



Together
we will end
homelessness

Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority partnership: Helping homeless people and those in vulnerable housing situations to effectively access and safely maintain tenancies

Independent evaluation report prepared
by the Dartington Service Design Lab

November 2015 – December 2017



**South Yorkshire
FIRE & RESCUE**



**DARTINGTON
SERVICE
DESIGN LAB**

Who is Crisis?

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. Crisis is dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life changing services and campaigning for change.

Crisis offers education, employment, housing, arts and wellbeing services to address individual needs and help homeless people to transform their lives. Demonstrating tangible results and continual improvement is central to the Crisis model.

They are determined campaigners, working to prevent people from becoming homeless and advocating solutions informed by research and direct experience.



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Executive Summary

Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire (CSSY) successfully obtained funding from the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority *Stronger Safer Communities Reserve*. The funding (2015-2017) was to enhance existing partnership working between Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (SYFRA). The purpose of the grant was to help SYFRA better identify and support vulnerable groups at greater risk of fire; help homeless people and those in vulnerable housing situations to increase their knowledge of fire safety, and; help homeless people and those in vulnerable housing situations to more effectively access and safely sustain tenancies.

The evaluation report provides a series of reflections and recommendations focusing on the delivery of partnership activities by CSSY and SYFRA. Partnership activities include the following:

- Delivery of the Renting Ready course intended to help Crisis members develop the skills and knowledge to effectively sustain a tenancy;
- Delivery of 1:1 Crisis coaching to help members gain access to accommodation and sustain a tenancy - primarily within the Private Rented Sector (PRS);
- Facilitate member access to a housing bond or material support (where appropriate) to help ease the transition into a new tenancy;
- Development and ongoing refinement of a 'Safe & Well' fire safety module – using the most up-to-date evidence and expertise from SYFRA - to be embedded within the Crisis Renting Ready course curriculum, and;
- Referral of Crisis members entering new tenancies to receive a fire safety assessment and practical support from SYFRA (e.g. fitting of suitable fire alarms; review of safe cooking practices; assessment of electrical safety).

Reflections

Reflection 1. Crisis members who had engaged with CSSY and SYFRA partnership activities reported better awareness of their rights and entitlements as a tenant, and reported increased confidence in being able to maintain a tenancy (if secured).

Reflection 2. The content and delivery of the Renting Ready course is well designed and tailored by tutors to meet a range of different learning styles and needs.

Reflection 3. Renting Ready tutors work hard to effectively manage challenging group dynamics within the classroom.

Reflection 4. Renting Ready and accompanying 1:1 coaching creates a holistic package of support that provides a more direct pathway out of homelessness.

Reflection 5. The CSSY model is skilfully delivered to prevent members involved in partnership activities developing a dependency on Crisis.

Reflection 6. The nimble outreach model, coupled with the extensive reach of the Crisis team across South Yorkshire, provides an accessible service for vulnerable populations benefiting from partnership activities who would otherwise struggle to travel distances outside their local area to seek support.

Reflection 7. The partnership between CSSY and SYFRA was effective and mutually beneficial.

Reflection 8. An enduring legacy: delivery of partnership activities will continue beyond the lifetime of the initial grant.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Increase the reach of the Renting Ready course via development of online content.

Recommendation 2. Further enhance CSSY's presence at organisations/ services such as food banks, GP surgeries, Job Centres etc. to increase the reach of Renting Ready.

Recommendation 3. Develop an evidence-based assessment tool that compliments professional judgement when deciding if a member is ready to take on an independent tenancy.

Recommendation 4. Explore incentives and initiatives that encourage and support landlords who let to homeless people and those in receipt of housing benefits.

Recommendation 5. Refine the Renting Ready course, using rapid innovation and testing cycles, to incorporate content that promotes attitudes and motivation required to sustain a tenancy.

Setting the scene

Established in 2013, Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire (CSSY) provides support to homeless people and those in vulnerable housing situations across an extensive geographical area covering four local authorities: Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster.¹ The CSSY team works with some of the most vulnerable members of society who are facing multiple challenges (e.g. struggles with drug and alcohol addiction; mental health difficulties, and/or; low income and debt). Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire operates an exclusively outreach-based model. The CSSY team works in close partnership with a range of public and voluntary sector partners in South Yorkshire (see Appendix 1 for a list of partners). The CSSY team delivers a range of learning, art and wellbeing classes alongside partners and within partners' buildings (e.g. hostels) and travels extensively to meet with and support Crisis members who are in receipt of 1:1 coaching support.

About the Stronger Safer Communities Reserve

The *Stronger Safer Communities Reserve* was set up by South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (SYFRA) to fund prevention initiatives in the area. SYFRA has a duty to prevent fire and is committed to helping keep communities healthy, safe and resilient. The fund was designed to add value to

and enhance existing partnership work focused on prevention and community protection.

SYFRA, through targeted fire prevention work, recognised that some households and populations have an elevated risk of fire (such as those with drug and alcohol addictions). SYFRA is keen to more effectively support hard-to-engage, high-risk groups which might be reluctant to work with statutory services.

CSSY demonstrates a track record of effectively engaging and supporting high-risk groups with multiple and complex needs. CSSY successfully obtained funding from the *Stronger Safer Communities Reserve* to develop and bolster the partnership with SYFRA to better support the most vulnerable groups in society.

