Skylight may have been making a positive difference to some longer-term members' prospects of securing work. The results of the cohort study showed that the process of moving into paid work could take a while, particularly for members moving forward for the first time.

Table 4.1 Reported improvements in housing by Crisis Skylight 2013-2015

Crisis Skylight							
	Birmingham	Edinburgh	London	Merseyside	Newcastle	Oxford	All
Number of members reporting improvement in housing situation	80	50	404	77	102	112	825
As percentage of all members	5%	8%	11%	4%	9%	11%	8%

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015. Percentages are rounded.

Table 4.2 Reported gains of employment by Crisis Skylight 2013-2015

Crisis Skylight							
	Birmingham	Edinburgh	London	Merseyside	Newcastle	Oxford	All
Number of members reporting gaining one or more jobs*	181	81	687	148	149	206	1,452
As percentage of all members	9%	8%	14%	6%	6%	13%	10%

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015

*some work was part time or temporary, meaning members could and did sometimes secure multiple jobs while with Crisis. Percentages are rounded.

Table 4.3 Securing work and one-to-one support sessions 2013-2015

One-to-one support	Did not secure work	Gained one or more jobs*	All Crisis Skylight members
None	59%	10%	54%
1 to 4 sessions	29%	28%	29%
5 or more sessions	12%	62%	17%
All	100%	100%	100%

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015

* Some work was part time or temporary, meaning members could and did sometimes secure multiple jobs while with Crisis. Percentages are rounded.

Volunteering

Overall 7 per cent of Crisis Skylight members became involved in internal or external volunteering over the period 2013-2015. Rates varied between the Crisis Skylights (Figure 4.3), with the highest levels recorded in Birmingham, London and Oxford.

Volunteering was more likely to occur among members who had been in contact with a Crisis Skylight for some time⁴⁹. For some members, volunteering, both within Crisis Skylight and externally, had proven to be a pathway to employment. For others, as illustrated by the cohort study, it was a way in which they could fill their time in a way they found productive and rewarding. Some longer term members, who faced multiple barriers to work, undertook volunteering, both within and outside Crisis Skylight, for this reason.

There appeared to be some association between volunteering and securing paid work, but it was not possible to control for all the factors that might also influence employment outcomes. For example, data on health and wellbeing and educational attainment were self-reported and not always complete (see Chapter 2). Bi-variate analysis

suggested some association, as 26 per cent of those members who had secured paid work had volunteered, compared to 5 per cent of those who had not secured paid work⁵⁰. Whether volunteering is a direct pathway to paid work will vary on the nature of that volunteering. Some roles are in many respects job-like and provide opportunities to gather relevant experience for work in a specific field, other volunteer roles may only be occasional or low level.

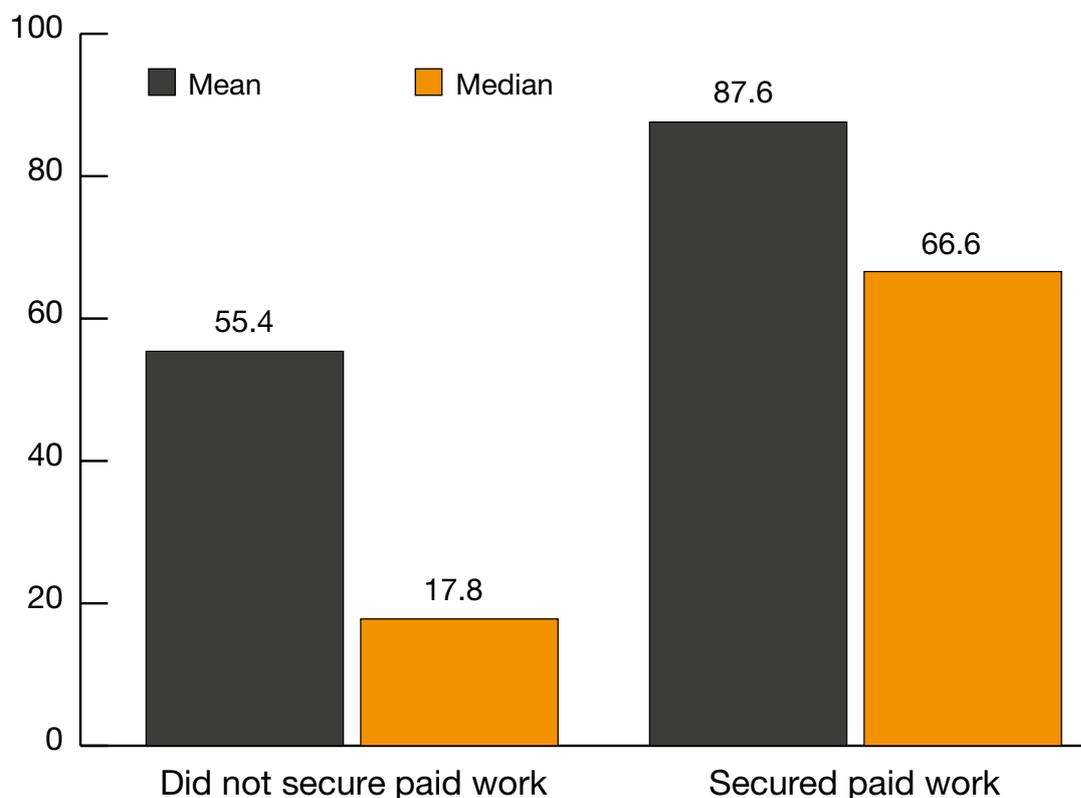
Most of the members who were involved in volunteering had quite sustained contact with a Crisis Skylight. Members who were involved in volunteering had been using Crisis Skylight for an average of 112 weeks (2.15 years), as at the end of 2015 with a median figure of 93 weeks (1.78 years). One quarter of all the members involved in volunteering had been engaged with a Crisis Skylight for less than 46 weeks (0.88 years) as at the end of 2015.

Arts, education and training provided by Crisis Skylight

Table 4.4 summarises the qualifications and certificates secured by Crisis Skylight members during 2013-2015.

⁴⁹ Sig at p<0.001.

⁵⁰ Sig at p<0.001.

Figure 4.1 Duration of contact (first contact, last recorded contact) by whether secured paid work (weeks)

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015.

In addition to the qualifications and certificates earned, the Crisis Skylights also ran women-only sessions in the arts, basic skills, health and wellbeing and vocational subjects. Women members earned a further 181 qualifications and certificates in these classes and activities over the course of 2013-2015⁵¹.

