



Together  
we will end  
homelessness

# Progressing Onwards at Crisis Skylight London:

Improving outcomes for  
homeless people and those  
in vulnerable housing


Independent evaluation report prepared  
by the Dartington Service Design Lab

1 August 2015 – 31 July 2018



DARTINGTON  
SERVICE  
DESIGN LAB





“We know [other members] by face and sometimes we sit together and talk... So, it jointly leads to a little bit of conversation... This is a home for a lot of people. That’s what I’m trying to say.”

Crisis member



# 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 offer 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

This evaluation report contains data findings and lessons emerging from the three-year *Progressing Onwards* project, delivered by the Crisis Skylight London team and funded by the Big Lottery. It offers a series of reflections and recommendations for the service to consider in the future.

## Reflections

**Reflection 1.** *Progressing Onwards* is effective at reaching people who meet Crisis' eligibility criteria.

**Reflection 2.** *Progressing Onwards* has supported members to achieve long-term outcomes related to housing and employment.

**Reflection 3.** *Progressing Onwards* works with significantly more members who are EU/EEA nationals or have refugee status than other Crisis Skylights, which affects the barriers their members face as well as the Skylight service delivery.

**Reflection 4.** There has been a significant increase in demand for Crisis Skylight London's housing services during the course of the *Progressing Onwards* project.

**Reflection 5.** Crisis Skylight London has adapted the sequencing of *Progressing Onwards* activities in response to the high demand for housing services and the context of the London private rented sector.

**Reflection 6.** The Housing Team within Crisis Skylight London have adapted their practice models in response to the pressures associated with extremely high demand for their service.

**Reflection 7.** Crisis Skylight London has developed strong relationships with local landlords which helps members to secure accommodation.

**Reflection 8.** Members of Crisis Skylight London report that the biggest changes they experience while working with Crisis are around confidence and mental health.

**Reflection 9.** Crisis Skylight London helps members to overcome the challenges posed by low levels of English literacy.

**Reflection 10.** Some members reported feeling isolated, something which Crisis Skylight London has been able to partly, but not wholly, address.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1.** Crisis Skylight London could establish a mechanism for landlords to refer in tenants who are experiencing difficulties.

**Recommendation 2.** Crisis Skylight London should consider its existing resources and good quality evidence to determine how it can further help members experiencing social isolation and loneliness.

**Recommendation 3.** Undertake 'user-centred' research to understand exactly why a long waiting list is associated with 'no shows' at appointments.

**Recommendation 4.** Develop relationships with a network of employers offering longer-term opportunities with more potential for progression.

# Setting the scene

Crisis Skylight London provides support to homeless people and those in vulnerable housing situations.

The Crisis team work with some of the most vulnerable members of society who are facing multiple challenges (e.g. significant lack of affordable housing; unsafe or poor-quality housing; family bereavement; struggles with drug and alcohol addiction; mental health difficulties; low income and debt). Crisis Skylight London operates a building-based model. This means Crisis members in London can access a range of 1:1 support and learning activities from the Skylight building.

The *Progressing Onwards* project provides a range of accredited pre-employment and pre-tenancy training and functional skills (English and maths) classes, as well as personalised one-to-one support. Three Crisis staff work full-time on this project: one Housing Coach; one Job Coach and one Curriculum Coordinator.

The *Progressing Onwards* project was delivered by Crisis Skylight London over a three-year period between 2015-2018. The project sought to support homeless people and those in vulnerable housing situations by helping members to improve their employability, housing stability and functional skills. As part of the *Progressing Onwards* project, the

Crisis team provided a combination of support that focused on learning activities (e.g. English and maths classes, accredited pre-employment and pre-tenancy training/classes) and 1:1 Crisis coaching.

As part of the *Progressing Onwards* project, the Crisis London team provided service users (known as members) with a holistic package of support to help them overcome barriers that prevent them from moving towards their employment, skills and housing goals. The *Progressing Onwards* project sits within a wider portfolio of support delivered by the Crisis Skylight London team that includes personal development, one-to-one counselling, education and training, and peer-mentoring, along with housing and benefit support/guidance.

The *Progressing Onwards* project sought to help Crisis members progress into paid employment, improve their housing situation and achieve longer-term stability by:

- Providing support and guidance to help members achieve accredited qualifications in order to increase likelihood of employment;



- Increasing confidence, self-esteem and motivation to pursue employment goals;
- Facilitating volunteering opportunities/placements (e.g. administration roles; support at Crisis classes; barista training etc.) and;
- Supporting members to develop the skills to effectively sustain a tenancy.

The Dartington Service Design Lab (or the Lab) were commissioned by Crisis on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund to produce this independent evaluation of the *Progressing Onwards* project. There are three main goals of the evaluation:

- Understand and assess the delivery model of the *Progressing Onwards* project;
- Determine the impact on members, and the extent to which specified outcomes have been achieved and;
- Share insights and highlight recommendations for further development within the Crisis Skylight services in London.