As part of the *Stronger Safer Communities Reserve*, the CSSY and SYFRA partnership intended to work together to:

1. develop and refine a 'Safe & Well' fire safety module – using the most up-to-date evidence and expertise from SYFRA - to be embedded within the Crisis Reading Ready course curriculum (explained in more detail below) and;
2. keep Crisis members safe entering new tenancies – particularly in the

¹ Please note: In the original application to the *Stronger Safer Communities Reserve*, Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire highlights that the majority of services delivered by Crisis are in those Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) with the highest risk score in the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority Community Fire Risk Model.



Private Rented Sector (PRS) – by referring them to receive a fire safety assessment and practical support from SYFRA (e.g. fitting of suitable fire alarms; review of safe cooking practices; assessment of electrical safety)

About Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority partnership activities

CSSY delivers a 12-week Renting Ready course intended to increase members' skills to effectively manage a tenancy.² Renting Ready is delivered in a group setting by a trained Crisis tutor.

Upon completion of the course, CSSY provides members with 1:1 support and guidance to help them access suitable and affordable accommodation – mainly in the PRS – but may also include social housing where available and appropriate. The 1:1 support provided by Crisis coaches

may begin prior to Renting Ready, and continue throughout the duration of the course. Once a tenancy has been secured, the Tenancy Support Worker³ will provide ongoing support to help members sustain their tenancy. One goal of Crisis coaching is to build on the knowledge and skills members gain via the Renting Ready course to increase members' confidence, self-reliance and independence so they can effectively manage and maintain their own tenancy. Financial or material resource may also be provided by Crisis to help ease the transition into the PRS in the form of, for instance, a housing bond or the purchase of an essential household item.

An underlying driver for the development of the Renting Ready course was the concern that some landlords are less likely to rent to those who are homeless, or in receipt of benefits. Indeed, previous research found that **over half** of

² Renting Ready is one type of learning support offered by Crisis. The overarching Crisis model is described in more detail in the following section: Understanding the Crisis model.

³ Please note: this is the same role as the Crisis Housing Coach

private landlords surveyed would **not** be willing to let properties to those claiming Housing Benefit.⁴ Crisis members who successfully complete the course are provided with an accreditation to demonstrate they have the knowledge and awareness to effectively manage a tenancy (alongside ongoing support from the Tenancy Support Worker once a member is in a new tenancy). It is hoped this could provide landlords in the PRS with greater reassurance and confidence, and in turn private landlords may be more willing to accept tenants in receipt of benefits or who are homeless.

Fire safety risk assessments are also carried out by SYFRA once Crisis members move into a new tenancy. This is intended to help reduce fire incidents with high risk groups.

About the independent evaluation

Crisis remains committed to monitoring and evaluating its performance and impact. Crisis has commissioned the Dartington Service Design Lab (or 'the Lab') to undertake an independent evaluation of the CSSY and SYFRA partnership and activities. The Lab seeks to bring evidence and science to bear on practice and works alongside organisations to re-imagine the way services could be designed and delivered.

This evaluation report, compiled by the Lab, will be circulated with Crisis' partners and more widely across the sector. The evaluation provides the following: reflection and assessment of the Renting Ready course and accompanying 1:1 Crisis coaching; a reflection of the partnership between CSSY and SYFRA and; outlines a series of recommendations. In particular, the evaluation explores the degree to which partnership activities:

- increased homeless and vulnerably housed people's tenancy skills (e.g. increasing awareness of housing rights and entitlements; improving money management etc.);
- increased homeless and vulnerably housed people's confidence about finding and keeping a home;
- increased homeless and vulnerably housed people's knowledge and understanding about fire safety in the home;
- increased the efficiency of SYFRA's targeted fire prevention work (with the aim of decreasing housing fire risks).

The outcomes, indicators and targets measured for the evaluation are set out in table 1.

Table 1: Outcomes, indicators and targets measured by the evaluation

Outcome	Indicator
1 Homeless people will increase their knowledge and understanding about fire safety in the home, thereby decreasing the risk an incident/s of fire.	1.1a 300 homeless people will attend Renting Ready (at least three sessions)
	1.1b An additional breakdown of homeless people who attend Renting Ready and achieve accreditation in at least one module (of three). This is not part of the original evaluation targets.
	1.2 200 homeless people will report an increased knowledge of fire safety
2 Homeless people will have increased support to access the PRS, thereby improving their confidence at finding and keeping a home.	1.3 200 homeless people will report an improvement in their confidence about finding and keeping a home.
	2.1 150 homeless people will work with a Crisis Housing Coach
	2.2 140 homeless people will improve their housing situation
	2.3 40 homeless people will receive support with a bond
3 SYFRA has increased access to high fire risk housing thereby allowing them to increase their targeted fire prevention work.	2.4 40 homeless people will work with a Tenancy Support Officer
	3.1 40 properties have been referred for fire safety assessment.

⁴ *Home: No less will do. Homeless people's access to the Private Renter Sector*, July 2016. Kesia Reeve, Ian Cole, Elaine Batty, Mike Foden, Stephen Green and Ben Pattison.

The method

The report blends both quantitative data and qualitative insights to provide: a picture of the Renting Ready course and accompanying support; the extent to which outcomes have been achieved; reflections regarding the partnership arrangements and; recommendations for further consideration.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data in this report come from the member data system currently used across Crisis. The Crisis team provided the Dartington Service Design Lab with data guidance and support. The Lab analysed the data. Data are for the whole evaluation period which runs from November 2015 to December 2017.

