

VENTURE
STUDIO 
FROM CRISIS

Impact Report
2020-2021



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FOREWORD BY JON SPARKES

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CRISIS



I am proud to say that the front-line teams at Crisis have, over the past year, helped 3,599 people to find their way out of homelessness for good.

We say 'Together we will end homelessness', and we mean it. We know our mission is possible, however with more than 200,000 households experiencing the worst forms of homelessness and many more affected by the economic impact of COVID, there's a lot of hard work to do before we fulfil it.

In 2018 we published a comprehensive plan to end homelessness. *Everybody In: How to End Homelessness in Great Britain* sets out the policies, practices and investments needed to prevent and end homelessness for good within ten years. Fulfilment of this plan will prevent the misery and trauma of homelessness for so many people, and it will put vital money back into the public purse – a benefit of £26 billion.

Ending homelessness requires some key policy decisions in relation to supply of and access to housing, the social security system, investment in prevention, and ensuring support is available for all regardless of migration status. But it also requires a change in the way we all address homelessness, as individuals, as charities, as entrepreneurs and as businesses – as well as public services.

If we are to succeed, we're going to have to disrupt the way things work. We're going to have to engage with the world of social enterprises. We're going to have to engage with businesses and academia. We're going to have to engage with everybody we possibly can and encourage them to join our mission. And it's with this pioneering and collaborative spirit that we have created Venture Studio by Crisis.

We already prevent, tackle and end homelessness person by person through our front-line services, place by place through our regional and local partnerships, and policy by policy through our work to advocate for

and support change by national governments. Venture Studio by Crisis gives us the opportunity to develop a new line of progress, working with the energy of social entrepreneurs and social enterprises to accelerate solutions that contribute to ending homelessness.

Why invest in social enterprise?

There are three things that the Venture Studio gives us the opportunity to develop. Firstly, it will help us to build powerful cross-sector partnerships. Secondly, it will enable us to challenge, innovate, disrupt and re-shape systems, products and processes. Thirdly, the Venture Studio has the potential to help us tap into new sources of income to support the other services that we offer – to create a sustainable model that enables us to spend money on things which have a huge impact on ending homelessness, and then recycle and spend it again.

Looking ahead

I hope that when I write this in a years' time, I can report that we've invested in more ventures and that we've built more ventures from the inside of Crisis. I hope that our Changing Lives Grants Programme has a much greater reach, and that we have built a public profile that shows how social enterprises can and will help end homelessness. I hope that our work continues to drive forward social change across the country.

And, based on the achievements of the Venture Studio team over the past year, I know that we will be reporting great progress.

Jon Sparkes
Chief Executive, Crisis

We're on a mission to accelerate the end of homelessness through entrepreneurship.

ABOUT

We build, invest in, and scale ventures that end homelessness for those experiencing it, or prevent homelessness from happening in the first place.

Our primary aims as a studio are to:

- Discover and create and lead new ventures to end homelessness
- Invest in and grow existing ventures with products and solutions to end homelessness
- Support those with lived experience of homelessness to create their own ventures
- Build and grow Crisis's entrepreneurial culture

We want to invest in and create appropriate, humane solutions with a true understanding of homelessness and how to solve it for good. To enable this, we provide access to industry expertise, user testing groups, funding, and a range of technical, business and product support to accelerate businesses that are driven to end homelessness.

We work in areas such as prevention and affordable housing provision to develop our own ventures, and we are proactive in scouting for ventures with innovative technology with whom we can help to create solutions for those experiencing homelessness.

WHY A VENTURE STUDIO?

We know that more people are at risk of homelessness due to the pandemic, and we need to explore new ways of tackling the issues underlying this. We also know that the entrepreneurial solutions and talents needed to help us bring an end to homelessness are out there.

The Venture Studio offers Crisis a new model to tackle homelessness — one which will embody cross-sector working uniting the knowledge and resources of the wider charitable sector, but those from industry, academia, and civil society to grow and invest in new solutions to end homelessness. Since our launch we have seen the huge appetite for taking this approach.

In 2020, at the very beginning of our work, we launched the Ending Homelessness Innovation Challenge with the Collective Foundation and were struck by the huge response from supporters and innovators across the world. 500 participants from 74 countries signed up to the challenge to develop early-stage ideas to end homelessness — that's a whole lot of prospective solutions worth exploring. The success of this challenge aside, we know that a great number of Crisis members have the appetite and ambition to develop their own ideas and ventures. You only have to look at the outcomes of our Changing Lives grants programme to appreciate the transformative impact this can have. We've also been overwhelmed by the support of ecosystem partners, funders and investors who immediately have understood the potential of our approach.

With increased impact investment internationally, there is a great opportunity for us to leverage the growing funding that exists for startups that are socially impactful, earning their name by creating innovative solutions to the world's biggest problems that are scalable, sustainable, and systematic. There has been a significant increase in the number of socially

conscious impact investors in recent years, with the market now estimated to be worth \$715 billion. Our role in this global shift is to back the right startups that can help bring an end to homelessness, whilst supporting them to unlock the right resources to scale. And as well as the solutions ventures can offer, there is an additional opportunity for us to generate new income for Crisis to fund our critical work.

We are an entrepreneurial charity by nature. In the wake of the pandemic, we demonstrated our adaptability and fearlessness through independence like never before. We quickly adapted our services to continue delivering support for those that needed it most, through our In This Together grants scheme and through the Home for All grants scheme, which is funding innovative work of smaller charities across the UK.

Our team is here to provide a trusted source of connection and support for startups, and — through the Venture Studio from Crisis — we're on a mission to accelerate the end to homelessness through entrepreneurship.



OUR ADVISORS

My role at Crisis is to ensure we have the people, culture and organisational design that enable us to have the most impact on ending homelessness. Crisis has unique insight into and understanding of the experience of homelessness which is drawn from our Experts by Experience panels, member forums, research and evaluation and experienced service providers. We use this insight to develop our services, policy positions, campaigns, build partnerships and to provide grants to not for profit partners delivering front line solutions.

Crisis continues to support thousands of individuals a year to become sustainably housed and has a proven track record in delivering policy changes that prevent and end homelessness. However, despite this great work thousands of families in Britain are unable to access the housing and services they need. If we are to end this injustice we need to think and act differently; our goal cannot be achieved unless we build new partnerships and structures, ones centred about the voices of those with lived experience. Our beneficiaries and supporter are interested in direct action, greater voice and new models of funding. The convergence of innovators, entrepreneurs, not-for-profit, and for profit sectors give rise to new opportunities. Increasingly, we see the need to share our insight and expertise with a broader range of partners who have the potential to create bold new solutions that contribute to ending homelessness.