The *Progressing Onwards* project is funded through the Big Lottery Reaching Communities programme. The aims of the programme closely reflect the strategic goals of the Big Lottery Fund, which are to improve the lives of people in communities who are most in need in the UK. Reaching Communities is focussed on people who face multiple barriers to social integration in the sense that they are excluded from normal social interaction with neighbours and the wider community, lack social supports and may also need help to live independently and to access education, training and paid work.

In addition, the Reaching Communities programme seeks to support those people who have become 'hard to reach' because they are isolated from the community due to lack of self-confidence or unmet support needs. The *Progressing Onwards* project was designed specifically to meet the programme's goals



# The method

The report blends both quantitative data and qualitative insights to provide a picture of the *Progressing Onwards* project and the extent to which outcomes have been achieved, as well as recommendations for consideration.

## Quantitative data

Quantitative data in this report come from the client 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 1st August 2015 to 31st July 2018. Activity data are counted by date and all such data only refer to activities that have been conducted within the three-year period of evaluation.

## Qualitative insights

Qualitative insights have been distilled from semi-structured interviews focused upon exploring reflections and any emergent recommendations relevant to the *Progressing Onwards* project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This involved staff interviews with the Employment Services Manager, a Job Coach, the Housing Team Leader, a Housing Coach and the Maths Tutor. Ten members were also interviewed about their experiences of working with Crisis. One landlord with whom Crisis Skylight London have a strong working relationship took part

in a final interview. Ethical approval for interviews was obtained from the Centre for Social Policy and adhered to Crisis safeguarding policies. These interviews have informed much of the Lab's thinking and are woven into the report. Insights from staff and member reflections are highlighted throughout the text.

**Please note:** Crisis staff and members will not refer to *Progressing Onwards* as a separate project that sits outside the usual Crisis Skylight London model or activities. It is embedded and overlaps with a number of other activities delivered by the Crisis team in London.