Qualitative insights

Qualitative insights have been gained over several months with staff and members. First, a series of site visits and conversations with staff took place across the CSSY teams relating to the collection, reporting and use of data. Second, a series of interviews were arranged with staff and members of the CSSY. Interviews with staff and members were recorded and transcribed in full. Interviews with staff included the South Yorkshire Skylight Director, Tenancy Support Worker and Renting Ready tutor. Four members were interviewed about their experiences of working with CSSY and completing the Renting Ready course. The interviews focused on exploring reflections and any emergent recommendations relevant to the Renting Ready course; accompanying 1:1 support provided by Crisis coaches

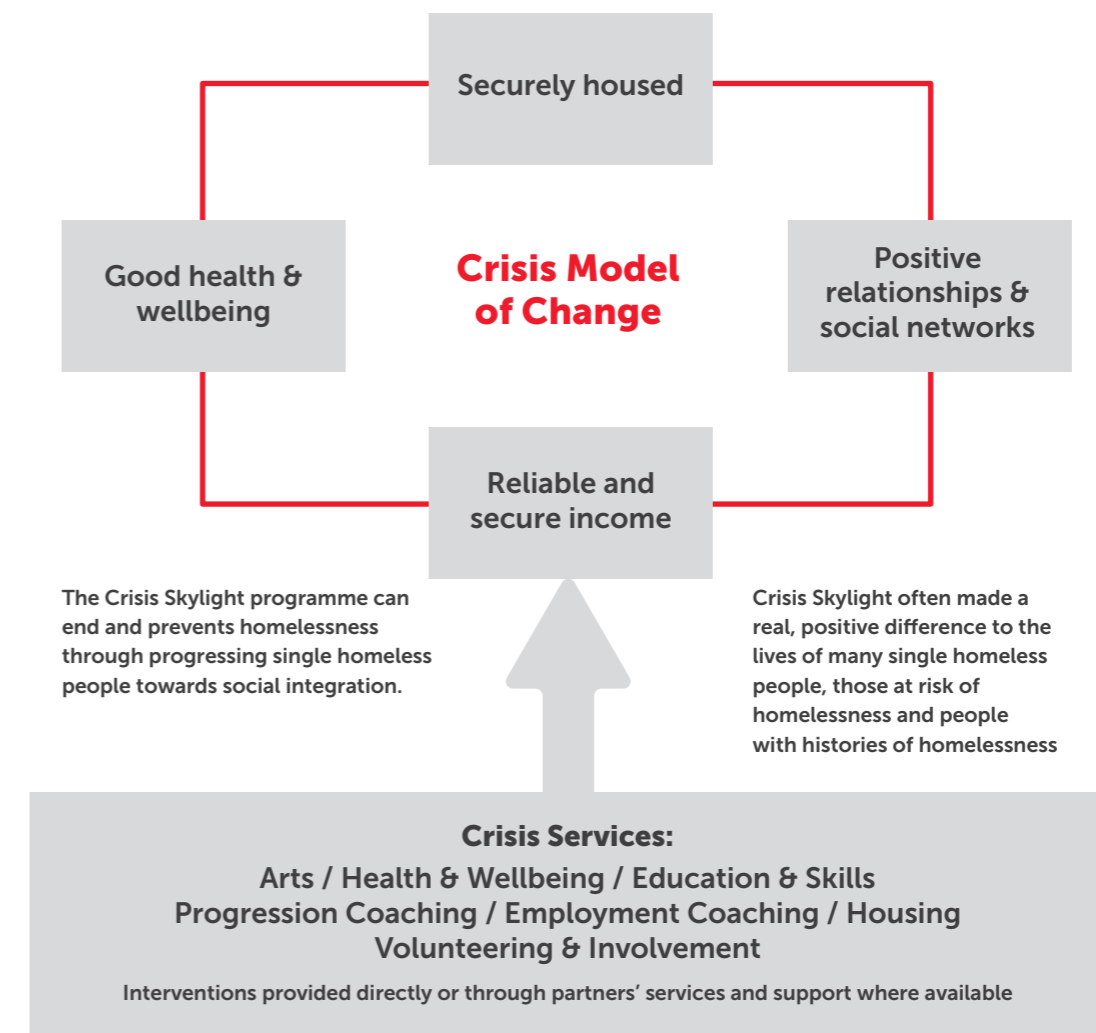
and; partnership arrangements between CSSY and SYFRA. Conversations were also arranged with the partner and funder – SYFRA. The Lab had telephone interviews with two representatives from SYFRA.

Ethical approval for interviews was obtained from the Centre for Social Policy and adhered to Crisis safeguarding policies. These conversations and interviews have informed much of the Lab's thinking and are woven into the report. Insights from staff, members and partners are highlighted throughout the text.

Understanding the Crisis model

Crisis has a well-defined Model of Change across all 11 of its UK Skylight centres. See Figure 1 for a visual representation of the Crisis Model of Change. It is centred around a holistic view of homelessness and does not concentrate on any single problem. Crisis works with individuals who are currently homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, or have been homeless in the last two years.

Figure 1. Crisis Model of Change





Demographics: Who does Renting Ready support?

The overarching outcomes of the Crisis Model of Change include: helping members to find secure housing; obtain a reliable and secure income (e.g. by obtaining education and vocational qualifications to increase likelihood of employment and/or providing guidance about legal entitlements); improving health and emotional wellbeing, and; helping members build positive relationships and their wider social networks.

Broadly speaking, Crisis activities are organised around two themes of work:

1. The learning branch

The learning branch provides a wide variety of tutor-led group-based activities that are open to all Crisis members. This includes a range of accredited, and non-accredited courses from employability training to more creative art classes. Renting Ready courses are delivered by the learning branch at CSSY.

2. The progression branch

The progression branch provides some members with 1:1 coaching, which can include guidance and support in relation to housing, wellbeing and/or employment.