Sarah Farquhar
Chair of the Venture Studio Advisory Board
and Director of Organisational Development



Dr. Vivienne Ming



Sarah Kerruish



Sarah Farquhar



Rosie Ferguson



Simon Ford



Sujata McNab



Damien Régent



Sue Siddall



Chenelle Ansah



Julie Devonshire



Jouja Maamri



James Gow



Ezechi Britton



ENDING HOMELESSNESS PERSON BY PERSON

CHANGING LIVES GRANT PROGRAMME

Our Changing Lives grant programme helps those who have experienced homelessness or been vulnerably housed to achieve their goals. When a Crisis member doesn't have the means to realise their aims, they can apply for a grant to help them take the necessary steps to get into education, employment, self-employment, or to start their own business. Since 2002, the programme has helped more than 3500 people with grants of up to £5000.

Between July 2020 and June 2021, Changing Lives awarded £78,000 of funding to 44 Crisis members, enabling them to enroll in training courses, purchase items required to secure paid employment, and to develop their business ideas.

The resilience of our members

Despite the immense challenges brought about by the pandemic, Crisis members have remained resolute and determined to achieve their goals. We are so proud to report the outstanding personal and professional achievements that 45 Changing Lives grant holders have made in the past 12 months:

32 were enrolled in or had completed a formal education course or programme

21 had gained a qualification or successfully completed a module towards qualification

21 had taken up paid employment or started their own business

15 had taken up a voluntary role or work placement

And with respect to personal growth:

82% felt that their confidence and self-esteem had improved

80% reported an increase in motivation

64% felt they had benefitted from meeting people

67% felt they were more likely to get work

In a year of tremendous uncertainty and lost learning time, Changing Lives has provided grant holders with a way to stay on track. With most education and training courses moved online, we swiftly adapted our decision-making and awarded significantly more grants to online learning than in the previous year. As well as funds to pay for courses, our grants helped people to purchase the digital devices they needed to attend them. This coincided with a period when our own services were forced to shift online, with members and our Skylight teams having to adapt to a new way of working together. Moving forward, our aim will be to ensure that Changing Lives continues to adapt to meet the needs of our members.



Between July 2020 and June 2021, Changing Lives awarded £78,000 of funding to 44 Crisis members...

What grant recipients have said

'D' received a grant to take NVQ level in Health and Social Care

I have completed 12 units so far. From July last year I have been volunteering in a drug and alcohol treatment centre as a support worker and I am enjoying it. Thanks for all your support, help and guidance – you have helped me change my life.

'F' is aiming to complete European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) Level 4 and had completed 80% of the modules within 12 months of receiving funding.

The lockdown severely impacted on the smooth flow of the course and various programmes I was undertaking. The course had to be put on hold for most of that period. I am very grateful for the support with completing this qualification as it becomes ever more relevant in the current climate of remote working. I feel better equipped to face the challenging job market with the ECDL course under my belt. Thank you very much.

'L' was awarded a grant to help them set up a creative business. Within 12 months of receiving it, they had launched their own website, created a range of Christmas cards, received a commission, opened an Etsy shop, had their work featured in magazines, and grown their profile on social media.

I hope that my business keeps thriving and a huge thank you for letting me have this opportunity of a creative career.

'J' received a grant to establish their insurance business

One of the main things that I have been able to do is work with some amazing people, Tom, Murray, George, Liz who have all been the bed rock of everything that I have done. They have all helped with advice, guidance and support.

FUNDING BREAKDOWN JULY 2020 – JUNE 2021

People Supported: 44 (47 grants)

Funding Awarded: £78,000

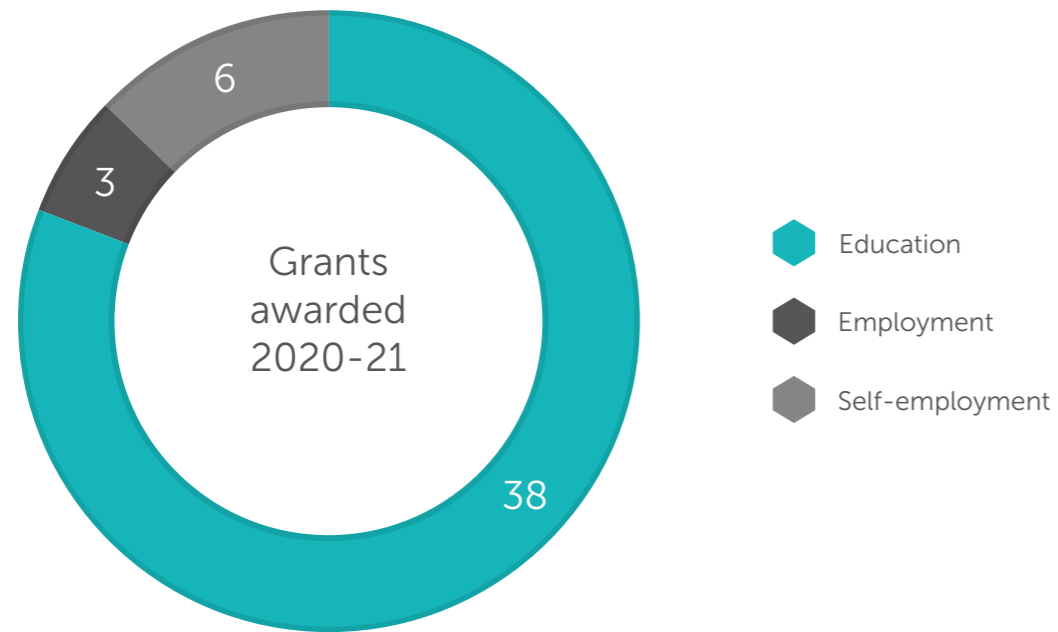
- Education grants 38
- Employment grants 3
- Self-employment grant 6

Spend per grant

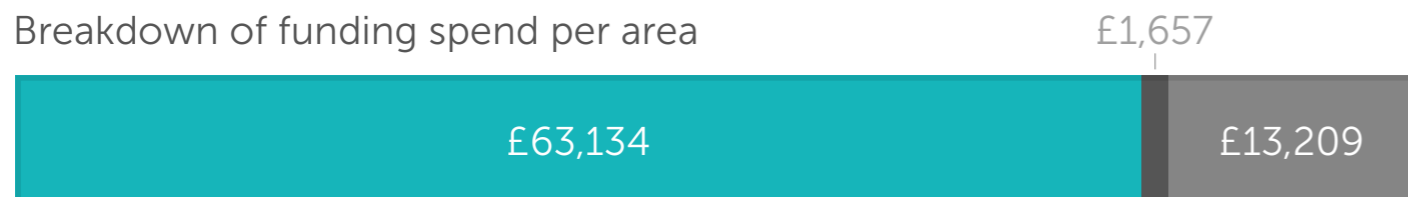
- Education £63,134
- Employment £1,657
- Self-employment £13,209

Grants awarded by Crisis Skylight location

- London 25
- Birmingham 10
- Oxford 6
- Edinburgh 2
- Coventry and Warwickshire 1
- Croydon 1
- Merseyside 1
- South Yorkshire 1



Breakdown of funding spend per area



■ Education
 ■ Employment
 ■ Self-employment



New approaches to Changing Lives

The Venture Studio is helping the Changing Lives programme evolve from a solely grant-giving initiative, into a partner-supported programme that can impact the journey of Crisis members – both before and after they receive funding. Our research has shown that many of our members have ambitions to start their own business, and there is a clear opportunity for us to support them in it – whilst accelerating their pathway out of homelessness. For those wishing to embark on an entrepreneurial journey, the Venture Studio is here to provide them with the right environment, tools, and expertise.