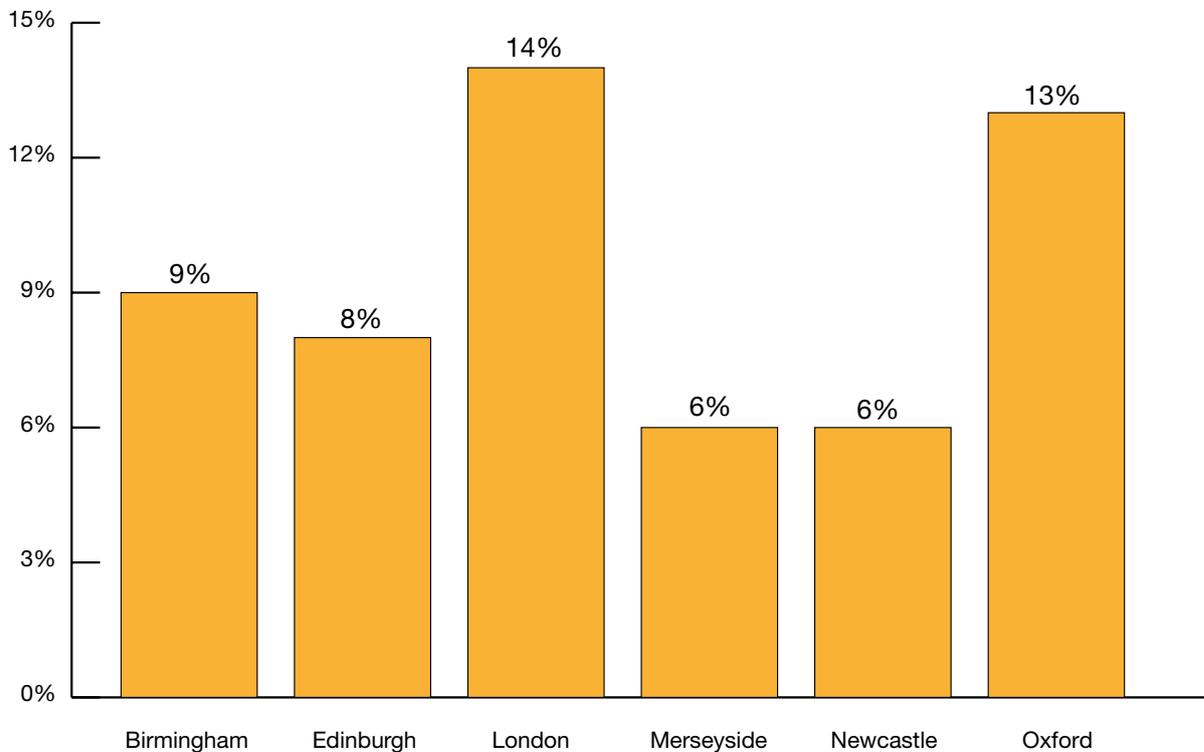
Table 4.5 summarises the differences in emphasis and approach across the Crisis Skylights. In terms of qualifications, a focus on basic skills, employability, vocational and/or personal development is evident across all six. Certificates and qualifications are less commonly awarded for arts-based activities, so the aspects of Crisis Skylight's work on arts are not as strongly represented here.

More recently arrived members, starting in 2015, were less likely to have achieved qualifications or certificates, but this is likely to have been related to their not always having had sufficient time to complete qualifications.

Data on educational attainment prior to joining Crisis Skylight were incomplete. However, those recorded as already having qualifications did not appear to be more or less likely to secure qualifications from Crisis Skylight.

Figure 4.6 shows the rates at which members had passed examinations or certificates in basic skills education, personal development, vocational training and employability. Birmingham and London were the two Crisis

51 Five additional qualifications were earned in men-only activities.

Figure 4.2 Rates at which Crisis Skylight members secured work 2013-2015

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015.

Skylights in which the rate at which members secured one or more such qualifications were highest. In Birmingham, there had been a conscious decision to focus more heavily on these aspects of course delivery, in London, the range of options for members to engage with in these areas was wider than elsewhere.

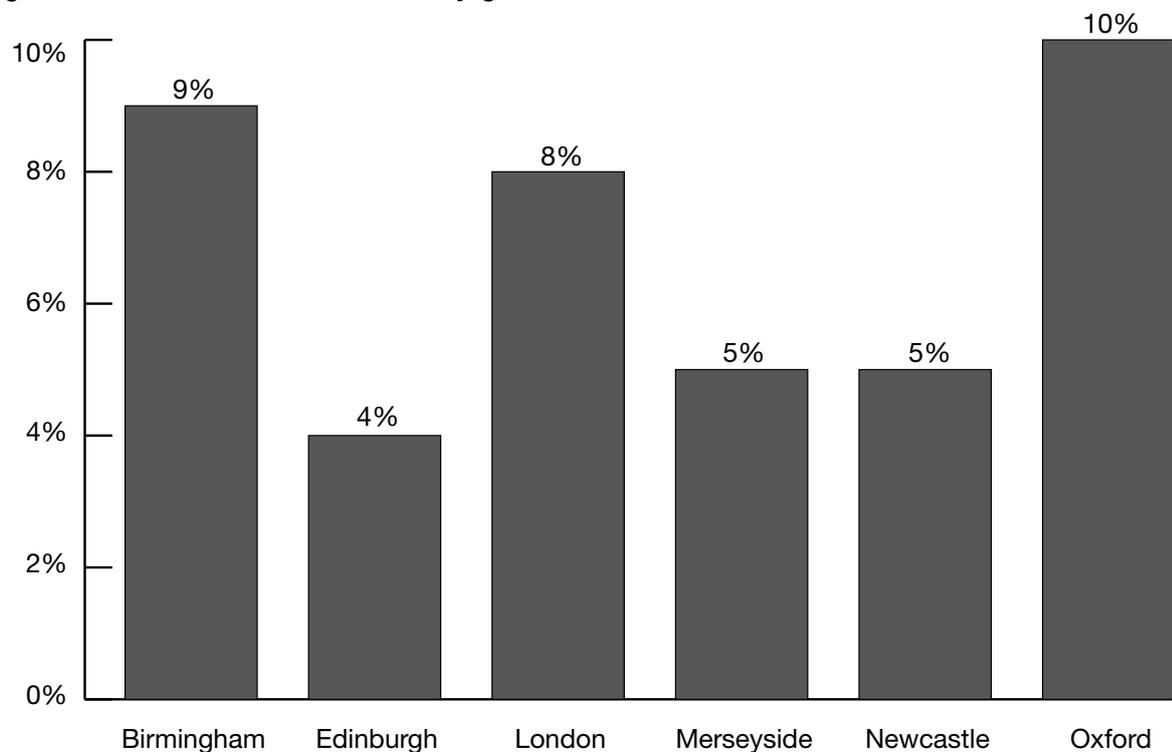
There is also another possible, partial, explanation, which is that members who had been with Crisis Skylight longer tended to have passed such qualifications and certificates at higher rates between 2013-2015. So, for example, 20 per cent of members who had joined Crisis Skylight before or during 2012, secured one or more these types of examinations and certificates during 2013-2015, with 20 per cent of members who joined in 2013 achieving the same. During 2013-2015, of those members joining in 2014, 18 per cent secured these types of qualifications and certificates,

falling to 14 per cent among members joining in 2015.

As noted above, this could simply be a question of needing time to secure these kinds of qualifications and certificates, with those joining later on not yet being at the point where they had yet achieved this. In Edinburgh, only 12 per cent of members had been active in any way with the initial phase of Crisis Skylight since 2013 or earlier, although Merseyside (29%) and Birmingham (23%) had similar levels of members who had been active since this point.

There was some evidence of a relationship between use of one-to-one support and success in passing the examinations and certificates.

- Among members who received no sessions of one-to-one support, 86 per cent did not secure any qualifications while working with Crisis Skylight (8,093 members)

Figure 4.3 Rates at which Crisis Skylight members volunteered 2013-2015

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015.

Table 4.4 Qualifications and certificates by Crisis Skylight 2013-2015

	Crisis Skylight						
	Birmingham	Edinburgh	London	Merseyside	Newcastle	Oxford	All
Basic skills	435	130	1,482	160	629	406	3,242
Employability	485	1	1,101	95	55	6	1,743
Creative arts	309	8	1	104	207	37	666
Performing arts	250	4	55	41	0	5	355
Health and wellbeing	18	3	0	0	24	0	45
Vocational	0	4	37	174	188	158	561
Personal development	610	9	6	9	48	27	709

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015.