Individual coaching offers more intensive support. Coaches work to help members reach a point of stability where they are in a better place to concentrate on gaining qualifications, seeking employment or housing.

The two branches provide complimentary, holistic support. Members receive progression and learning activities depending on the nature of their needs. Sometimes a member may access Crisis via classes; others may first begin working with a coach. Often members will be involved in both types of learning and progression activities.

The majority of Crisis members enrolled at CSSY over the last two years were male (62%) and from Britain or Ireland (69%). A fifth (21%) of members reported that they had no qualifications; a further 5% had no qualifications recognised in Britain.

Table 2 provides the demographic breakdown of the 1,375 unique members served across the two-year project. All are included in the data dashboard summary (Figure 2) in some form, but not all participated in Renting Ready.

There were two parts to the collaboration: (1) raising fire safety awareness through the Renting Ready course; and (2) helping members into fire safe housing. Note that some members could have been served for the whole two years of the project and some only for the last couple of months.



Table 2. Demographics

	%	N
Gender		
Male	62%	851
Female	37%	515
Missing/refused	1%	9
Citizenship		
British or Irish	69%	955
EU/EEA	2%	33
On work permit	0%	6
Leave to remain	3%	47
Refugee	6%	83
Missing/refused	18%	251
Highest Qualification (on entry to Crisis)		
No qualifications	21%	292
No British equivalent	5%	71
Less than GCSE level	19%	257
GCSE level A*-C	25%	347
A-level or equivalent	10%	140
Vocational	5%	63
Professional qualification	1%	13
Degree level	4%	55
Missing/refused	10%	137

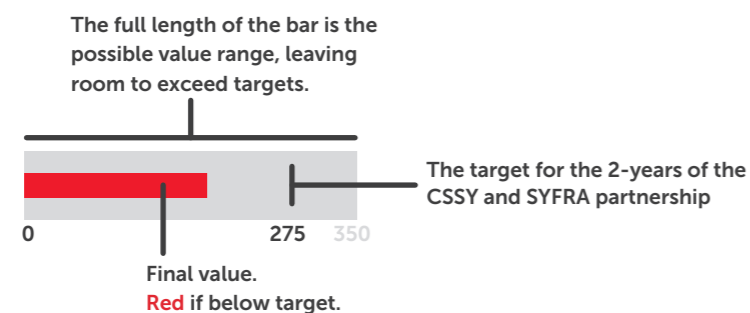
There are all different types of homeless.
Crisis member

Impact on members

This section presents data on member progress and outcomes collated from existing Crisis data systems for all Crisis members who were supported by the CSSY and SYFRA partnership between 2015 and 2017. It contains findings on reach, changes in member confidence, Renting Ready modules gained, changes in housing status, along with fire safety goals associated with member housing.

An example below illustrates how to read the charts used on the summary page.

Figure 2. Example 'how to read' chart.

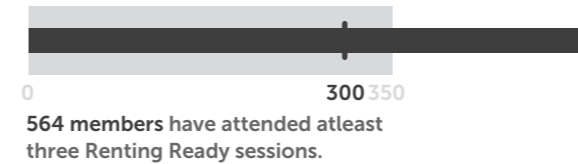


Crisis activity and outcomes data

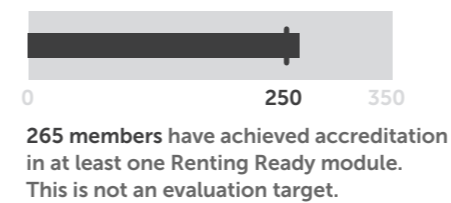
Date covers members involved in fire safety activity (01/11/2015–31/12/2017)

1. Renting Ready outcomes

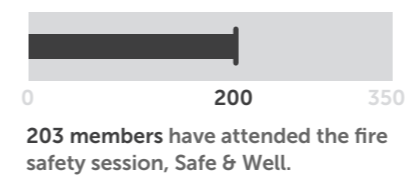
1.1a Attended Renting Ready



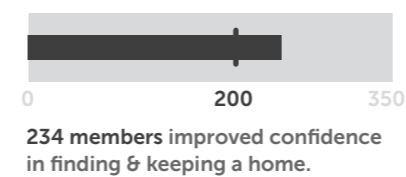
1.1b Renting Ready accreditation



1.2 Attended Safe & Well session

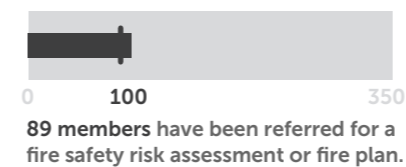


1.3 Improved confidence



3. Partnership outcomes

3.1 Referred for fire safety risk assessment

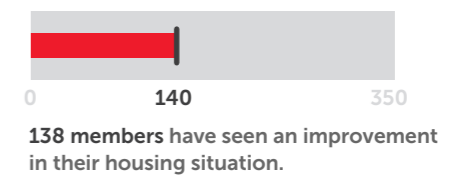


2. Housing outcomes

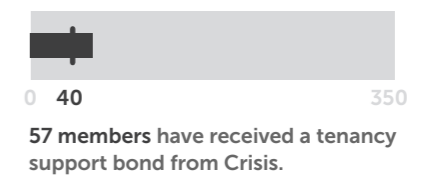
2.1 Saw a Housing Coach



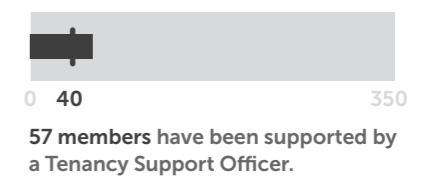
2.2 Improved housing situation



2.3 Supported with a bond



2.4 Saw a Tenancy Support Officer



For data tables, see Table 3

Data summary

Over the course of the partnership between CSSY and SYFRA, Renting Ready has been attended by many more members than anticipated (n=564). The Safe & Well fire safety module was also well attended (n=203). About half of those members attending Renting Ready achieved accreditation in at least one module. Most of those members who achieved accreditation reported an increased confidence in their ability to improve their current housing situation. The qualitative interviews with members attending Renting Ready support this