Next Steps programme

In October 2020, Crisis collaborated with Impact Hub King's Cross; an organization which runs a co-working space, business support programmes and events that unite impact-driven individuals and organisations with a shared vision of building a fairer and more sustainable future. We worked collectively to create *Next Steps*; a nine-month support programme for Crisis members interested in starting their own business. The programme was delivered entirely online, with the Impact Hub team sharing their expert knowledge, network, and resources with Crisis members.

The programme provided participants with access to:

- **Educational workshops** offering practical resources and knowledge on key business topics, including Mission, Vision and Value, Business Model Planning, Finance, Marketing and Storytelling, Sales Strategy and Pitching Ideas
- **Business mentoring** from a dedicated expert for two hours per month, to help participants develop and get their ideas ready to launch
- **Start-up funding** through the Changing Lives grants programme, for launch-ready ideas

Impact

The Next Steps programme ended in August 2021 and we are currently evaluating its full impact and the lessons learnt from it. What we know for sure is that it provided Crisis members with a structure to explore and develop their ideas, and it helped us to expand the support we can offer – thanks to additional expertise from Impact Hub King's Cross.

- **14** Crisis members attended 6 educational workshops
- **7** Crisis members have been working with a Business Mentor since March 2021
- **5** members involved in the programme have received funding for their business ideas

Identifying members needs through co-production and consultation

To ensure we are developing and delivering the right package of support, in June 2021 we hosted a focus group with eight current and ex-Crisis members – all of whom had started businesses or were considering starting a business. A common request was for tailored business support to be offered in the run up to launching an idea, and during the first few months into running the business.

Specifically, the group suggested extra support with:

- **Building resilience** – how to bounce back when things don't go to plan
- **Business skills training** – more support with business planning, marketing and promotion, storytelling and pitching skills
- **Professional services** – business finance, tax and accountancy, coaching and mentoring

The group also highlighted the importance of having access to peer support and connecting with people who 'get it'.

Thanks to the insights and ideas contributed by the focus group, we have been able to design a programme of support which we aim to provide in collaboration with Venture Studio partners. We are in the initial stages in developing this programme, however since the focus group we have already:

- Started exploring a partnership where Crisis members could join an already established and successful start-up programme
- Had discussions about creating a pilot video series to develop Crisis members' knowledge about starting a business
- Explored access to an accelerator programme and funding to support business who are ready to scale
- Made plans to launch a Peer Network which will support all new and existing Changing Lives business grant holders. We will involve Crisis members in the creation of this network, starting with an initial co-production workshop in mid-August 2021

Staying tuned to the needs of people with lived experience of homelessness will be key to us developing a truly impactful programme of support for Crisis members and our alumni of grant holders. We will continue to co-produce and assess the effectiveness of the support in place on an ongoing basis, to ensure we are setting people up for sustainable success.

LAURA'S STORY

Laura studied Fine Art at university, but when her mum died, she used alcohol to escape her grief.

Homeless for months and unable to get support, she got into a very dark place. But thanks to a Changing Lives grant from Crisis, she's now a self-employed illustrator and full of hope.

"My mum was my best friend and I was devastated when she died. If you can't get help for mental health problems, you find other ways to escape what's going on inside you. I became addicted to alcohol and went to a really bad place.

I was homeless for months, staying on people's sofas, which made me feel incredibly anxious. With no support to help me, there was a lot of worry about what the next day would bring."

When Laura went into rehab, she finally received the counseling she needed to help with her anxiety, depression, and grief. She moved into a dry house for women and started doing Crisis courses.

"I picked up a pencil and drew a field and a fence, and doing that simple task was so powerful. It was such a big moment because I felt my brain come back! It was magical. Art helped me express myself.

Coming to Crisis was the best thing that could have happened. I've done courses on everything from mental health to finances, while also having art mentoring, I'm like a sponge with the experts' advice.

My coaches have been incredible, providing one-to-one support with everything from universal credit, to finding a flat just before the start of the pandemic.

My home is in a peaceful rural area, so I can create from here. It's safe, a base camp, which you really need when you've had a journey like mine.

My coaches also helped me secure a Crisis Changing Lives grant so I could get started as an illustrator. I did a pitch to a panel of experts, and got funding for a laptop, a mobile phone, a desk, art materials. I get vouchers in instalments so I can buy the materials I need as I go along.

I love capturing nature, buildings, people and animals and I've started selling originals and prints, creating gift cards and doing commissions too.

The Crisis coaches have been angels. They were so kind and supportive, right from my recovery to becoming self-employed. I've finished all my 121s with Crisis, which were superb. I'm getting my art out there, it's me versus the world now, eek!

I know Crisis will always be there for me. I've gone back to the old Laura that I used to be, the sporty one, the healthy one. It's a beautiful feeling and I've got so much hope for the future."



ENDING HOMELESSNESS BY BUILDING NEW BUSINESSES

WHAT IS INTRAPRENEURSHIP, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER TO CRISIS?

Internal venture building, or *Intrapreneurship*, is something that has always been encouraged at Crisis. When launching the Venture Studio, we saw it as a key piece of the puzzle; an opportunity to use the fast-paced iterative approach to accelerate the pace and scale at which we could explore internal business ideas. Creating new businesses within Crisis is not a new concept – take for example our shops, furniture and café businesses that we have launched over the last few years. These have become an integral part of our brand profile and are key to our commercial offering.

We want to further embed and enable a culture of innovation at Crisis, by giving staff who are working within the homelessness sector the opportunity to turn their insights and ideas into potential businesses to be developed in-house. We know that the answer to a problem often lies within the problem itself, which means that Crisis staff are among some of the most qualified to create meaningful, impactful solutions to homelessness. In the instances where our in-house ideas, bolstered by our own knowledge, insight and infrastructure are best placed to create an effective solution – we want to give those ideas the best chance of succeeding.

Sprinting for homelessness

In November 2020, as part of an organisation-wide 'Mission & Money Audit', we ran two design sprints in collaboration with innovation consultancy Good Innovation, which resulted in us exploring two new potential business propositions in detail.

Over the course of a week, we worked together as a multidisciplinary sprint team and engaged key internal experts along the way. We defined key questions to test the validity of each proposed idea and used an Agile approach to product development – testing ideas in short iterative bursts to help us decide on those most worthwhile pursuing.