Table 4.5 Qualifications and certificates awarded by Crisis Skylight 2013-2015

Crisis Skylight							
	Birmingham	Edinburgh	London	Merseyside	Newcastle	Oxford	All
Basic skills	21%	82%	55%	27%	55%	64%	44%
Employability	23%	1%	41%	16%	5%	1%	24%
Creative arts	15%	5%	0%	18%	18%	6%	9%
Performing arts	12%	3%	2%	7%	0%	1%	5%
Health and wellbeing	1%	2%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%
Vocational	0%	3%	1%	30%	16%	25%	8%
Personal development	29%	6%	0%	2%	4%	4%	10%

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015.

cent did not secure any qualifications while working with Crisis Skylight (4,340 members)

- Among members who had received five or more sessions of one-to-one support, 49% secured one or more qualifications while working with Crisis Skylight⁵².

A great many courses were offered by Crisis Skylight – health and safety, IT training, basic skills in maths and English and a wide range of vocational qualifications and certificates were on offer. Crisis administrative data indicated that 1,268 distinct accredited courses and activities were offered across the six Crisis Skylights during the period 2013-2015. It was possible (tables 4.5 and 4.6) to broadly classify these different activities into groups, but no single accredited course or activity represented more than 1 per cent

2015. A description of the activities and qualifications offered by Crisis Skylight was provided in Chapter 2.

Facilitating access to external education and training

The rates at which referrals occurred to further and higher education and to externally provided training occurred, appeared again, to possibly be influenced by contact with one-to-one support⁵³. 34 percent of those members receiving five or more sessions of one-to-one support received such a referral, falling to 7 per cent of those receiving one to four sessions and 2 per cent of those members receiving no one-to-one support⁵⁴. The results generated through bi-variate analysis do however suggest that the positive relationships between one-to-one support and outcomes, reported in the cohort study, were more widely present.

⁵² Sig at p<0.001.

⁵³ Outcomes were recorded for members seeing a coach as the coaches record the outcomes. However, tutors would also have had a role in referring members on to external education and training.

⁵⁴ Sig at p<0.001.

Table 4.6 Basic skills, education, personal development, vocational and employability qualifications and certificates awarded by Crisis Skylight 2013-2015

Crisis Skylight							
	Birmingham	Edinburgh	London	Merseyside	Newcastle	Oxford	All
Members passing one or more exams or certificates	621	108	1,172	341	574	237	3,053
Average (mean) exam/certificate passes	3.43	1.52	2.29	1.99	2.20	2.70	2.47
Median exam/certificate passes	2	1	1	1	1	2	1
Total exam or certificate passes	2,133	164	2,680	677	1,260	640	7,554

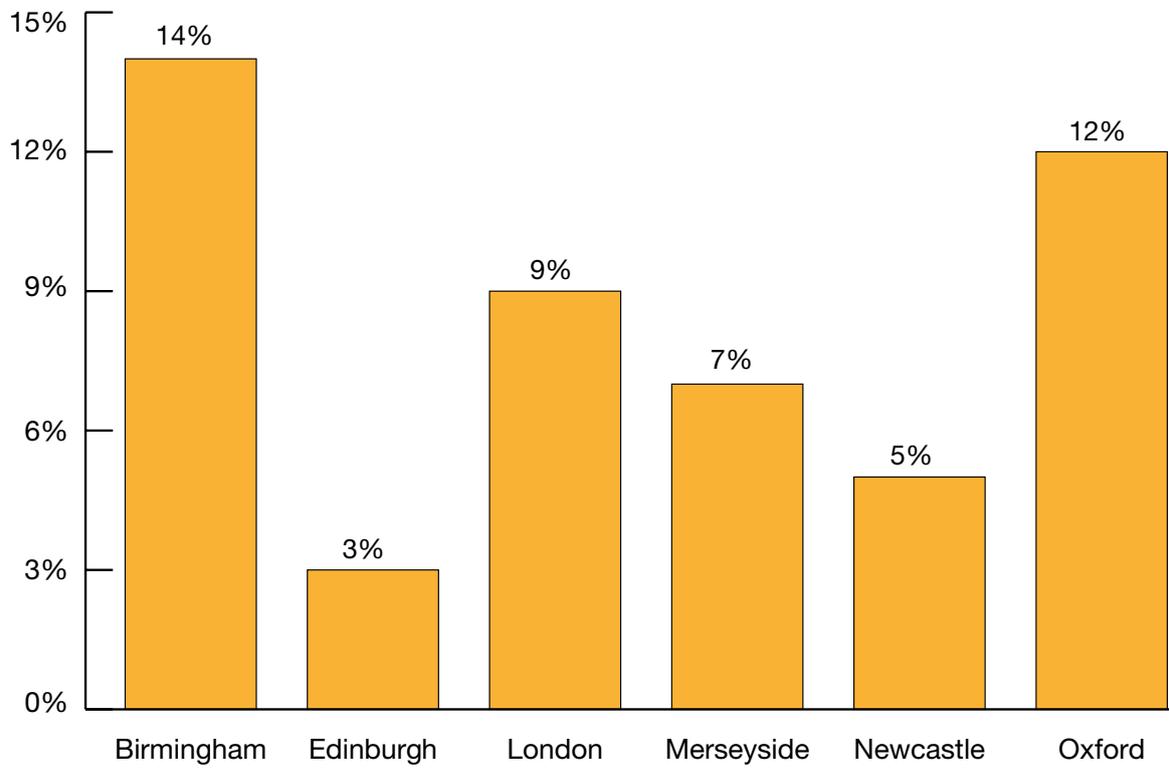
Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015.

Health and wellbeing

Administrative data on health and wellbeing consisted entirely of basic self-reported data, which have a number of limitations. Any support needs not recorded in the first contact form may not be accounted for, and any changes in health and wellbeing were self-reported, again meaning that a negative or positive change that was not reported, was not recorded. Such measurements are, alongside being incomplete, also imprecise. For example if someone reports a current mental health problem or a history of such problems, this potentially covers a very wide range of conditions, diagnoses and needs.

Overall, 11 per cent of members received support related to mental health during the course of 2013-2015. One of the key elements of the support offered by Crisis Skylight, the mental health coordinators, was not available in all the Crisis Skylights during this period (see Chapter 2). Oxford, Newcastle and London provided support at the highest rates (29%, 15% and 13%). The research focused specifically on the mental health coordinators and was conducted by

the authors and the results of the cohort study did indicate that support with mental health could be very beneficial to Crisis Skylight members⁵⁵.

Figure 4.4 Proportion of members entering external education and training by Crisis Skylight

Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015.

5 The strategic role of Crisis Skylight

Introduction

This chapter draws on the results of 20 interviews with homelessness service providers, local authorities, charities and other agencies working with the six Crisis Skylights conducted in 2013 and 2015. This chapter describes the way in which Crisis Skylights were viewed by other agencies and the role they played in local homelessness strategies.

A slowly changing landscape

Our understanding and response to single homelessness is undergoing a number of changes. During the last 25 years, homelessness research started to show that the relationships between unmet support needs and single homelessness are more complex than was once thought. Globally, the research evidence base shows that some single homeless people initially have low – or no – support needs, experience trigger events, and deteriorate during the course of unresolved longer-term and recurrent homelessness⁵⁶.