finding. Housing outcomes have been exceeded over the last two years; 200 members have spent an average of four hours face-to-face with a housing coach, with 138 having seen some improvement in their housing situation (slightly under the project target). More members than anticipated were supported by the Tenancy Support Officer (n=57) and were supported into housing via a tenancy support bond (n=57). Finally, 89 members were referred to the Safe & Well team to have fire safety risk assessments carried out for them. Table 3 shows the numbers in table format.

Table 3. Detailed data summary

	Actual	Target
1.1a Participated in Renting Ready	564	300
1.1b Accreditation gained (at least one module)	265	n/a
1.2 Attended Safe & Well	203	200
1.3 Improved confidence in finding & keeping home	234	200
2.1 Saw a Housing Coach	200	150
2.2 Improved housing situation	138	140
2.3 Supported with a housing bond	57	40
2.4 Worked with a Tenancy Support Officer	57	40
3.1 Referred for a fire safety risk assessment	89	100

Data definitions**1. Renting Ready outcomes - reach**

Definition: The numbers of members who attended the Renting Ready course (at least three sessions), attended a Safe & Well session or met with a Housing Coach between 01/11/2015 and 31/12/2017.

In this report: Data focus on the number of unique members taking part in each activity. Any attendance at a Safe & Well session or completed appointment with a Housing Coach is captured. However, a member had to attend three or more of the Renting Ready sessions to be included.

Data quality: Members' attendance and sessions with coaches are well documented. Data on hours spent face-to-face with coaches is recorded in various formats and is carefully recoded for consistency before analysis.

Renting Ready outcomes - improvements

Definition: The stated goals of importance to SYFRA include:

- Gaining at least one Renting Ready module (accreditation)
- Improved confidence in finding and keeping a home

In this report: In order to obtain a Renting Ready accreditation of at least one module, the learner had to complete one of the following: Ascentis L1 Understanding Tenancies, Ascentis L1 Tenant Financial management or Ascentis L1 Tenant Responsibilities. If the member completed the full course, this indicated that they had improved their confidence in finding and keeping a home.

Data quality: Accreditations gained are well recorded and flagged within the system. They are hard to achieve but much easier to record. Improved confidence is measured via those members awarded the Renting Ready accreditation and those who improved their housing situation.

2. Housing outcomes

Definition: Housing achievement and sustainment is the key outcome of Crisis services. As well as moving into stable rented accommodation, improvements in living situation since becoming a member are recorded.

In this report: Living situation improvements and gaining stable rented accommodation are indicators of the potential group SYFRA could work with. Stable accommodation includes living in a PRS property.

Data quality: Data around living situation improvements and moving into stable housing (e.g. PRS) are well recorded in the system.

3. Partnership outcomes

Definition: In this evaluation, referrals to the Safe & Well team to conduct fire safety risk assessments are also recorded. This keeps track of whether CSSY provides SYFRA with the means to access this high-risk group.

In this report: The number of fire safety risk assessments and fire plans developed is the number that CSSY refers to SYFRA.

Data quality: Data on fire safety risk assessments come directly from SYFRA and are matched to Crisis members.

Reflections

This section contains insights and reflections that have been made by researchers following interviews and conversations with staff, Crisis members and partners. The reflections focus on the Renting Ready course; accompanying 1:1 Crisis coaching and; the partnership between CSSY and SYFRA.

Reflection 1. Crisis members who had engaged with CSSY and SYFRA partnership activities reported better awareness of their rights and entitlements as a tenant, and reported increased confidence in being able to maintain a tenancy (if secured).

"...When I actually finished the [Renting Ready] course, I found out that I've got more rights than I realised..."

Crisis member

"...they've built my confidence well really, [it's] good to be honest with you ... I had a lot of worry about ... your rights [as a tenant] and ... how to be assertive and stuff.... whereas when I went on Renting Ready course they actually taught me how to ask the right questions in the right way, which has been really helpful ...just a real confidence builder..."

Crisis member

Members interviewed reported that the Renting Ready course helped them to:

- develop a better understanding of the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords;
- gain practical knowledge in living independently e.g. prioritising bills, reading the meter and;
- know which questions to ask energy suppliers, letting agents, etc.

"It just opened up what actually I could expect from a private landlord. And I said, I'd had council properties before but never gone private rented and didn't have a clue about what it involved, I didn't know about all the extra charges that they asked for."

Crisis member

"The first step would be to, if it's to do with like an eviction I would first speak to the landlord to see what can be done and then it depends. Y'know the complaints service as well, if the landlord doesn't take it up, and I'll also go to Crisis if there's any problems."

Crisis member

Reflection 2. The content and delivery of the Renting Ready course is well designed and tailored by tutors to meet a range of different learning styles and needs.



"[Renting Ready course]...really informative to be honest with you 'cos, as I said, I thought I knew about rights and things but then it was explained to me in like bullet point snippets so I could understand and remember it better..."

Crisis member

"...it's a lot better than college because they're more understanding as well, and the classes are smaller so it's a bit easier."

Crisis member

"...the teacher he went out of his way to accommodate everybody..."