Over 50 members of staff from across Crisis took part in the 'Mission & Money Audit' to create new commercial ideas that could accelerate the end to homelessness



200 ideas were generated



10 ideas with the most commercial and impact potential were prioritised



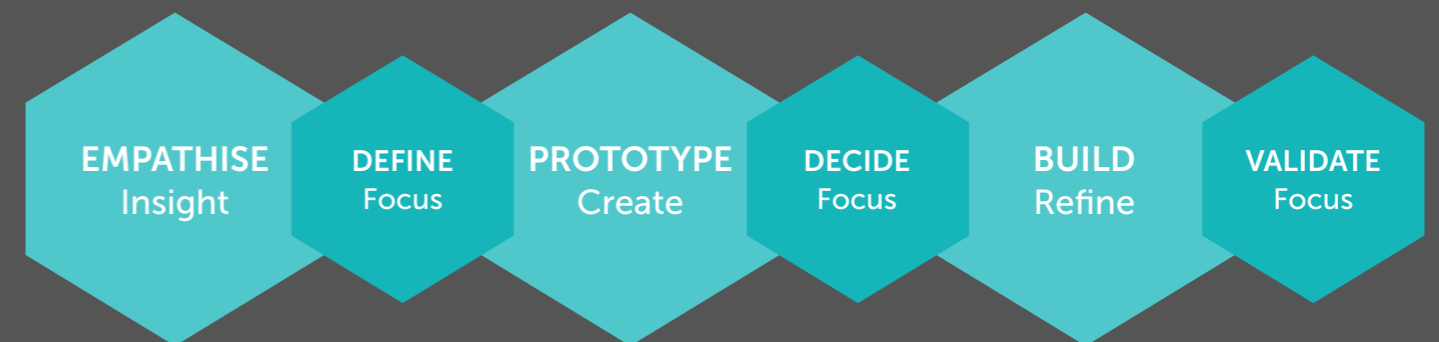
I found the design sprints process massively helpful in challenging me to think more broadly and creatively on the solutions to some of our most daunting challenges. As someone who has been working in housing and homelessness for some time, I retain an unhealthy amount of skepticism and defensiveness when it comes to things which suggest answers where we haven't been able to find them before. However, the inclusive, reflective and evidence-based way these sprints were approached thankfully proved me to be very wrong.

Chris Hancock,
Director of Services
Development, Crisis

How we got there...in a one week sprint!

Over the course of the 5 days we worked closely with the target audience groups to co-create and prioritise the features, services and Crisis USP. We focused on

our sprint questions for the 5 days and there are still questions to answer.



What we aim to achieve next

Intrapreneurship provides a real opportunity for change within Crisis. We believe that it's the people working directly with our members who will develop impactful ideas that will help us to make leaps, not steps, towards ending homelessness for good. By providing an effective framework and way of working, as well as rewarding those with innovative and entrepreneurial ideas, we can help to bring about a swifter and sustained end to homelessness.

Jem Henderson,
Head of Innovation, Crisis



ENDING HOMELESSNESS BY INVESTING IN AND SUPPORTING BUSINESSES

OUR INITIAL PRIORITY

When we explored the priority means of ending homelessness during our 'Mission & Money Audit' last year, Crisis staff ranked Housing solutions above all else. Access to housing is one of the biggest barriers for people experiencing homelessness, and that's why we are leading the way with the development of Housing First and Housing Led approaches. The lack of access to suitable housing in the UK is not purely a supply issue, but that is a big part of the problem. So, armed with this knowledge, when we were looking at making our first round of investments into external businesses, we prioritized the products and services that were going to help us tackle it.

Our investments

So far, The Venture Studio has invested in two commercial organisations whose housing-focused products and services we believe will play a significant

role in ending homelessness. Along with financial investment, we are providing a tailored programme of support to guarantee the impact and success of each business.

'Housing Led' or 'Rapid Rehousing' approaches to ending homelessness simply mean trying to get someone into their own home as quickly as possible and providing them with the support they need to make it work. It involves minimising the amount of time spent in temporary accommodation and seeks to minimise the number of moves people have to make before they move into a permanent home. 'Housing First' is a form of 'Housing Led' solution to homelessness which supports people with the most complex needs.



We have invested in Lanu because of the tangible impact their technological solution could have on ending homelessness. Lanu is on a mission to make planning easier for everyone by digitally analysing the development potential for each property in the UK. Using their unique assessment technology, they will be able to optimise existing housing stock at scale and bring vacant properties back into use. By creating new space for housing within existing stock to serve those most in need of housing, Lanu reduces the reliance on new housing development.

Since engaging with the Venture Studio, Lanu has expanded its scope from private customers extending their own home, to analysing and optimising whole property portfolios and even whole city blocks.

The Venture Studio will monitor Lanu's impact through the:

- Number of local councils, housing associations and private landlords that are engaged to regenerate vacant housing stock
- Number of local councils, housing associations and private landlords that expand or regenerate their vacant housing stock as a result of a Lanu recommendation
- Number of affordable homes or social housing units that are subsequently brought back into the market



Shane O'Donnell,
CEO & Co-Founder



Luke Coburn,
CTO & Co-Founder



Agile Homes is radically changing the way homes are built, and we are invested in their ability to deliver affordable and dignified homes at speed, whilst involving the community in every step of the process. They use unique technology to build high-quality, low-carbon and affordable homes fast – on land that is free and hidden in plain sight. Their first build was a flexible, environmentally friendly home called 'TAM', which they completed to the highest standard in just ten weeks. Their approach and agility mean that they can create homes without the need for planning permission and build in spaces that would otherwise not be viable for developers, by identifying micro-sites in gaps, corners, and overlooked areas.

Since engaging with the Venture Studio, Agile Homes has committed to using its model of development as a means to help end homelessness, and they have recently secured additional loan capacity from Bristol City Fund.

The Venture Studio will monitor Agile Home's impact through the:

- Number of houses they build
- Number of individuals that are housed in Agile Homes
- Number of individuals that are trained in offsite construction techniques
- Number of ex-offenders that are employed on Agile Homes Sites



Craig White,
CEO & Co-Founder



Linda Farrow,
Director & Co-Founder



Agile Homes has committed to using its model of development as a means to help end homelessness...



THE SUPPORT WE PROVIDE

The main aim of the Venture Studio investing in external businesses is to help them to deliver solutions that tackle homelessness. More important than the financial support we can offer, is the expertise, guidance and network that we can give each business access to.



A force for good

In addition to investing in two external businesses, Venture Studio has also launched a first-of-its-kind startup. Good Giving was founded in partnership with four major charities – WaterAid, RNIB, the Royal British Legion, and Barnardo's. The startup is owned by all five charities and aims to disrupt the payroll giving market aiming to raise an additional £150 million for charities across the UK by 2030. Payroll giving offers a tax-efficient way of donating to worthy causes and is highly popular in the US and Australia, yet in the UK only 4% of employees take up this scheme. With the force and influence of five charities combined, we believe Good Giving will increase the take-up rate exponentially, and in doing so provide funding for the vital services that Crisis provides.

