



Creating A Fairer Scotland: Employability Support

Response from Crisis

October 2015

Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people. We work with politicians, policy makers and the Scottish and Westminster governments to bring about change and share good practice, using our expertise from working with single homeless people and our understanding of the issues they face to shape policy and practice. We work with local authorities across Scotland to improve access to the private rented sector for people threatened with homelessness.

We strongly welcome the opportunity to contribute to this consultation on developing employability support in Scotland following the devolution of powers through the Scotland Bill.

Crisis has considerable experience of delivering employment support to people who have experienced homelessness. Crisis Skylight, our award winning and accredited education, training and employment centres, offer practical and creative workshops in a supportive and inspiring environment together with formal learning opportunities that lead to qualifications and finding work. Our funding, which is largely independent, allows us to innovate and determine what works for the people we support. We run a number of social enterprise cafes which enable homeless people and ex-offenders to gain work experience and qualifications in a busy commercial environment. We have also published research on how effective the Work Programme is for homeless people.

Employment and homelessness

Unemployment and homelessness can have strong links, with unemployment being both a cause and a consequence of homelessness.

- 60% of homeless people have low or no qualifications, putting over 80% of jobs out of reach.¹
- Only 2% of the people Crisis work with are in full time employment. 5% work part-time.²
- The overwhelming majority want to work, either now (77%) or in the future (97%).³
- The longer people have been homeless, the less likely they are to be engaging in any kind of education or learning.

Homelessness can also create or exacerbate a broad range of issues which act as barriers to employment, such as mental and physical ill health substance misuse, learning difficulties, offending or being a victim of violent crime.

¹ Crisis, *Homeless people and learning & skills: participation, barriers and progression* (July 2006)

² Crisis (2014) *Crisis Skylight: an evaluation year 1 interim report*

³ Off the Streets and Into Work, *No Home, No Job: moving on from transitional spaces* (March 2005)

When people make a homelessness application to their local authority in Scotland the primary reasons recorded are related directly to their housing situation. Nevertheless, where non-housing related reasons are recorded, 18% listed financial difficulties, debt or unemployment as a contributory factor⁴. Among people who approached the authority for help to prevent homelessness this rose to 25%⁵. Yet only 1% of cases of recorded prevention activity included the provision of assistance to maintain or find employment, education or training.

A recent evaluation of mainstream employment provision for the long term unemployed suggests that stable housing can underpin (re-)entry into work⁶. Employment support programmes should recognise housing needs, and support needs relating to housing and homelessness needs to be incorporated into the assessment framework. People who are homeless, including those in temporary accommodation, should be identified at the very start of the journey. People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness may require support around tenancy sustainment, resettlement into secure accommodation, disclosing housing circumstances to potential employers, securing documents to prove identity and to claim in-work benefits.

Through our Crisis Skylight model we work with those who are currently homeless, those at risk of homelessness and those with past experiences of homelessness. Clients engage voluntarily and take classes to build their confidence and develop their skills, before being referred to our employment support once they are ready to take steps towards work.

In 2014 we worked with 8,078 homeless and vulnerably housed people in eight centres across Great Britain, supporting a total of 646 into employment. Of these, 478 had engaged with our employment services, giving our employment offer a success rate of 25 per cent. In addition, 455 clients volunteered and 1337 gained at least one qualification, module or certificate.

Clients have access to a range of classes within the Skylights. These include literacy and numeracy, IT skills and English as a second language (ESOL), as well as a wide range of creative and performing arts classes which focus on building self-confidence and social skills. In addition, the Skylights offer a range of employability courses including CV writing workshops, mock interviews and motivational training, and certified courses such as Health and Safety and First Aid.

The employment service is delivered through a coaching model, with each client allocated their own trained coach to provide tailored support to overcome the individual's barriers to work. Coaches build trust and encourage clients to take personal responsibility for their journey towards work, as well as providing practical support to write a CV, complete job applications, search for jobs and prepare for interview. Job coaches provide support for the first 12 months of employment to ensure clients can sustain their job.

⁴ Scottish Government (2015) Operation of the homeless persons legislation in Scotland 2014-15

⁵ Scottish Government (2015) Housing Options (PREVENT1) statistics in Scotland 2014-15

⁶ DWP (2014) Work Programme evaluation: the participant experience

Crucial to the Skylight model is the positioning of our employment services within a broader framework that offers holistic support across a whole range of issues. This includes support to secure access to adequate and affordable housing in the private rented sector, as well as support to improve access to mental health services and promote individual well-being. Clients also have access to progression coaches who focus on goal-setting, directing people towards courses, activities and specialist services, as well as providing some help with welfare rights and benefits.