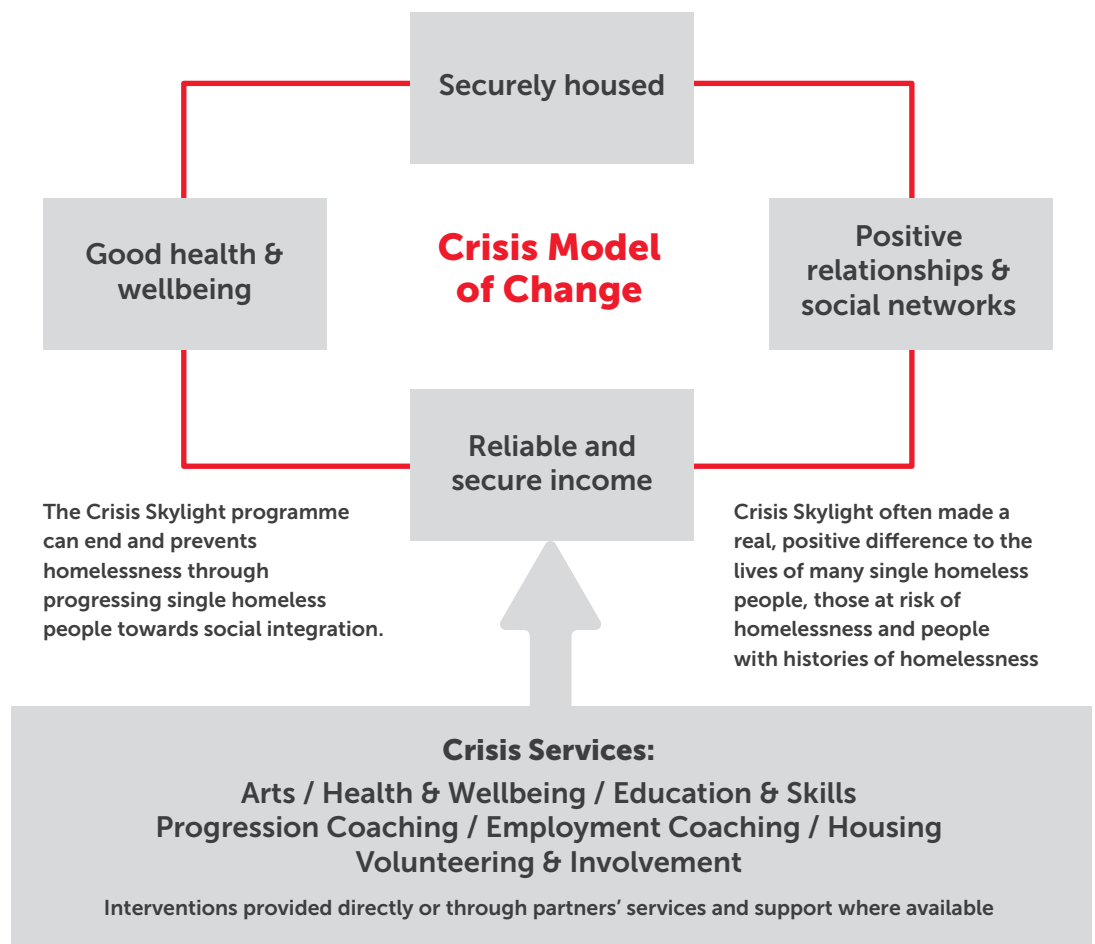
# Understanding the project

## Crisis Model of Change

Crisis has a well-defined Model of Change across all 11 of its GB Skylight centres. See Figure 1 below 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, at the point of joining the service, are currently homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, or have been homeless in the last two years.

**Figure 1. Crisis Model of Change**





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); improve their health and emotional wellbeing, and; build positive relationships as well as 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 to increase employability (e.g. helping members to obtain market-led qualifications such as food hygiene). Other group-based activities provide opportunity for participation in more creative initiatives such as art and drama classes.

### **2. The progression branch**

The progression branch provides some members with one-to-one 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 or seeking employment.

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

**“...every day is completely different.”**

**Crisis staff member**

# Demographics

## Demographics: Who does *Progressing Onwards* support?

**"...what we have over the last couple of years in London specifically is we've seen an increase in a client group here with new refugee status."**  
Crisis staff member

Table 1 provides the demographic breakdown of 5,165 unique members who participated in the *Progressing Onwards* project between 1st August 2015 and 31st July 2018. Analysis of the dataset comprising these individuals is presented in the data summary below.

The majority of Crisis members in the *Progressing Onwards* project are male (74%). While a large proportion are from Britain or Ireland (43%), Crisis Skylight London has a significantly higher proportion of members who are EU/EEA nationals (28%) or have refugee status (14%) than other Skylights. In Coventry and Warwickshire, for example, 7% of members are EU/EEA nationals and 8%

have refugee status; at Crisis Skylight South Yorkshire those proportions are 2% and 6% respectively. 1,127 members (22%) report having no qualifications. Furthermore, 86% of members reported being unemployed and financially insecure when joining Crisis. Please note: the remaining 14% (723) have some form of income via part or full-time employment. This does not mean they are financially secure, as all are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness.



**Table 1. Demographics of the *Progressing Onwards* programme**

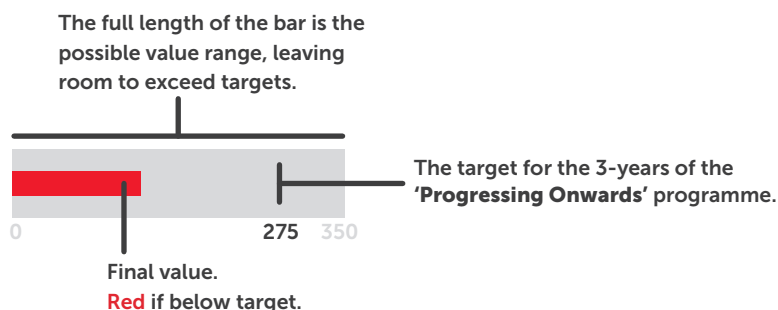
	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	74%	3,803
Female	26%	1,323
<i>Missing/refused</i>	1%	39
<b>Citizenship</b>		
British or Irish	43%	2,215
EU/EEA	28%	1,445
On work permit	2%	86
Leave to remain	7%	365
Refugee	14%	701
<i>Missing/refused</i>	7%	353
<b>Highest Qualification (on entry to Crisis)</b>		
No qualifications	20%	1,018
No British equivalent	22%	1,127
Below GCSE	7%	367
GCSE A*-C	13%	672
A-level	10%	493
Vocational	10%	499
Professional level	2%	78
Degree level	11%	590
<i>Missing/refused</i>	6%	321

# Impact on members

This section presents data on member progress and outcomes collated from existing Crisis data systems for all Crisis members on the *Progressing Onwards* project between 1st August 2015 and 31st July 2018. It contains findings on reach, member satisfaction, skill development, changes in member confidence, self-esteem and motivation/desire to pursue employment goals and the long-term outcomes of progressing into employment, volunteering or work placements, living in housing in the private rented sector, and functional qualifications gained.

For detailed definitions of each construct measured in the report see Appendix 2.

**Figure 2. Example 'how to read' chart**

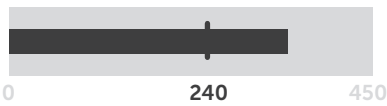


## Progressing Onwards activity and outcomes data

Data covers members involved 01/11/2015–31/07/2018

### 1. Job coaches

#### 1.1 Supported one-to-one



354 members have attended at least one face-to-face session with a Jobs Coach.