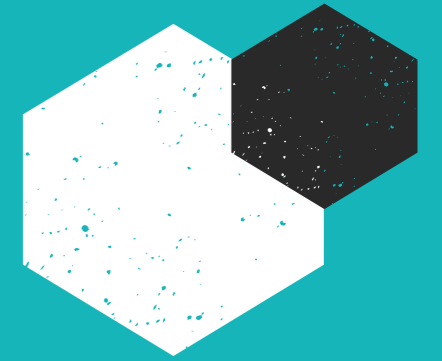
Beyond housing

Whilst our first investments are in the Housing sector, we are working towards a portfolio that extends beyond this. We are exploring other areas that could have significant impact on ending homelessness as part of an evolving investment thesis, which could include businesses in sectors such as health and wellbeing, financial inclusion, and skills and employment.

Our pipeline report

For the first time, between November 2020 and January 2021, we actively recruited potential ventures for investment. We think it's important to share this data as part of our YSYS #KnowYourDataPledge. In our commitment to building a diverse and inclusive Venture Studio, with ventures that represent the range of people we serve at Crisis, we want to be transparent in our approach and dedication to improve.

DATA



150+ startups in our pipeline



53 companies completed an application for funding

- Diversity and Inclusion data
 - Gender: 36% identified as women
 - Ethnicity 39% self-identified as having a Black, Asian, and/or Ethnic Minority, or mixed background
 - LGBTQIA: 6% yes



7 companies and 15 founders were shortlisted

- Age
 - 33% between 25-34
 - 53% between 35-44
 - 7% between 45-54
- Gender
 - 87% identify as male
 - 13% identify as female
 - 0% identify as non-binary

- Sexual orientation
 - 80% identify as heterosexual/straight
 - 20% prefer not to say
 - 0% identify as Bi, Gay, Lesbian, Queer or Pansexual
- Ethnicity
 - 40% identify as White: British
 - 27% identify as White: Irish
 - 7% identify as Asian or Asian British: Indian
 - 7% identify as Chinese or Chinese British
- Experience of Homelessness: 13% said yes
- At Risk of Homelessness: 33% or five people
- Previous founding experience: 87%



What have we learned?

We worked hard to build community partnerships with dozens of organisations that helped connect us to founders we wouldn't otherwise have reached. For example, YSYS, Ada Ventures, ACH, Foundervine, Zebras Unite, FinTech North, FinTech Scotland, and with Tech Nation Entrepreneur engagement managers in Wales, Scotland, Yorkshire. It is clear however, that the outcomes were not in line with our ambition and we need to do better.

To widen the diversity of our portfolio we will do more targeted scouting ourselves, develop a referral programme that remunerates finders, be more vocal about our existing 'open-door-policy' and publish our investment thesis clearly articulating who we invest in against what criteria making our due diligence process more transparent. We will continue to learn from experts in the field what best practices in diversity and inclusion looks like for investors and keep pushing ourselves to do better.










ENDING HOMELESSNESS THROUGH A PEOPLE-POWERED COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY MANIFESTO

Our mission as a community is to inspire action. We choose to be active over passive, intentional over opportunistic. By uniting those with lived experience of homelessness, entrepreneurs,

innovators, investors, domain experts, technologists, creatives, and many more, we are nurturing a thriving community which uses its skills to end homelessness for good.

What we've been up to

 <p>12 Entrepreneurship Forums</p>	 <p>2 Digital & Data Innovation Talks</p>	 <p>50+ Speakers</p>	 <p>6 Office Hours</p>
 <p>5 Idea Clinics</p>	 <p>2 Hackathons</p>	 <p>∞ Countless connections</p>	

HOW WE OPERATE

Cultivating culture: breaking down the barriers to entrepreneurship

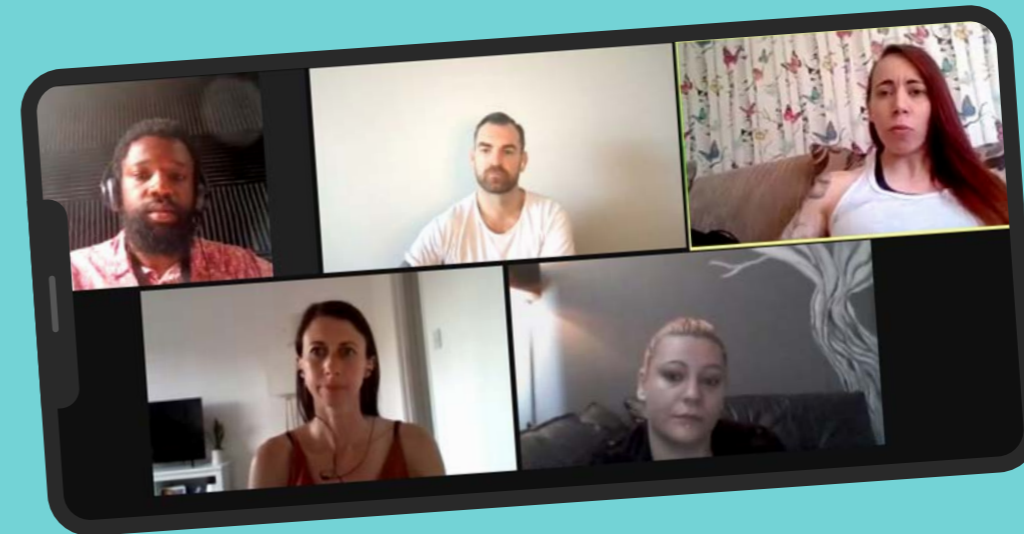
A key aspect of our work in the Venture Studio is understanding how we can build a bridge between homelessness experts at Crisis, those with lived experience of homelessness, and the startup ecosystem in the UK and beyond. We do this by organising a range of events and digital content to bring these communities together with an opportunity to learn from each other.

To build confidence with Crisis staff and members, the Venture Studio works to demystify entrepreneurship and inspire people to imagine what can be achieved when you look at a problem through an entrepreneurial lens. Rather than being associated with immense wealth or tech startups in Silicon Valley, we need to

make it accessible – a norm in our culture. We need to show that entrepreneurship is about solving societal problems, and that it's something everyone can pursue – not just a select few.

Creating a safe space to learn

Every month, the Venture Studio team hosts an Entrepreneurship Forum event for Crisis members, colleagues, and volunteers. We invite founders and business leaders to shed light on their journeys into entrepreneurship, helping to define what it means to be an entrepreneur, to inspire a culture of innovation within Crisis, and help us to think about how entrepreneurship can help us achieve our mission to end homelessness in new ways.



A Forum where we explored how lived experience contributes to startup success. Thank you to Rob Curtis, Co-Founder and CEO of Daylight, the first and only digital banking platform in the U.S. specifically designed for and by the LGBTQ+ community; Sophie Maxwell, Changing Lives grant to set up The Really NEET Project, an award-winning Social Enterprise working with some of society's most vulnerable young people; Alice Adams, Co-Founder and Director of Power With, alongside Caroline Hadley, an expert with lived experience of homelessness.