Crisis member

The course materials and teaching methods employed by Renting Ready tutors are tailored to the individual members in their class. Members highlighted a number of features that facilitated their engagement with the Renting Ready material: benefits from the small class sizes; information conveyed clearly both orally and visually with the help of course booklets; tutor understanding of member needs. The small class sizes meant that some members were more comfortable asking questions, with tutors more able to provide personalised support during the class.

"...when we're doing my GCSEs now, there's times in the class where I just can't get my head round stuff, but there was never a time like that on the Renting Ready course. It was explained pretty clearly, we had booklets we could go

through, there was stuff writ on the board. It all fell into place nicely ... the class wasn't too big so that if you had a question you could ask it cos y'know everyone was kind of like on the same page because it was a smaller group of people."

Crisis member

While the Renting Ready course is designed to be delivered over a 12-week period, members can complete in nine weeks. Crisis also offers a condensed, more intensive Renting Ready three-day version for those who need to complete the course more quickly. Again, this provides another example of Crisis flexibility to best meet the needs and individual circumstances of Crisis members.

Importantly, some members attending the Renting Ready course had a range of complex needs. While this remains a challenge for Crisis, members highlighted that tutors were sensitive and responsive to these needs and made efforts to ensure the classes were accessible as possible.

Reflection 3. Renting Ready tutors work hard to effectively manage challenging group dynamics within the classroom.

"I have had nine people turn up for the first week. And out of that you'd say, seven of them, did not wanna be there and would be disruptive ... Sometimes it gets a bit loud because some people just don't wanna be there and they vocalise it. And the other people who are perhaps more quiet and perhaps do want to engage with it more. It is

difficult..."

Renting Ready tutor

The delivery of Renting Ready requires a high degree of skill to manage exceptionally challenging group dynamics. One member spoke of the Renting Ready tutor's compassion and ability to manage the complex needs in classroom environment.

"The teacher he went out of his way to accommodate everybody. He did actually yeah ... Yeah because he was really understanding and accommodating to whatever state of mind they were in at that time, whether they'd been drinking taking drugs and that. It were really honestly, I've never met - how can I put it - well yeah accommodating person. He wasn't judgemental anything like that. They could be like drunk and be giving a bit of jip and whatever but he'd always manage to calm them down and get back to why we were there."

Crisis member

Reflection 4. Renting Ready and accompanying 1:1 coaching creates a holistic package of support that provides a more direct pathway out of homelessness.

CSSY recognises that Renting Ready may not be enough for some members to obtain and maintain a new tenancy; for some members, a more intensive package of support may be required. As such, members who complete the Renting Ready course also benefit from the expertise and guidance provided by the Tenancy Support Worker.⁵ The Tenancy Support Worker provides Crisis members with

a range of support: help identifying suitable properties (largely in the PRS); guidance on how to join the waitlist for properties and; support to implement the practical knowledge acquired during the Renting Ready course.

"[Tenancy Support Worker] sorted out a fridge-freezer for me, he sorted household goods like carpets, curtains, stuff like that, and he's just generally there. Like when I moved in I was having problems with my energy supplier, but [Tenancy Support Worker] talked me through it. I'd done it on Renting Ready but I sort of needed [Tenancy Support Worker] there for a bit of moral support, and now I've got smart meters put in and all, so yeah brilliant."

Crisis member

In short, the holistic package of support provides Crisis members with: (1) a knowledgeable and skilled navigator – in the form of a Tenancy Support Worker – who can help members to better access and maintain a tenancy in the PRS; (2) reasonable material support in the form of a bond or an essential household item and; (3) emotional support when a member is making the challenging transition into a new property – or dealing with setbacks if a property does not work out.

The continued support from a Tenancy Support Worker once the member is in a new property, provides members with the additional security and reassurance that the CSSY team is on hand with advice and practical support for a period afterwards.

"... I've done the Renting Ready course, but I know now that if

I've got any doubts whatsoever I can phone Crisis up and there'll be someone there to talk to me. If I'm not sure about something, they'll explain it properly and talk me through it."

Crisis member

Reflection 5. The CSSY model is skilfully delivered to prevent members involved in partnership activities developing a dependency on Crisis.

"Yeah cos he basically stood next to me while I did it (the Housing Coach), and if he thought I weren't asking the right questions he'd quietly say, you should be doing it that way, y'know."

Crisis member

Renting Ready and accompanying 1:1 coaching support has been carefully designed and is skilfully delivered to prevent members developing a dependency on Crisis. It is focused on helping Crisis members to build self-reliance and the ability to sustain a tenancy. The Tenancy Support Worker provides guidance to help members navigate the system more effectively for themselves. They are on hand to support and sensitively prompt when required. They do not simply 'do' things for Crisis members, but help members to help themselves.

Reflection 6. The nimble outreach model, coupled with the extensive reach of the Crisis team across South Yorkshire, provides an accessible service for vulnerable populations benefiting from partnership activities, who would otherwise struggle to travel distances outside their local area to seek support.

⁵ Please note: Tenancy Support Worker is the same role as the Crisis Housing Coach.

“I operate across the four local authorities within the region - Doncaster, Barnsley, Rotherham, Sheffield - so [Crisis] tries to make sure that there’s access for people in all those four areas. So at least one of those venues in each area will be somewhere that anyone can go to.”