This group of single homeless people need ever-increasing levels of support to exit from homelessness, as the duration or frequency of their homelessness increases. Of course, there is still also evidence of homelessness causation that appears linked to pre-existing severe mental illness, problematic drug use and drinking and poor physical health, all of which may worsen during an experience of single homelessness. However, single homeless people are not simply an ‘ill’ population; indeed some do not start out being ‘ill’ at all⁵⁷.

The truly common factors are social and economic. Single homeless people have

difficulties accessing the formal economy. They may encounter barriers to services and the welfare system and they also tend to lack alternative support, in the form of family, a partner or friends, or having relied on such support, have subsequently lost it⁵⁸.

This research on Crisis Skylight shows there can be exceptions to the relationships between poor life chances and single homelessness, people who fell out of work, further education and mainstream economic life due to serious illness, who had no support to fall back on. The international evidence base indicates that lower support for poorer elements of the population tends to be associated with higher levels of overall homelessness and single homelessness.

However, homelessness data tend to be more restricted in countries with low levels of welfare state spending, so it is difficult to be certain if this is universally true⁵⁹. Countries with a greater tradition of support from extended families may, despite lower provision of welfare, health and social housing, counteract homelessness because families are prepared to offer more support.

As understanding of single homelessness shifts, away from the idea of a universally ‘ill’ population and towards the idea of single homelessness as a social and economic problem. The policy context in which Crisis Skylight operates will continue to change. This will not necessarily be a single process, nor a smooth one. There has been significant consistency in homelessness policy since 1997, centring on maximising access to paid work as the way to tackle poverty and the extremes of social and economic disadvantage.

⁵⁶ Culhane, D.P. et al (2013) The age structure of contemporary homelessness: evidence and implications for public policy. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 13(1), 228-244; Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) op. cit.; Busch-Geertsema, V. et al (2010) op. cit.

⁵⁷ Lee, B.A., Tyler, K.A. and Wright, J.D. (2010) *The new homelessness revisited*. *Annual review of sociology*, 36, pp. 501-521.

⁵⁸ Busch-Geertsema, V. et al (2010) op. cit.

⁵⁹ Benjaminsen, L. and Andrade, S.B. (2015). *Testing a Typology of Homelessness Across Welfare Regimes: Shelter Use in Denmark and the USA*. *Housing Studies*, 30(6), 858-876.

Crisis Skylight was and is an innovative response that represents a reconceptualisation of single homelessness. The idea that single homeless people can work and indeed are willing to work represents an approach to this social problem that remains relatively unusual.

Two further developments are worth briefly noting. The first is the ongoing shift towards homelessness prevention as a key strategic response to homelessness. While this began in 2003/4 in England, there is still a clear impetus to push it further, reducing the social damage and the economic costs of homelessness, as evidenced in the recent Welsh legislative reforms. Crisis Skylight is accessible as a preventative response, it is focused on actual homelessness, but can and does support people facing the risk of single homelessness.

Secondly, the evidence base is shifting in favour of service interventions that give control to single homeless people, including those with high support needs. To those familiar with the policy landscape of single homelessness, the obvious example of this is the Housing First model. It emphasises choice, control and the human rights of single homeless people and is an example of a user-led service model⁶⁰. More generally, the shift towards personalisation and co-production, on the basis that this makes services more human, but, crucially, more effective is leading to changes in the strategic response to single homelessness. Again, the emphasis on choice, on working with single homeless people in ways that allow them to exercise real control over what happens to them, is a feature of the Crisis Skylight model that sits comfortably alongside other policy developments.

Crisis Skylight in local homelessness strategies

Other agencies often praised the Crisis Skylight service in their area for offering an array of services that were not available elsewhere. Crisis Skylight was widely perceived as a comprehensive service that was enhanced by being person-centred and respecting the choices and opinions of single homeless people.

I don't think, from my knowledge, there's still not one single centre where you could go and in the afternoon do a guitar workshop and in the evening do a full on theatre workshop and the next day to painting and drawing and also have that information, advice and guidance, support and training and education, employment focus as well. There isn't one single place where you can do all of that.
External agency respondent, 2015.

I think the unique thing for me that they do is they look at the person as a whole. Rather than just offering a course that people turn up to and take it or leave it, they're far more individually focused and that's the difference for us. That's what we get from it. We can refer someone to them and know that they'll take their time to get to know that person a little bit, maybe tailor their programme to suit them rather than just turn up this day and just do that and that's the offering.
External agency respondent, 2015.

More generally, Crisis Skylight was seen as offering services that were an important part of local strategic responses to homelessness. Crisis Skylight offered a different kind of service from the perspectives of representatives of external agencies, one which centred on social integration, rather than alleviating the immediate consequences of homelessness. For other service providers, Crisis Skylight was seen as a service

model that could help move away from homelessness in a social and economic sense, once their housing needs had been met.

...it's really, really important that we have Skylight to get people to move to, to get away from homelessness services and then often they will also then go on and engage with more community-based services and with the broader public.
External agency respondent, 2015.

Yes. I'll give you an example, if you've got a small organisation that delivers a few accommodation units, mini foodbanks, something like that, it's all very much about keeping the roof over somebody's head and getting them through a crisis in their lives. What they can get from Skylight is a much more calming environment, if they can get those people to the Skylight centre or whether the Skylight people are coming out.

They've really got it in their minds that they want to offer something that that other charities can't offer which are things like wellbeing sessions, volunteer counsellors, all that kind of stuff. It just seems to me that it compliments rather than conflicts.
External agency respondent, 2015.

Several respondents referred to the widespread cuts to homelessness services that have occurred since 2010, as local authorities in many of the areas where Crisis Skylights operated experienced very large reductions in grants. In 2015, the annual survey of homelessness service provision conducted by Homeless Link reported that 41 per cent of accommodation-based homelessness services had seen a cut in funding. A loss of 1,994 places in supported accommodation services for homeless people in England occurred between 2013 and 2014⁶¹.

In this context, representatives of external agencies reported that Crisis Skylight was increasingly filling gaps, especially when other education, training and social integration services had been cut.

What I think the strengths of the Skylight approach now is that they have the capacity to deliver the activities and training that actually lots of other homeless services don't have anymore. So for us, we've cut and cut and cut over the last few years. So the bit of flex we had in our budget to say okay, let's have an activities worker and that person will have a complete focus on making sure that people get engaged in meaningful activities and so on.

That's gone from our services now. We're down to the bone really with support workers doing their one-to-one support work. They still do group work but we just don't have the flex and capacity to do it. I think one of the key things about Crisis is that they've got that capacity and they can respond to people's needs in terms of, or people's wants really, I suppose, in terms of the activity and training side of it.
External agency respondent, 2015.

Coordination with other services had not always been ideal for Crisis Skylight. The authors reported in 2014⁶² that other elements of the homelessness sector had initially viewed Crisis Skylights with uncertainty, even sometimes an element of hostility, when Crisis Skylights had been set up outside London. The concerns were centred on a worry that they would absorb existing local funding, essentially putting other homelessness services out of business⁶³. By 2015, any idea that Crisis Skylight might drain other homelessness services of resources, or be uncooperative, appeared to have evaporated.

61 Source: Homeless Link (2015) Support for single homeless people in England: Annual Review 2015 London: Homeless Link <http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Full%20report%20-%20Single%20homelessness%20support%20in%20England%202015.pdf>

62 Preece, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) Crisis Skylight An Evaluation (Year One Interim Report) London: Crisis.