If you're going to make a change in the system that already exists, you need to support the trailblazers from non-traditional paths to entrepreneurship. You need to shine a light and support those who are breaking down a wall that has never been broken down before.

Rob Curtis,
Co-Founder
& CEO of Daylight

Peer-to-peer support

Established founders who come through our Changing Lives programme and our Venture Studio portfolio stay connected, and regularly 'pay it forward' by donating their time, expertise, and advice to founders in the studio who are in the early stages of building their business. Support ranges from assisting members with grant applications, to providing guidance on market strategy and vision. This valuable level of connectivity is unique to the Venture Studio. In such an environment, with its connected startup community, members with lived experience of homelessness can hear and learn from other experienced entrepreneurs who have embarked on this journey before.

Opportunities to experiment

We strive to spot the potential of new ideas, whether they come from members, Crisis staff, our own team, or external startups. We're not afraid to experiment and learn, especially as we work with our community to help test their ideas in a rigorous and dignified way. We do this by hosting weekly drop-in sessions that provide an open door for people to bring their ideas to the Venture Studio team and our partners. This consists of Idea Clinics, for those who are at an early stage of

developing their business idea; and Office Hours, for more tailored and strategic advice for those whose ideas have been tested and are closer to bringing their business to market. These sessions provide an opportunity for us to give constructive feedback, advice, offer new connections and support to those who want to 'have a go' at developing their idea into a product and business.

Co-Production: Designing with dignity

Everything we do at the Venture Studio needs to be at least informed by, if not co-produced with experts by lived experience of homelessness.

In addition to supporting people to develop their business ideas, we ensure that they're equipped to do so in a dignified way. While the entrepreneurial ecosystem is often full of well-intentioned people seeking to solve problems, many solutions often fail to consider the complexities of the problems they are attempting to solve, which can lead to doing more harm than good. When solutions are created with good intentions but from zero insight, (such as the phenomenon of the crisp packet blanket), we run the risk of further embedding the stereotypes that already

exist around homelessness, and the lack of understanding of its root causes.

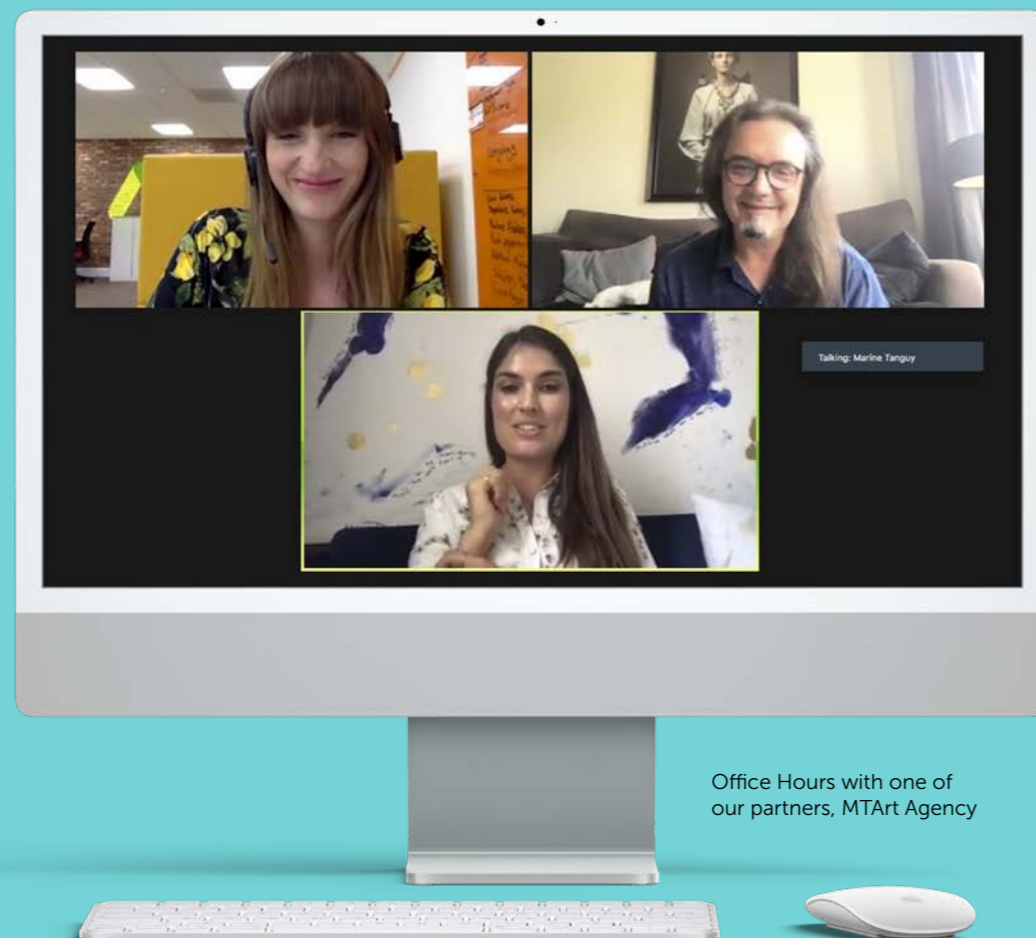
To ensure that our standards are set higher than good intentions, we support people to build dignified and informed solutions by:

- **Connecting them to experts with lived experience of homelessness, and domain experts in homelessness to gather insights at an early stage**
- **Showcasing examples of dignified and innovative solutions that work**
- **Hosting educational events and publishing digital content about what designing with dignity means in practice**
- **All investments we make are approved by a panel of lived experience experts. As part of our investment, the founders commit to working with lived experience experts on their offer.**

These processes ensure that any product or service must be informed by and ultimately approved by someone with lived experience. It also moves beyond this, in the sense that by designing with dignity, teams can shape the way in which homelessness is perceived, communicated, and framed in public discourse.

We're also not just getting co-production commitments from other founders, but stay true to this ourselves. This report received valuable feedback from our standing expert by experience panel, and for next year, we'll involve the panel earlier in the process. Every major project, be it our Peer Network or our Investment Thesis is developed together with lived experience experts. And we aim to include a Crisis member on every interview panel for new team members to join the studio.

Together, the commitment on co-production from our community and ourselves, means we're always designing with dignity.



Office Hours with one of our partners, MTArt Agency

I became interested in being involved with Venture Studio as it focuses on helping people and serving the common good. I have been on the verge of homelessness for about a year and a half, however I am starting my own business now. What excites me about the project is its entrepreneurial spirit and the way the sessions are organized, giving all the members an opportunity to contribute and share our ideas in a creative setting.

Anonymous member

I have volunteered for some years in various projects supporting the homeless and those with multiple disadvantage so that lived experience was of obvious relevance to this project. This is perhaps the first project where my qualifications and work experience prior to my voluntary work are of specific use.