Renting Ready tutor

Support and services may cluster around more densely populated areas with greater levels of demand and better transport links. As a consequence, this clustering of services around larger towns and cities (e.g. Sheffield) runs the risk of excluding those from more rural and less populated areas. Service ‘coldspots’ become especially problematic for vulnerable populations who might face difficulties traveling distances outside of their local area to seek support (e.g. low income, poor physical or emotional health). CSSY is committed to covering an extensive geographical area, and works on an exclusively outreach based model to effectively reach isolated, vulnerable populations. CSSY works with a range of partnership organisations across the four local authorities, which include providing classes within hostels and 1:1 support within food banks to reach those experiencing homelessness as well as those in vulnerable housing situations. This also includes the CSSY team meeting potential members in the local library for an initial session, or in cafés in their area and providing bus passes to those members who need them to access courses or 1:1 support.

“I think that does work, that we can actually go out to them, particularly for clients with mobility issues. Y’know even clients that are perhaps struggling with their

mental [health], they don’t like leaving the house. It [an outreach model] does have its advantages...”

Housing Coach

The coverage of such an extensive geographical area and exclusive outreach model however, does bring a number of challenges: reliance on access to external buildings and facilities; more staff travel time and; cost and resource implications of missed appointments if staff have travelled a considerable distance.

Reflection 7. The partnership between CSSY and SYFRA was effective and mutually beneficial.

“[South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority] wanted to reach vulnerable groups that they just weren’t hitting because they knew these groups were more prone to fire”

Skylight Director

The partnership has brought considerable benefits to CSSY and SYFRA. Specifically, CSSY has demonstrated a track record of effectively engaging the most vulnerable in society. CSSY has been able to help SYFRA better identify vulnerable tenants and keep them safe in new tenancies (89 members were referred for fire safety risk assessments). SYFRA meanwhile has helped CSSY by enhancing the quality of the Renting Ready course ensuring that members are equipped with the most up to date knowledge when it comes to fire safety.

These arrangements were developed and refined through partnership meetings between CSSY and SYFRA. The original idea was for SYFRA to come and deliver the Fire and Rescue training. However, the partnership

agreed it would be more efficient if SYFRA would develop the content and train the Renting Ready tutors to deliver the fire safety modules:

“So then it developed and what [South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority] said to us [Crisis] was, well, if rather than we come in and train, could we not do training with your Renting Ready tutors, and they can deliver it, because that’s hitting another marker for us because it frees up [South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority] capacity.”

Skylight Director

The partnership has also been strengthened by good informal relationships between management staff at the two organisations. The partners provide ongoing reciprocal support at various events (e.g. Crisis staff have spoken at events to raise awareness of the work and; representatives from SYFRA have come and supported Crisis’ member celebrations etc.).

Reflection 8. An enduring legacy: delivery of partnership activities will continue beyond the lifetime of the initial grant.

The funding has helped create an enduring partnership between CSSY and SYFRA. There is a commitment from both partners to continue to work together. For example, the partnership will continue to deliver and update the fire safety aspects of the Renting Ready course as required:

“With one of our Renting Ready tutors and another one coming on and I know that when I ring the fire service up even though we’re not being funded they’ll come out and train that

person, because it’s in their interests to do it.”

Skylight Director

The Tenancy Support Worker will be funded by Crisis on a permanent basis, thus ensuring that members continue to receive support to make a home and sustain their tenancy and access the Safe & Well services of SYFRA to reduce fire risks in their home.

Furthermore, the partnership can be used as an exemplar of how a statutory service and the voluntary sector can work together to better support the most vulnerable in society. Key elements of the partnership include: statutory services sharing expert skills and knowledge with the voluntary sector to benefit members/clients; the voluntary sector creating more effective avenues for the statutory sector to reach and support vulnerable populations, and; statutory and voluntary organisations working together to craft and update shareable materials and tools for a wider social benefit. There is the opportunity for others across the statutory sector to learn from the partnership developed by CSSY and SYFRA (e.g. health services, police etc.).

Conclusions

Conclusions and recommendations

The formal elements of the partnership – the delivery of fire safety content as part of Renting Ready and the referral of newly-housed members to the fire service – have been implemented successfully. The CSSY and SYFRA partnership provides an exemplar of how fire safety training and support can be effectively implemented for hard-to-engage, high risk groups. This evaluation report will be circulated widely across the sector in South Yorkshire. The intention is to share the insights and learning that have been gathered as part of the CSSY and SYFRA partnership.

The following recommendations focus on service delivery and highlight opportunities for development.

Recommendation 1. Increase the reach of the Renting Ready course via development of online content.

CSSY has invested considerable time and resource in the development of the Renting Ready course materials. This has involved refinements in light of member feedback, and design and implementation of new modules based on guidance from sector experts (e.g. SYFRA). The content and materials are an invaluable asset. CSSY might consider exploring opportunities offered by advancements in digital technologies and develop online content to further increase reach and

maximise the potential benefit to those in vulnerable housing across South Yorkshire.

Recommendation 2. Further enhance CSSY's presence at organisations/ services such as food banks, GP surgeries, Job Centres etc. to increase the reach of Renting Ready.

CSSY works across a range of partnership organisations (e.g. see Appendix 1). There is further scope for the team to increase their presence at organisations/services to reach those in vulnerable housing situations before they become homeless. For example, further increasing CSSY's presence at local food banks presents a particularly valuable opportunity as it may better reach those who are less visible to statutory services:

"...I mean some of them aren't eligible for our services [who attend food banks] because they might not be homeless or at risk of homelessness. But generally, if they're coming to a food bank they're perhaps gonna be at risk of homelessness, they might have some rent arrears, that kind of thing. But some of them that come in, are kind of work



ready and are just struggling, so it might be that you can refer 'em to work and learning [Crisis Coach], but some will be actually street homeless, or risk of homeless so you can do some interventions, prevention of homelessness work. So, we've had quite a few where we've done homeless prevention work. So, they're already in a home, but they're at risk of losing it, they're at risk of eviction."