63 Op. Cit.

I certainly see Skylight in...being good team players. Of course, when they first came here, everybody was saying, 'Oh, grumble, grumble, big London charity, blah, coming to poach our staff, blah.' I think we really do value what they do...really good to have the partnership working.

External agency respondent, 2015.

[That Crisis Skylight would drain resources from other homelessness services or duplicate existing services] *Yes. I think that was certainly an anxiety at first. I think they've managed that pretty well. They've ploughed a furrow that really other people weren't trying to plough particularly, which is down to the learning and accreditation and the Wellness Centre-type stuff. So I think yes, in that respect they've done a good job of alleviating the initial concerns.*

External agency respondent, 2015.

Crisis Skylights were generally seen as enhancing the range of services available to single homeless people and as improving the strategic level response to homelessness in the cities in which they operated. They were often seen as delivering tangible benefits for single homeless people and, in concentrating on social and economic integration, as providing services that had not been available to the same extent prior to their arrival. In addition, the Crisis Skylights were seen as good partners, that other homelessness services and local authorities could work alongside effectively.

It's useful because no service can do it all nowadays; joint working's a reality in services, or should be a reality in services in order to get the best possible outcomes for people. So it's for those reasons and it's the type of expertise that Crisis Skylight bring in areas that we don't have the same level of expertise. So it's bringing something that's adding value

really...to be perfectly honest. As I say, it's improved outcomes for the people that do participate in it.

External agency respondent, 2015.

We've found them very good to work with. I think they've got a good range of different projects and groups which certainly ties in with some of the work that we're doing.

External agency respondent, 2015.

We talk together. To be able to do the volunteer scheme and the trainee scheme effectively, our staff are talking with Crisis staff all the time and going to them for advice and support and vice versa. So although we are absolutely different organisations with different line management...it also has a sense that we're actually working across teams.

External agency respondent, 2015.

In 2015, external agency representatives were rarely critical of Crisis Skylights in terms of their services or willingness to work cooperatively. However, the issue of effective engagement with some single homeless people was raised, particularly around people with high and complex needs, and single homeless people having to move out of the 'range' of a Crisis Skylight before their support was complete. Sustaining contact with people whose lives were characterised by precariousness, alongside a minority whose high support and treatment needs were not always being met, was however seen as a challenge across the homelessness sector as a whole. A few external agency respondents raised the question, also reported by the authors in 2014⁶⁴, as to whether building based services were sufficiently accessible to some of those with higher needs.

Negatives; I don't think there are any. I think it's a win-win for ourselves. The

challenge is engagement. Excellent service that isn't used as fully as it might be and that's a fundamental problem in the sector. People's state of readiness to engage with services of this type. It really is a problem. If you've got any solutions to that one, let me know!

External agency respondent, 2015.

...the nature of the client group doesn't particularly lend itself to easily getting into the habit of going regularly to something and committing to it. So the more outreach they can do, the better because, I think, we find that the more you can work with people where they are, the more readily they are able to join in on something longer term. Even so, these are people who have very chaotic lives...

External agency respondent, 2015.

One final challenge was reported by external providers, which was a sense that greater numbers of single homeless people, increasingly characterised by complex needs, were appearing in their services. This was seen as potentially making life more challenging for Crisis Skylight, as they were presented with a higher proportion of single homeless people with high and complex needs.

...there's a real sense that the client group is changing quite quickly. Numbers are going up and their needs are much more intense and actually they're coming here much more quickly. So instead of coming via the supportive routes with a hostel, they're coming straight from the streets. What that means is you've got more people who have much more immediate anxieties and concerns.

External agency respondent, 2015.

6 Costs

Introduction

Crisis was able to provide the research team with broad cost information on the operation of the Crisis Skylight services. The data were insufficiently detailed to allow for a detailed analysis of costs, but it was possible to ascribe costs to different progression routes, with a particular emphasis on exploring how much it cost to deliver a range of tangible outcomes. The first part of this chapter looks at progression to paid work and the costs involved in achieving employment for Crisis Skylight members. The same exercise is then run to look at typical costs of Crisis Skylight service use.

Spending

Across the six Crisis Skylights, data from the two financial years 2013/14 and 2014/15, the most recent available, showed average costs of £269 for one session of one-to-one support for one member, and £58 per member, per session for classroom-based activities. These costs represent total expenditure, ie everything it cost to deliver Crisis Skylight, from building costs and salaries through to telephone lines, computers, travel and office expenses⁶⁵.

Across the six Crisis Skylights, the average cost of support for a member who secured a job was £4,356 and the median cost was £2,360⁶⁶. This takes into account both classroom-based services, including basic skills education and use of one-to-one support.

Spending varied considerably, reflecting different overheads, varying combinations of staff and also the duration for which services were operational during the period 2013-2015. Relatively higher operating costs

existed in London, which would be expected. In Edinburgh, the relatively higher spending was linked to the newness of some of the services, ie the cost per hour was relatively higher as the service came into full operation over the course of 2013. Staff initially saw fewer members (and thus cost more per member, per hour) until caseloads and participation in education and arts-based activities began to increase.

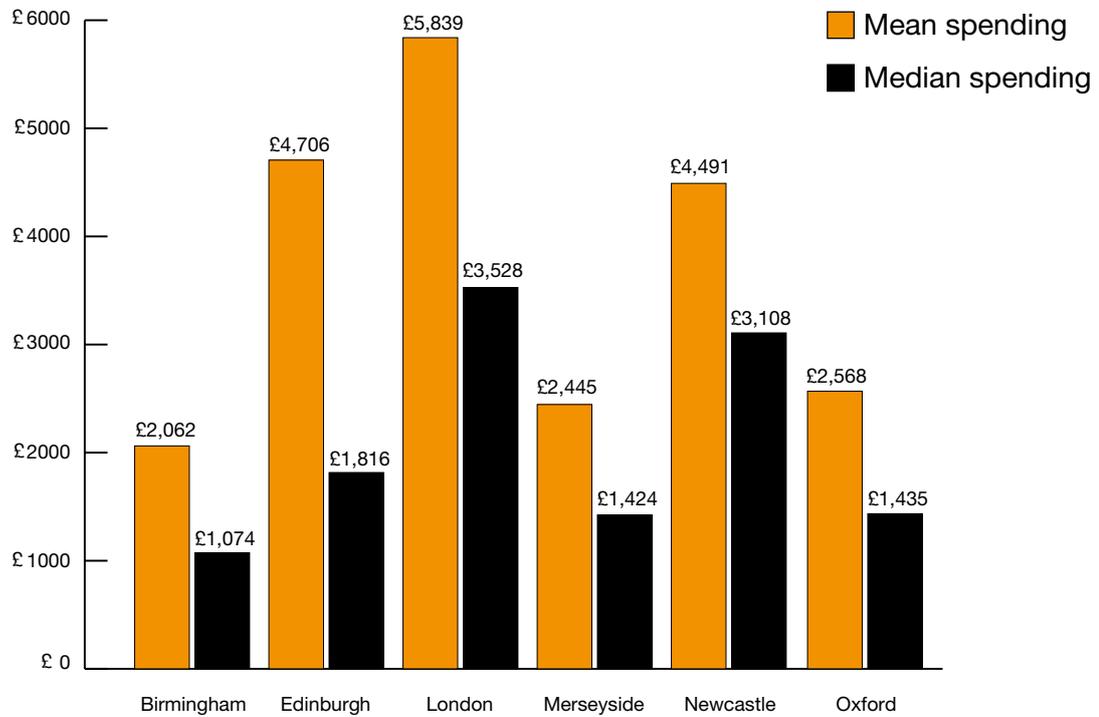
On average, spending between just over £2,000 and just under £6,000 was enabling a Crisis Skylight member to secure a paid job. Median costs were somewhat lower across all six of the Crisis Skylights. Relatively higher expenditure on a small number of members who had more extensive or longer-term support from Crisis Skylight, before they progressed to getting a job, pulled up the average costs.