Anonymous member

BUILDING A PEOPLE-POWERED MOVEMENT

Tackling large societal problems requires a cross-sector approach, and Crisis cannot end homelessness alone. To make the changes needed to prevent homelessness, ensure access to housing, and to sustain individuals out of homelessness for good, will require effort from those beyond the charity sector.

That's why, in our Venture Studio, we're building a community of advocates from industry, academia, investors, government, charities, and beyond. We know that bringing people with interdisciplinary backgrounds and different lived experiences together offers new ways of looking at problems and will enable us to co-create solutions and test innovative methods – all whilst generating and sharing new knowledge.



Our first event was a success. Ten brilliant MVPs were built and deployed...

The Venture Studio from Crisis team brought experience, innovation, and a deep understanding of the problems that people experiencing homelessness face. That meant that the Hackathon teams were able to build dignified solutions with users at the heart of their product. This is only the start of a relationship where, together, we'll be able to leverage technology and innovation to make a real difference to the lives of many.

Ibrahim Javed,
Founder of Deen Developers

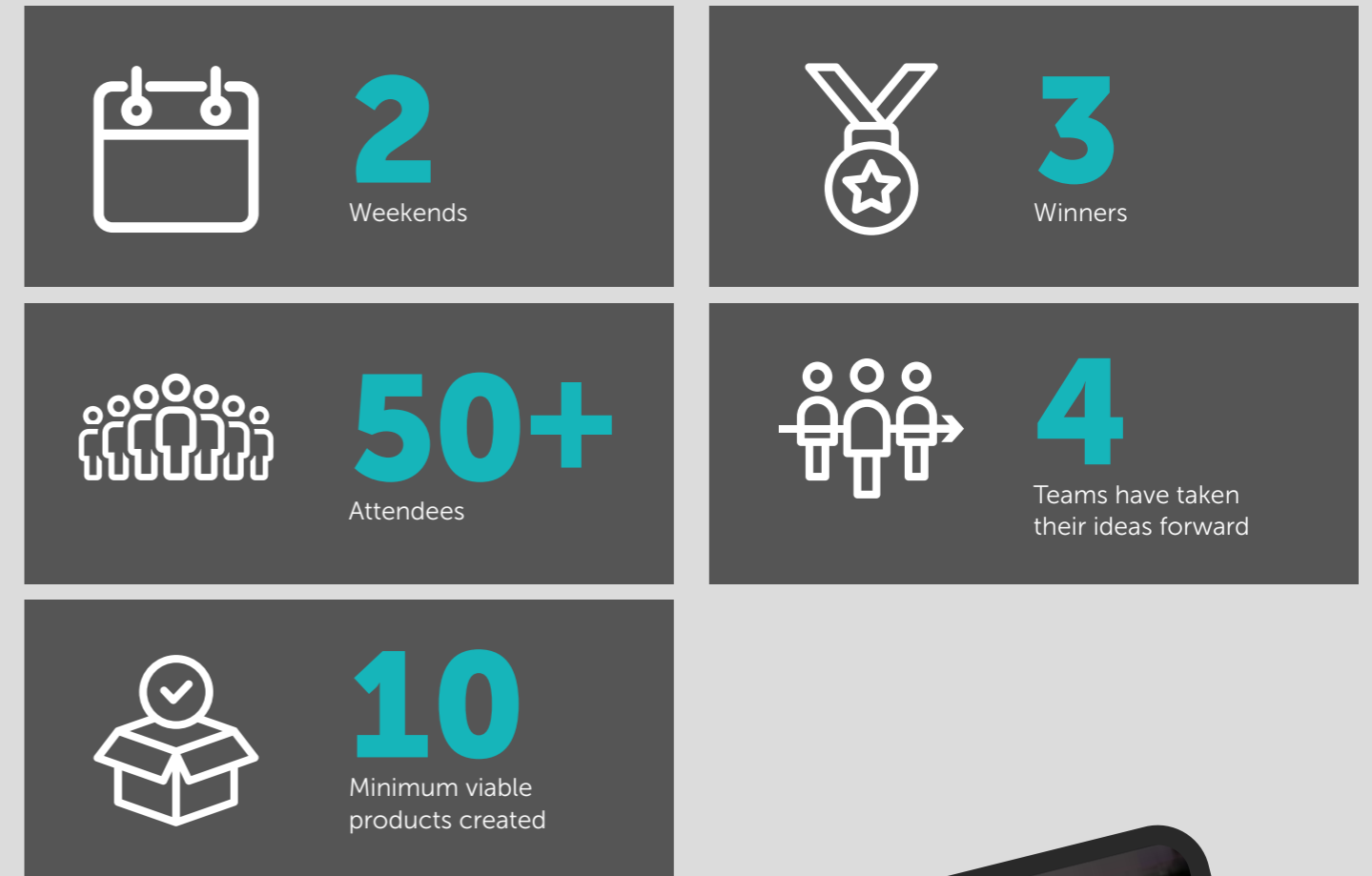
How are we doing this?

The Hackathon for Homelessness with Deen Developers

Over two weekends in March 2021, Venture Studio from Crisis teamed up with Deen Developers, a passionate community of techies and creatives who crowdsource their skills for social good, to host the #HackathonforHomelessness. Over the course of a few days, we brought together a diverse group of ten talented, curious, and emotionally intelligent teams to build impactful solutions to problem statements that were co-created by those with lived experience of homelessness.

Our first event was a success. Ten brilliant MVPs were built and deployed in a short space of time. Attendees also learned a wealth of new skills around coding, design, prototyping and startup business strategy. We want to build on this success by making Hackathons a regular event in the Venture Studio by hosting them every term. This will enable us to spark and support early-stage ideas, alongside individuals who want to have an impact on ending homelessness.

Hackathon for Homelessness in numbers

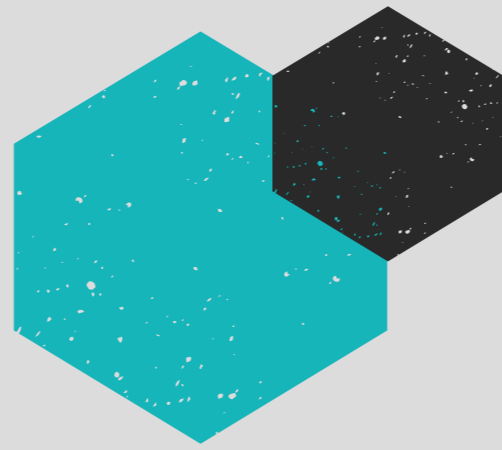


Deen Developer Hackathon





We gather for the purpose of building a community that shares and creates meaning to ultimately play a pivotal role in ending homelessness.



Bringing people together

Uniting people from different backgrounds is an integral part of what we do. We gather for the purpose of

building a community that shares and creates meaning to ultimately play a pivotal role in ending homelessness.