An independent evaluation of Crisis Skylight in 2014 found the services to be a major innovation in services provision focusing on the social integration of homeless people. The evaluation found clear indications that Skylight delivers extensive and tangible outcomes in education, training and paid work, as well as enhancing the self-confidence, social support networks and well-being of clients⁷.

Lessons from current employment support for homeless people

Research published by Crisis indicates that the Work Programme has not been effective at providing support for people who are homeless⁸. Key factors include:

- Courses and training intended to improve participants' opportunities in the job market are often too generic and not specific to the particular needs of participants to be beneficial.
- Assessment processes fail to identify homeless people's barriers to employment. In some cases Jobcentre Plus assessments do not identify people as homeless, including people who are sleeping rough. This means that people are not referred to the correct level and type of support and providers do not receive the level of payment needed to provide more intensive interventions.
- The process has left people feeling more disillusioned and excluded, as if they've 'slipped through the net'. Initial hopes about an improvement in their prospects on being referred to the Work Programme turned into disappointment. Contributing factors include appointments which are cut short or interrupted, inconsistency of staff due to high turnover and sickness and a lack of personally tailored support. In one study, 58% of homeless people did not feel they were treated with dignity and respect by their Work Programme provider.
- Work Programme contractors are not motivated to risk spending on homeless people and others who appear harder to help.
- Organisations such as Crisis provide the personalised support originally promised by the Work Programme. Yet they receive none of the recognition or reward where a participant does succeed in getting a job.

The future of employability support in Scotland

We welcome the direction of travel set out in the discussion paper. It makes sense to link employability with the fair work and skills agendas. It is vital to support people into work

⁷ The University of York (2014) Crisis Skylight: a evaluation, one year interim report

⁸ Crisis (2013) Dashed hopes, lives on hold: Single homeless people's experiences of the Work Programme; Crisis, St Mungo's, Homeless Link (2012) The Programme's Not Working: experiences of homeless people on the Work Programme

which is meaningful for them and sufficiently well paid to lift people out of poverty and give them stability. This is particularly important for people who have experienced or been at risk of homelessness.

Identifying needs (section 7)

Assessment

We welcome the recognition of the importance of an effective assessment to ensuring jobseekers get the right level of support. It will be important that the initial assessment is comprehensive enough to give an indication of distance from the labour market. This is the basis on which claimants should be allocated to different levels of support. The type of benefit they are on is not an appropriate indicator. The problems of the Work Capability Assessment have been well documented, and many of the people we work with have significant support needs which are not captured in the assessment and have therefore been deemed fit for work. Moreover, the assessment is designed to focus specifically on health related barriers to work and not on other factors such as homelessness.

More specialist assessments are likely to be needed once an individual is referred to further support. Assessors should undertake specific training in order to develop the skills needed to identify housing support requirements. Not all jobseekers are able or willing to reveal their housing situation and many may not self-identify as homeless if they are not sleeping rough. People may also be reluctant to disclose their situation due to the stigma associated with homelessness and a lack of trust in officials.

Employability pipeline

Crisis is aware of the Employability Pipeline model, and many of the people we work with are at the very earliest stages of the “pipeline”. For those who progress further through the different stages, very often this journey is not a linear one, and they can move between different stages even on a week-by-week basis, depending on their mental wellbeing and their wider circumstances.

Duration of support

Personally tailored support should be a fundamental aspect of future employment support programmes. The duration of support will need to be appropriate to the level of support and type of barriers that an individual has to getting work.

In work support is a critical part of the journey for many of the people we work with, particularly in the first few weeks when people often require guidance and reassurance but often it needs to last up to a year after someone has started in employment.

For some individuals with very complex needs it can take several years of engaging with support services before they are ready for skills training or work-focused activity. The programme should therefore include the ability to extend, if needed, to at least three years, on the condition that a provider can evidence what support the person has received so far. This will also encourage providers to innovate in the services they deliver.

Delivery (section 8)

Whatever the contracting arrangements, it is essential to develop an effective supply chain. This needs to reflect local needs whilst also covering the range of support required to meet

the needs of different types of jobseekers who will need to access the programme. The commissioning process should be designed in such a way that it encourages specialist organisations such as housing support organisations and specialist provision which can support people with multiple or complex needs into supply chains.

There will need to be clear arrangements with the DWP and local Jobcentres to ensure effective working, including data sharing arrangements.

Relation to public services (section 9)

Support for people with complex needs

Some people who are homeless face multiple support needs, which may include mental health needs, substance dependencies or histories of offending. Research by Crisis shows that providing support at an early stage of someone's homelessness presents major cost savings to public services⁹, and employment support can make a significant contribution to this. The devolution of employability support presents a key opportunity to join up a range of services and make them more integrated, particularly for those with complex needs.