Across all six Crisis Skylights, the average spend per member was £1,558, with a lower median cost of £385. This pattern reflected the average spending per member being pulled up by higher expenditure on a small group of members, whereas the median more closely reflected the lower spending on members who did not engage for very long (see Chapters 3 and 4).

⁶⁵ Financial data provided by Crisis.

⁶⁶ Based on average and median costs for the financial years 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Figure 6.1 Average (mean) and median total spending by Crisis Skylights on members who got paid work (2013-2015)



Source: Administrative data for Crisis Skylight members, 2013-2015. Average and median spending are based on financial data for the Crisis Skylights over the financial years 2013/14 and 2014/15 provided by Crisis. Average and median costs per classroom session and one-to-one support over two financial years, 2013/14-2014/15.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

This report represents the final stage in an extensive longitudinal analysis of a major innovation in UK homelessness services. While other interventions designed to increase the life chances and employability for homeless people exist, nothing else in the UK has approached the scale of Crisis Skylight. This includes social enterprises and the work of the private sector via organisations like Business in the Community,

The aims of this research were centred on assessing the capacity of Crisis Skylight to deliver the goals of the Crisis Model of Change:

- Good health and wellbeing
- Housing stability
- Good relationships and social networks
- Employment and financial stability

Delivering progression

Many positive findings have been reported in the earlier publications by the research team (see Appendix 1). Crisis Skylight is a service that is viewed very positively by a great many of the people using it and the programme has delivered tangible successes. Crisis Skylight has been directly responsible for progressing considerable numbers of single homeless people - and those at risk of homelessness - into paid work, volunteering, further and higher education and training.

Members in the cohort study, who were asked to weigh the benefits of Crisis Skylight, alongside those of the other services, often identified it as playing the key role in promoting positive change in their lives.

I think when I first started with Crisis Skylight, people used to tell me there's light at the end of the tunnel and I used to

think, no, there isn't, you're lying. There's never going to be no light. I can't see no light. With me, everything was dark. I didn't even know where I was going to end up, where I was going to go.

Cohort member who progressed to paid work, interview 4.

All I would really like to say is Crisis Skylight have actually given me a focus and a purpose to get up every day for the last two and a bit years. All I can say is it's made a very positive difference to my life.

Cohort member, interview 4.

Like I said before, I was lucky to get referred there, it was only that this guy at this hostel that I was living at, said, 'I've sent this chap down to so and so and I think you might be...are you interested in going?' I went down there and I was very sceptical but I went anyway and Crisis has made a difference. No-one else has.

Cohort member, interview 4.

The successes of Crisis Skylight

The results of the cohort study and the analysis of administrative data from Crisis both show very clear patterns.

- More engagement with one-to-one support was associated with more sustained use of Crisis Skylight services. The more often a member received one-to-one support, the greater the likelihood that they would use Crisis Skylight for a longer period and engage with the services on offer.
- There was a very clear, strong, association between engagement with one-to-one support and securing paid work. The more a member used one-to-one support, the greater their chances of getting a job. This effect was independent of their needs, characteristics and experiences.

- Engagement with one-to-one support clearly increased participation in education, training and volunteering, alongside engagement with external education and training.

Beyond this, being generally more engaged with Crisis Skylight, in terms of completing courses and sequences of arts-based activity, was also associated with better outcomes for members. In essence, there was evidence from the core element of this research, the cohort study, and from the analysis of the administrative data collected by Crisis, that the more members used Crisis Skylight, the better their progression towards paid work tended to be. This is a clear finding that represents an endorsement of the Crisis Skylight model as a whole.

The cohort study showed distinct pathways that were closely linked to the ways in which someone had experienced homelessness⁶⁷:

- Regaining progress for people whose expected progress through life had been disrupted, often by mental health problems that had been associated with loss of employment, disruption of education (including degree courses), domestic or gender-based violence (overwhelmingly among women) or a trigger event, such as a sudden loss of employment, from which a downward spiral had begun. Crisis Skylight essentially helped this group of people back onto their feet, enabling them to progress again.
- Moving forward for the first time was experienced by people whose homelessness was associated with a marginalised economic position, who had generally not completed formal education, had often never worked at all and whose access to formal and informal supports was minimal. With

this group, Crisis Skylight was taking people out of a situation of effectively permanent socioeconomic disadvantage of which their homelessness or risk of homelessness was only one aspect.

- Punctuated progression occurred among homeless people and those at risk of homelessness whose health, support needs or personal situation created obstacles in their path. These were people actively trying to change their lives for the better, who became temporarily overwhelmed in ways that stalled their progress, but who continued to engage with Crisis Skylight and to seek a better life.
- Members experiencing limited progress were in some cases people who did not like what was Crisis Skylight was offering, or did not want it. Yet this group was more likely to include people who were not, realistically, going to be able to secure or sustain some forms of employment, volunteering, training or education, due to illness or disability. This was a group that Crisis Skylight could benefit, providing a range of support and the benefits of structured activities such as art and basic skills education, but for whom the goal of progression towards the mainstream labour market was not always realistic.

Crisis Skylight was also valued at a strategic level, in the towns and cities where it worked, both by other homelessness services and by local authorities. Where Crisis Skylight services operated, they were valued by other agencies, as well as by the homeless people using them.

Challenging assumptions

Crisis Skylight presents a challenge to some of the images of single homelessness, pervading mainstream politics and media. Single homeless people can often be portrayed too mentally ill to work, as feckless individuals opting for a life of excessive drug and alcohol use, or as criminal⁶⁸.

Of course, a homelessness service that offers help with education, training and job-seeking will attract single homeless people who want those services. Assessing the extent to which the single homelessness population wants employment – by looking only at Crisis Skylight members – is akin to assessing the health of single homeless people by looking at single homeless people attending Accident and Emergency at a hospital, rather than looking at health across the single homeless population as a whole.

Any study based only on data collected from people using specific homelessness services – rather than the whole homeless population – must recognise the inherent dangers in equating a group of homeless service users with the homeless population as a whole. Nevertheless, the difference between some Crisis Skylight members and popular imagery of single homeless people remains striking.

Crisis Skylight was clearly not for everyone; there were sometimes challenges in meeting the needs of chaotic, disruptive individuals, as described in earlier reports⁶⁹. And based on the cohort study, a few people did not like Crisis Skylight, or became frustrated and disillusioned with it. Equally, however, there are dangers in assuming attrition always represents active disconnection, as although this must have happened, the results from the cohort study showed how homelessness itself, alongside health problems could punctuate and limit progression.

The limits of Crisis Skylight

The limitations of Crisis Skylight were in part a function of trying to meet the needs of a population characterised by precariousness, lacking settled, adequate housing and often reliable social supports. Crisis Skylight was working with people who might not be able to keep using its services, because some aspects of their lives, ranging from their health to where they lived, were not really under their control.

How much can be done to reduce attrition, given that it is potentially related to many factors, is uncertain. However, the evidence clearly shows that one-to-one support was positively associated with engagement and with better outcomes. Allocating one-to-one support at first contact seems a logical step forward, but while it may increase engagement, there would be resource implications.