Below: Convening people around the Studio, including our Strategic Advisory Board, our partners, Changing Lives grant recipients at the House of St Barnabas, Summer 2021



VENTURE STUDIO GOVERNANCE

The Venture Studio is ultimately overseen and governed by Crisis's Trustees. The Investment and Risk committee, made up of Trustees and Directors, approves every investment decision of the Venture Studio. This committee also receives bi-annual reports on the progress of the Venture Studio, its investment portfolio companies as well as the grant recipients.

Grant decisions are made within the Venture Studio team supported by a panel of skilled volunteers. Going forward Changing Lives alumni will be involved in the decision-making process.

The investment due diligence process is supported by a range of Crisis internal and external experts. As part of the process we involve experts with lived experience of homelessness, impact investors, and people with deep housing expertise, helping us to understand what best practice really looks like. Our external investment committee is chaired by our strategic advisor Chenelle Anseh.

We work with our funding partners on a reporting schedule to demonstrate how the Venture Studio and its portfolio are ending homelessness. We also track the impact our bespoke growth programme has on our portfolio companies.

We are committed to transparency and accountability and welcome any questions on our governance.



OUR PARTNERS

PROGRAMME PARTNERS



STRATEGIC COLLABORATOR



ECOSYSTEM PARTNERS



FUNDING PARTNER



We'd like to give a special thanks to the players of the People's Postcode Lottery who have made our work this year possible through their generous funding.

Thank you also to the visionary donors who have supported our ambition to end homelessness through the Venture Studio from Crisis. Your donations of money, time and expertise have all played a significant role in the impact we have achieved together in this first year, and we look forward to building our collaborations with you in years to come.

THE VENTURE STUDIO TEAM

Liz Choonara

Head of Entrepreneurship

Leads the Crisis Enterprise & Innovation team and manages its existing business portfolio. Is responsible for the development of the entrepreneurship and innovation culture within the charity and the creation of new ventures to end homelessness. She previously worked with deep tech and science startups at Imperial College London. Whilst there she founded its successful women's entrepreneurship programme 'WE Innovate' and has spoken on her experience of increasing diversity and inclusion in tech internationally including at the World Economic Forum.

Felix Litzkow

Venture Studio Manager

"I'm thrilled to lead the Venture Studio Team. I've been a part of the Enterprise Team at Crisis for six years, helping our different businesses deliver mission and money. Before my time at Crisis I was based in India for almost three years working for No Nasties, an e-commerce startup leading the fairtrade and organic clothing movement. I got a taste for businesses that create real social change during my time at Grameen Creative Lab, a consultancy focused on Social Business co-founded by Prof Muhammad Yunus and a startup company itself. While I was in India, I also co-founded a side hustle apply named The Secret Supper Project."

Lloyd Francis

Changing Lives Grants Coordinator

I manage our individual grants programme that support Crisis members to develop their career prospects. I'm excited to be exploring how the Studio can harness the education, tools and networks that would support our members to build sustainable businesses and leave homelessness behind for good.

Ellie Broad

Community & Events Executive

"I lead on growing and managing the community of amazing humans that work with the Venture Studio to source diverse founders and deliver support for our portfolio. You can also chat to me about all things content, brand, and events in the Studio. Prior to joining Crisis, I was part of the early team at Zinc VC building socially impactful startups from scratch, and have spent time volunteering supporting refugees and youth in regions of conflict in Greece, Gaza, the Netherlands, and the UK. I'm a bit obsessed with how people-power, innovation, and startups have the potential to tackle huge social inequalities."

Sarah Hopley

Commercial Partnerships Lead

"I initially joined the Venture Studio as a Venture Builder during my social innovation fellowship with Year Here. In that time, I have been developing housing-led solutions to homelessness as potential internal ventures and have been leading the growth programme for our investment portfolio. I have recently taken on the role of Commercial Partnership Lead and am most excited about how we embed intrapreneurship more widely within Crisis, and how we build inspiring strategic partnerships that will ensure we realise our mission to end homelessness through entrepreneurship."

Katrin Busch

Venture Programme Manager

Before starting as Programme Manager at Crisis, I co-founded a digital marketing agency. As Head of Operations, I built the structure to support its growth from 3 to 40 employees. Joining the Venture Studio marries my startup experience with my passion for social causes which really excites me! Through connecting ventures with in-house experts, partners, and our lived experience panel, we accelerate their growth whilst ensuring meaningful social impact.



Liz Choonara



Ellie Broad



Felix Litzkow



Sarah Hopley



Lloyd Francis



Katrin Busch

WHERE IS THIS WORK LEADING US?

We are very much at the beginning of our journey, and we are yet to realise the full potential of this work. So far as a team, we have invested in external ventures, built propositions for internal venture concepts, ran hackathons, secured new funding for the Studio,

given grants to those experiencing homelessness to start a business, and created new opportunities to get those businesses to the best start possible.

Within the next five years, our aim is for the Venture Studio to have:

NOW

Demonstrate that a different model of venturing is possible in the social enterprise space through convening a cross-sector approach

Ensure that anyone with lived experience of homelessness has just as much chance of creating a sustainable and successful venture as anyone in society, with our Changing Lives programme being recognised as a leading model for ending individuals' homelessness through entrepreneurship

Significantly increased the proportion of impact investment in the UK being directed at ventures to end homelessness

Build a broad investment portfolio of ventures with solutions to end homelessness

To have built a range of Crisis-owned ventures to deliver on mission and money for Crisis as we look to diversify our income streams

5 YEARS TIME

JOIN US

In order for us to bring our vision to life we need:

- **Funding from philanthropists to deliver our model of change**
We want to grow our offer and raise a fund to invest in ventures and need new sources of funding for this
- **Partnerships with the wider homelessness sector**
To ensure we are tackling the most challenging issues in homelessness we need to deepen our insights into the problems we are trying to solve and want to do this in partnership with the wider sector
- **Expertise and connections from corporate partners**
We want to capitalise on the knowledge and networks of corporate partners to support the growth of the ventures in our portfolio
- **Ecosystem Partners**
to help us find relevant investment opportunities

If you want to join us in our mission and can offer any of above get in touch with us at: venture.studio@crisis.org.uk

AN OPEN-DOOR POLICY

Our doors are always open. We want to get to know founders and support their products where we can – even before making an investment. That's why we host a bi-weekly event for founders

to join and meet the Venture Studio team, learn about what support is available, and discover how their business can end homelessness.


THANK YOU

We know that we will not achieve the goals set out above alone. This work is going to require an effective cross-sector coalition to support us in this journey. Thank you to our incredible advisors and partners who have supported us so far, on our pioneering journey to find and feed the ideas that will help us to end homelessness for good.

If you want to help us on our mission to end homelessness – whether you're a startup with a product or service that could end homelessness or a funder who can help us widen the impact of our work – get in touch.

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Sign up for our newsletter

crisis.org.uk/venturestudio

Email us

venture.studio@crisis.org.uk

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