Crisis staff member

CSSY might explore how they can further increase their visibility and subsequent reach at food banks, as well as drop-ins at Job Centres and GP surgeries. Experience from Crisis members highlights the importance of regular (i.e. weekly) attendance by the same member(s) of staff. There may

also be an opportunity for CSSY staff to provide training to staff within food banks, Job Centres and GP surgeries to better identify and refer those at risk of homelessness. This may also involve providing opportunities for staff to shadow Crisis coaches in the day-to-day delivery of the service.

Recommendation 3. Develop an evidence-based assessment tool that compliments professional judgement when deciding if a member is ready to take on an independent tenancy.

"...you can never fully know what's in another person's head, and while they might be perfectly stable and perfectly happy in supported accommodation, when you pull that person out and put them on their own, in their own thing, regardless of how many times you visit them,

or how many other agencies they've got with 'em, they are on their own in that flat. And it could be history that comes back to 'em that they've had... anything could trigger it"
Crisis staff member

Accurately predicting whether a member will successfully sustain an independent tenancy can be a challenge. There may be scope to develop a complimentary practice tool to help inform assessments about members' readiness to sustain a tenancy. A simple-to-use and well-designed tool could assist Crisis staff to identify areas of need and likelihood of tenancy sustainment. This would require a review of any existing reliable and validated tools in this area to see whether they might be adapted for use by Crisis (e.g. self-report; practitioner-report; multi-agency report etc.). The findings of this simple tool could be combined with other key variables (based on existing literature) that help inform the renting readiness, and subsequent additional support.

Recommendation 4. Explore incentives and initiatives that encourage and support landlords who let to homeless people and those in receipt of housing benefits.

As highlighted, some landlords are reluctant to rent to those in receipt of benefits, or who are currently homeless. It is hoped that a member's accredited completion of a Renting Ready course, coupled with the support provided by Crisis, will provide landlords in the PRS with greater confidence that the member is able to manage a tenancy. In turn, it is hoped landlords will be more willing to accept those who are in receipt of benefits,

or who are currently homeless. While this evaluation highlights the positive steps made by the CSSY and SYFRA partnership, recent Crisis research suggests that the present state of the housing market, compounded by government policies and landlord perceptions, will make it even more difficult for homeless people, or those in more vulnerable financial circumstances, to access the PRS.⁶

As such, CSSY must seek to work with the various local councils and voluntary sector organisations across South Yorkshire to foster a culture where landlords feel more able and willing to accept vulnerable tenants. This could include initiatives that shine a spotlight on the practices of private landlords; potential innovations could be similar in nature to socially-guided employers expressing their commitment to Living Wage Schemes. A counterpart accreditation scheme for landlords could encourage them to make safe and quality housing more accessible to the most vulnerable members of society. Another idea could be to include and promote 'tenancy training' - such as Renting Ready - as a quality measure for charities and other services seeking to help people into private rented accommodation.

Recommendation 5. Refine the Renting Ready course, using rapid innovation and testing cycles, to incorporate content that promotes attitudes and motivation required to sustain a tenancy.

The cyclical nature of CSSY terms provides a promising framework for trialling innovations in course content and delivery style. In addition to an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants, and practical knowledge like

reading the meter and prioritising bills, a member's readiness to rent also depends on their personal attitudes and motivation. In order that the course better prepares members for managing an independent property, the content of Renting Ready might be adapted to include material that promotes the attitudes required to sustain a tenancy. This could include activities that are focused on building motivation and willingness for attendees to consider a wider range of alternative housing options and arrangements. For example, under 35 year olds are only entitled to Housing Benefit/Universal Credit at the shared accommodation rate.⁷ As such, self-contained accommodation may be the initial expectation, but not financially achievable.

6 *Home: No less will do: Homeless people's access to the Private Rented Sector*, July 2016. p.46

7 See Shelter England Housing Advice: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/housing_benefit/shared_accommodation_rate_for_under_35s

Appendix 1. Partnership organisations (not exhaustive)

Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire worked directly with the following:

- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (SYFRA)
- Example of referral partners
 - Sheffield – Roundabout, Sheffield Foyer, St Anne’s Hostel, De Paul, Nomad, YWCA, Shelter, Cathedral Archer Project, Ashiana
 - Barnsley – Holden House, The Forge, Barnsley Churches Drop-in
 - Rotherham – Target Housing, Action Housing, Lighthouse Homes, Lifeline, MyPlace, Rookwood Probation
 - Doncaster – Open House Plus, Doncaster Foyer, Changing Lives
- Example of delivery partners
 - Bank Street Arts
 - St Marys Church
 - Musical Works
 - Theatre Deli
 - The Umix Centre
 - St Georges Hall
 - Salvation Army Community Centre
 - Shiloh Drop in Centre

Appendix 2. Hothouse for Innovation initiative: further opportunities for partnership working

Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire is also about to embark on a service redesign initiative: ***Hothouse for Innovation: Rapid Cycle Innovation and Testing***. CSSY was selected as one of three Crisis Skylights across the UK to participate in the initiative. The initiative will see CSSY work with the Dartington Service Design Lab to apply state-of-the-art design thinking approaches to frame challenges experienced by Crisis staff, members and partners to co-design and test innovations focused on improving outcomes for homeless people and those in vulnerable housing situations. This initiative provides the opportunity to build upon and refine partnership with agencies such as SYFRA and others across the public and private sector.

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**Together
we will end
homelessness**