There were some relatively easy wins for Crisis Skylight. The cohort study included a few members who, after only brief contact with Crisis Skylight, quickly returned to a world of paid work that they had not long left behind⁷⁰. Yet it was still evident that Crisis Skylight had often made a difference, at the least speeding up a process that could have taken longer, and perhaps progressing some people away from a downward spiral. American evidence indicates that homelessness associated with high support needs may often begin with someone with initially low support needs, experiencing a homelessness ‘trigger event’, like losing work, that they are unable to overcome on their own⁷¹.

Some members required ongoing support to stay in work. The reality of the labour market meant that many jobs were low paid, part-time, temporary or had unpredictable income due to zero hours contracts. Maintaining

68 Phillips, R., 2000. *Politics of reading: cultural politics of homelessness*. Antipode, 32(4), pp.429-462.

69 Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) *Crisis Skylight: An Evaluation* (Year One Interim Report) London: Crisis.

70 See Chapter 3.

71 Culhane, D.P. et al *The Aging of Contemporary Homelessness* (2013) Available at: http://works.bepress.com/dennis_culhane/119/

employment on an ongoing basis could mean securing multiple jobs or one job after another, processes that could require support from a Crisis Skylight. Challenges also existed in other respects, the gap between what some could earn in Oxford or London and the rent levels in the private rented sector was pronounced. The labour markets in Merseyside, Newcastle and Birmingham also had fewer jobs on offer⁷².

The realities of labour markets, offering most people hyper-casual jobs characterised by insecurity, transience and low pay cannot be ignored. The labour market position of homeless people using Crisis Skylight was often improved, but Crisis Skylight could not change the labour market itself.

Likewise with housing, Crisis Skylight could and did help, but the challenges of finding a decent, affordable and secure home in housing markets like those in London or Oxford remain acute. Structural problems centred on an inadequate supply of decent affordable housing with reasonable security of tenure could not be overcome by Crisis Skylight.

Increasing support with housing, perhaps exploring the integration of local lettings agency models within Crisis Skylight services and increasing services that can prevent or rapidly relieve homelessness could be beneficial. The challenges that arise from working with a housing market like that in Oxford will remain, however.

Health and wellbeing are complex issues, influenced by many factors. Crisis Skylight did improve the situation of homeless people in meaningful ways, but it could not necessarily address all the factors influencing something like an individual's mental health. If NHS mental health services were not adequate, or cuts to other homelessness services were causing

problems, Crisis Skylight could not repair or rebuild those systems. Enhancements to referral mechanisms, perhaps also increased provision of support, may help improve outcomes. It is clear that the mental health coordinators often made a positive difference to members' lives and improving outcomes may centre on nothing more complex than increasing that element of service provision.

This three-year research project has shown some extremely positive results (see the reports listed in Appendix 1). Revisiting the Crisis Model of Change a number of broad findings are evident:

- *Good health and wellbeing.* Crisis Skylight clearly delivered improvements to mental health, both in the sense of specialist support from the mental health coordinators and, in a much broader way, by promoting self-confidence and self-esteem among Crisis Skylight members. Crisis Skylight was not, in any sense, a health service and the health outcomes must be seen in that context.
- *Housing stability.* This aspect of Crisis Skylight was, with the partial exception of London, the least developed. One reason for this was that four of the six services under review – while situated in contexts in which there were issues with affordable housing supply – did not face the extremes of housing stress that existed in Oxford and London. Given that research indicates that social integration and successful service engagement is associated with stable, suitable housing, this aspect of is the most challenging for Crisis. Crisis Skylight was designed as a programme to promote social integration, as something distinct from a housing-focused homelessness service. A greater emphasis on housing might change the nature of Crisis Skylight, focusing a proportionately

greater level of resources on preventing and ending homelessness. Equally, the case for addressing housing need – simply in terms of further enhancing Crisis Skylight’s own outcomes – remains a powerful one.

- *Good relationships and social networks.* In respect of this goal, Crisis Skylight generated benefits in terms of enhancing relationships and social networks, because it could often bolster self-confidence and self-esteem and, within classes and arts-based activities, created social spaces in which friendships formed. However, these social networks were not a strategic emphasis for Crisis Skylight in the way that the pursuit of education, training and employment were. As with housing and health, there are questions about how far Crisis Skylight should, or could, be adjusted to devote more resources to promoting positive social networks, as this might again change the character of the service.
- *Employment and financial stability.* The potential importance of economic integration in terms of promoting the other three goals of the Crisis Model of Change is self-evident. Someone with a reasonable job at a living wage is far more likely to enjoy better physical and mental health, secure housing and good social supports, than someone who is economically marginalised. In progressing members to paid work, Crisis Skylight often enhanced their chances of better outcomes in other areas of their lives, albeit with the caveat that the lower the quality of work, the lower the likelihood of improvements in other areas of life. It was in employment and financial stability, above all others, that Crisis Skylight achieved the most. The successes in progressing single homeless

people and those at risk of homelessness to paid work were unambiguous and very considerable.

There are some questions around how best to respond to the needs of Crisis Skylight members who are characterised by limited progression. Successes have been achieved with supported employment, for example in the USA, or using social enterprise models such as the Emmaus approach or time-banking, to deliver work that is accessible to homeless people with support needs⁷³. Crisis Skylight can sometimes, within resource constraints, offer employment and an array of volunteering opportunities, both internally and externally. Here, the answer may lie in ensuring the most is made of links to other services, so that when someone can ultimately only make limited progress, alternative support is in place.

Recommendations

Crisis Skylight is in many ways a success. Much has been achieved by the staff and volunteers at the individual Crisis Skylights and also those involved in the planning of the Crisis Skylight programme. Yet there are some important limitations to Crisis Skylight and in the ways in which it has been implemented.

One recommendation from this research is to look at the degree to which Crisis Skylight supports all the aspects of the Crisis Model of Change. Services are present to promote and support good health and wellbeing, employment and financial security, housing stability and good relationships and social networks, but their provision is clearly uneven. There are two dimensions to this, first, some Crisis Skylights did initially lack some services, like housing coaches and mental health coordinators. While this has been rectified, there is still a lesson to be

73 Drake, R.E. et al (1994) *Rehabilitative day treatment vs. supported employment: I. Vocational outcomes*. Community Mental Health Journal, 30(5), 519-532; Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2012) *New Growth for Emmaus* York: Centre for Housing Policy; Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2014) *An Evaluation of the Broadway Skills Exchange* Time Bank, London: Broadway.

learned for any future developments of new Crisis Skylights. Second, Crisis Skylight is strong on promoting employment and financial stability, but the service mix is very clearly less extensive in relation to the other three elements of the *Crisis Model of Change*.

Crisis Skylight is not, nor was it intended to be, a health service for single homeless people. But liaison with the NHS and – as has been part of the role of the mental health coordinators – someone advocating on behalf of a single homeless person is essential. Poor health is not universally present among single homeless people or among Crisis Skylight members, but as the cohort study shows, it can be hugely important in moving away from homelessness.

There is, always, a question of balance, around what Crisis Skylight is and where its priorities lie, but support with health care, which may be most effectively extended by greater use of case management, is essential to the progression that Crisis Skylight seeks to achieve. There is scope to increase provision of the mental health coordinators and look more widely at case management in relation to ensuring access to health, social services and housing related support.