For people with multiple or complex barriers to work, employment support needs to be integrated with other forms of support. A 'one stop shop' approach can be particularly valuable, with a single point of contact that allows participants to define their own pathway and access a range of services to address their individual circumstances. Where possible services should be co-located, with data sharing policies in place to improve the quality of services provided and reduce duplicate assessments. Some services should be provided using an outreach model so that they can be provided in environments where the participant is more likely to engage. To facilitate multiagency working data sharing protocols, work targets and cultures need to be better aligned.

Measuring success, payment and performance management (section 10 and 11)

There should be a national outcomes framework, and there should be flexibility within the programme to meet local needs and adapt to local employment and housing markets, but with nationally agreed outcomes relating to employment, skills, health and housing. By including housing in the outcomes framework it will be possible to adequately measure providers' performance in relation to homeless participants. This should incentivise providers to work with homeless and vulnerably housed people rather than 'parking' them in favour of those with fewer support needs, as currently happens on the Work Programme¹⁰. This would also help identify best practice, encouraging providers to increase performance in order to generate higher volumes of referrals.

The framework needs to be based on multiple outcomes to offer sufficient financial incentives as well as mitigate risk. Alongside job outcomes, incremental outcomes such as completing courses, volunteering and CV writing should be included, particularly for job seekers who are further away from the labour market. Soft outcomes such as increased confidence and improved motivation are harder to measure but equally important, as they help to map the distance travelled by clients who may be much further from achieving a hard

⁹ Crisis (2015) At What Cost?

¹⁰ Revolving Doors Agency (2015) *op cit*.

outcome than others, but are still benefitting significantly from a service. A broader outcomes framework also helps providers consider the service user holistically.

For people who are further from the labour market, and those who have needs requiring a range of support, the funding mechanism must reflect the additional support that will be required. While homeless people may need more support than other people who are nearer the labour market, there may also be a greater return on public investment in reduced long-term spend by helping them into work. Pricing and resourcing must reflect the fact that for people with more complex needs, ultimately financial savings come through intensive work to support people to address the multiple barriers they face, rather than from processing people more efficiently in the short term¹¹. If a payment by results model is used then there must be greater upfront payments or grants for these groups.

For smaller scale organisations, or those providing more specialist support, such as support to homeless people Payment by Results contracts can be more effective when the contracts are on smaller scale, which results in a closer link between providers and commissioners¹².

Conditionality (section 12)

Current policy around conditionality appears to be based on the premise that a significant proportion of people are reluctant to engage with employment support and deliberately choose not to do so. However, the vast majority of people say they want to work, and if employment support is effective, that should provide enough incentive for people to engage and find appropriate employment. In our experience, if someone appears reluctant to engage with employment support, there is very often a reason, whether practical or psychological. The first step should be to work actively and supportively with the individual to identify and address any barriers they face, rather than take action to punish the failure to engage.

There may be a role for conditionality in a devolved programme, for example by making access to some services conditional on them engaging with certain aspects of support, to ensure that the programme does not encourage damaging behaviours in the long-term. However, conditionality should take into account the individual's circumstances. Currently far too many sanctions are given without taking into account the impact of homelessness on someone's capacity to seek work. Conditionality should also be evidence-based, with clear links to how the conditionality supports people to engage with employment support provision and engage effectively with the labour market.

If sanctions do continue to be used in Scotland, they should be used only after someone has received clear information about how the system works, and only as a last resort after prior warning of what the implications of their actions would be if their current actions continued, and where it is supporting and empowering people to engage with the programme.

¹¹ Revolving Doors Agency (2015) Adding value? Reflections on payments by results for people with multiple and complex needs

¹² Community Links (2015) Payment by Results Policy Briefing No.5

It should be a point of principle that financial sanctions should never remove someone's entire source of income or their support for housing costs. Sanctions should not be used for people with complex needs or where someone is at risk of homelessness.

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About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people. We are dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life-changing services and campaigning for change. Our innovative education, employment, housing and well-being services address individual needs and help people to transform their lives.

As well as delivering services, we are determined campaigners, working to prevent people from becoming homeless and advocating solutions informed by research and our direct experience. We work with politicians, policy makers and the Scottish and Westminster governments to bring about change and share good practice, using expertise from working with single homeless people and our understanding of the issues they face to shape policy and practice.

Crisis has ambitious plans for the future and we are committed to help more people in more places across the UK. We know we won't end homelessness overnight or on our own but we take a lead, collaborate with others and, together, make change happen.



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