Equally, the housing support provided by Crisis Skylight could be further developed. There is, in the light of evidence from the cohort study, a need to consider extending what is on offer. Housing coaches and other staff providing one-to-one support, can facilitate access to the private rented sector, alongside providing more general housing advice, but the offer is not always consistently present, nor consistently effective.

Crisis Skylight could become further integrated into local systems for responding to homelessness and homelessness prevention services. This would formalise Crisis Skylight

as an access point for homelessness prevention, local lettings agencies, floating support teams focused on tenancy sustainment and provide a direct route to more intensive services like Housing First and Critical Time Intervention. One-to-one support would include referrals to homelessness prevention and homelessness services as a matter of course, alongside direct support from housing coaches and other workers.

Direct provision is another option. This which would mean Crisis moved into delivering services focused much more heavily on meeting housing need, a radical realignment for both Crisis generally and for Crisis Skylight. The evidence comparing housing-led and Housing First services with fixed site, congregate services that are designed to make someone ‘housing ready’, a hostel or temporary supported housing, shows that Housing First is more effective⁷⁴. The cost of developing and staffing hostels and congregate supported housing is considerable and, while these services can be effective for single homeless people with lower support needs, there is again evidence in favour of lower cost, housing-led/floating support services⁷⁵.

The results of this research indicated that disconnection from a Crisis Skylight may occur simply because housing need is not being met in a coordinated way, another service provider arranges housing or temporary accommodation that takes someone out of range and service contact ceases. If Crisis Skylight is more directly involved in providing settled homes, alongside promoting other aspects of ontological security, as discussed in Chapter 3, and becomes a service model with a more comprehensive housing offer, it may become more effective overall. There has been an expansion in the housing coach function, but it came too late for the research to fully explore the effects that it may have.

74 Pleace, N. (2016) op. cit.

75 Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) *The Case for Housing First in the European Union: A Critical Evaluation of Concerns about Effectiveness* European Journal of Homelessness 7.2, 21-41.

Extending this role may enhance effectiveness sufficiently, or it may not, in which case the questions around joint working and direct service provision arise again.

Discussing the possibility of a greater focus on housing need raises the question of whether Crisis should continue to invest in Crisis Skylight, or refocus attention on preventing and reducing single homelessness by meeting housing need, ie adopt a housing-led rather than social integration focus. Clearly, there are strengths and innovation in Crisis Skylight, as it connects single homeless people with education, training and employment, helps with mental health, can and does assist with housing and does, for some members, deliver a sustainable route out of homelessness. However – in terms of the time and investment Crisis has placed into Crisis Skylight – it may be worth considering whether Crisis Skylight, as it is now, does enough in relation to preventing and reducing homelessness and whether reducing socioeconomic exclusion among single homeless people, at the rates being achieved, is a sufficient response to single homelessness.

There are many single homeless people that Crisis Skylight does not successfully engage with, for all that it does achieve. Whether spending the money invested in Crisis Skylight in different ways could achieve more for single homeless people – which may mean radical changes for Crisis Skylight or a whole new direction for Crisis as a whole – is a strategic question that is worth consideration.

Crisis Skylight creates environments in which social networking may take place, but those environments are restricted in scale and in frequency. The classes allow people to socialise, but they are classes, just as the arts-based activities are focused on delivering meaningful participation in the creative or performing arts.

Crisis Skylight is not primarily a social space and this may also be something of a

deficiency. Again, this is a question of balance, of what Crisis Skylight is for, but as is the case with housing services, there is the possibility of expanding what Crisis Skylight does without necessarily sacrificing the strengths around education and arts-based activity. More social activities, more space and time to allow socialisation to take place, could be beneficial for some Crisis Skylight members.

Again, there are limits here, using Crisis Skylight as a mechanism for social support can only be extended so far before Crisis Skylight would start to change. This is the same sort of issue as exists around housing and homelessness prevention services, which essentially centres on how far it may be logical to modify Crisis Skylight.

The alternative is to work jointly with other services or consider directly providing external resources for social support and wider wellbeing that are affiliated with, but not ‘within’ Crisis Skylight in the sense of sharing times and spaces with Crisis Skylight activities (both for outreach-based and building-based services). The provision of additional, external, social support networks could also give Crisis Skylight an option when someone uses the service for activities and socialisation, but has limited capacity for progression.

While the evidence presented here is not entirely conclusive, there are strong indications from the cohort study that one-to-one support makes a crucial difference to the success of Crisis Skylight. The more one-to-one support there is, the better the outcomes tend to be. Two recommendations that flow from this are that one-to-one support should be immediately available, or as least as quickly as possible, and should be sustained. Some members will need more than others, but in terms of what makes a connection, keeps it and delivers results for Crisis Skylight, one-to-one support appears crucial.

Evidence from an array of studies conducted by the research team and colleagues at the

University of York strongly indicates that this support should, as is the case with Crisis Skylight, be as flexible and service-user led as possible and that one-to-one support should be consistent built around a trusting relationship that is allowed to develop between a service user and a worker⁷⁶.

Prevention and the focus on minimising the real and potential human and also financial costs of single homelessness are likely to continue to dominate policy and strategy in relation to single homelessness for the next few years. Crisis Skylight has a dual role to play in the development of homelessness strategies, like those in the USA, Canada and in Northern Europe. These have used a combination of wide-ranging, comprehensive preventative services and tested models of support for single homeless people with high support needs, to significantly reduce the level, duration and frequency of single homelessness⁷⁷.

Crisis Skylight can play a core role in homelessness prevention, because it can help address the economic and social precariousness that can be associated with single homelessness and, potentially, help with high support needs, like mental health problems, that might also lead to homelessness. When there is a risk that homelessness which has already occurred will become sustained or recurrent, Crisis Skylight has the potential to help bring that homelessness rapidly to an end, promoting the social and economic integration that underpin ontological security.

⁷⁶ Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2013) op. cit.

⁷⁷ Pleace, N. (2016) op. cit.

Appendix 1

Reports on Crisis Skylight

Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) *A Review of Crisis Skylight's Mental Health Services* London: Crisis.

Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) *Crisis Skylight: An Evaluation (Year One Interim Report)* London: Crisis.

Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) *Move Up, Move On at Crisis Skylight Birmingham: Evaluation Report* London: Crisis.

Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) *Progression Pathways at Skylight Oxford: Project Report* London: Crisis.

Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2014) *The Crisis Skylight Informal Learning Project at Skylight* London: Evaluation Report London: Crisis.

Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) *Helping young homeless people at Crisis Skylight Oxford* London: Crisis.

Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) *Positive Progression at Skylight Newcastle: Evaluation* London: Crisis.

Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) *Learn to Progress at Crisis Skylight Merseyside: Evaluation* London: Crisis.

Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) *Crisis Skylight Birmingham: An impact assessment 2012 – 2014* London: Crisis.

Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2016) *Crisis Skylight: Journeys to Progression* London: Crisis.

About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. We are determined to end homelessness. We do it person by person and by influencing policies to ensure everyone has a place to call home.

Homelessness is devastating, leaving people vulnerable and isolated.

Crisis offers ground breaking housing, health, education and employment services. We work with thousands of homeless people across the UK every year.

We are determined campaigners. We draw on our research, partnerships and years of experience of working directly with homeless people to deliver change and a vision to end homelessness for good.

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Homelessness ends here

The Crisis logo is rendered in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The letters are thick and closely spaced, with a slightly irregular, hand-drawn quality. The 'C' is particularly large and prominent, followed by 'R', 'I', 'S', 'I', 'S'. The overall appearance is strong and impactful.