Average contact = 3 hours

#### 1.2 Increased skills



89 members report increased skill in their ability to seek a job (and associated skills).

#### 1.3 Progressed into employment



74 members who were working with a Job Coach have progressed to employment or volunteering.

### 2. Housing Coaches

#### 2.1 Supported one-to-one



405 members have attended at least one face-to-face session with a Housing Coach.

Average contact = 3.2 hours

#### 2.2 Increased confidence



48 members reported feeling more confident in finding and keeping a home after seeing a Housing Coach.

#### 2.3 Progressed to renting



136 members who were working with a Housing Coach have progressed to renting from a private landlord.

### 3. Functional Skills Courses

#### 3.1 Attended a course



118 members have attended at least one session of a Functional Skills course. (i.e. basic literacy or maths).

#### 3.2 Qualifications gained



166 members have gained a full qualification in Functional Skills.

#### 3.3 Motivation to continue



111 members reported wanting to find employment, seek volunteer work, or continue their education.

**Data summary**

The data reported indicates that the *Progressing Onwards* project at Crisis Skylight London is on target on some indicators and exceeding some of these. In relation to reaching members and supporting them on a one-to-one basis through coaching, the programme has exceeded its target. The number of members moving into private rented accommodation is also higher than expected. Supporting members into further education, volunteering or work placements and to gain new qualifications are lower than intended.

Where data are available, intermediate outcomes, when members have reported increased job seeker skill development and confidence in finding and keeping a home are under the intended target. However, it is difficult to tell the extent to which these outcomes have been achieved by all members due to poor data completeness (~53% of those attended a course or seeing a coach). Intermediate outcomes data is collected via member completed feedback forms. These are used across Skylight services which may lead to form fatigue (members are asked to complete a large number of these forms). They are generally circulated at the end of a course and so members who miss the last session will not have completed one.

**“...this gentleman [Crisis Housing Coach] helped me very much. I found my place, my flat...”**

**Crisis member**



# Reflections

The following section provides a brief descriptive summary of the data findings, and shares the reflections arising from interviews with staff and Crisis members.

**Reflection 1.** *Progressing Onwards* is effective at reaching people who meet Crisis' eligibility criteria.

Crisis Skylight London delivered activities related to the *Progressing Onwards* project with a far greater number of members than its initial target. The number of members who had a one-to-one session with a Job Coach exceeded the target (354 members seen compared to a target of 240), as did the number of members who had a one-to-one session with a Housing Coach (405 members seen compared to a target of 300).

This demonstrates that Crisis Skylight London is effective at reaching and engaging people who are eligible for Crisis' services. It may also be indicative of the high demand for Crisis' services in London reported by staff members during qualitative interviews.

**Reflection 2.** *Progressing Onwards* has supported members to achieve long-term outcomes related to housing and employment.

Crisis Skylight London has exceeded its initial target for both the number of members supported into private rented accommodation (136 members compared to a target of 96).

However, fewer members than anticipated have gained a functional qualification over the period of the project (166 member compared to a target of 270) or been supported into employment or volunteering (74 members compared to a target of 93) as part of the *Progressing Onwards* project.

**Reflection 3.** *Progressing Onwards* works with significantly more members who are EU/EEA nationals or have refugee status than other Crisis Skylights, which affects the barriers their members face as well as the Skylight service delivery.

Crisis Skylight London has a significantly higher proportion of members who are EU/EEA nationals (28%) or have refugee status (15%) than other Skylights. These members experience several different and additional barriers to accessing employment and housing compared to those with British nationality, including: issues around a member's status in the UK; the control the Home Office has over the housing situation of members with, or applying for, refugee status; the difficulty of renting and working in new country with a different set of rules and expectations; a lack of UK qualifications or work experience; and, in many cases, limited English language skills. Some of these barriers are illustrated by the quotes below.



**"I had a very large proportion of European clients at the beginning of the project. With that kind of law in particular, they don't have the access to benefits. They will have limited language skills sometimes. I think some of the other barriers as well is just getting to know how things go, and how things are in the UK."**  
Crisis staff member

**"...when I came to this country, it's better ... when I got my status. When I have my status, I start my new life, real life..."**  
Crisis member

**"...last year ... I couldn't come back here [to the Skylight] because I couldn't afford to come here ... they [the Home Office] sent me to Essex. But**

**now I have been granted leave to remain..."**  
Crisis member

**"These guys [members with refugee status] often have trauma, they are young people, tend to be young males. Again, don't have any kind of support network and do end up rough sleeping. I often accommodate them initially after leaving government asylum seeker accommodation in different areas of the county; from what people tell me they do sometimes abandon these tendencies to come to London."**  
Crisis staff member

**"...it can be a bit transition, moving from another country or different environment."**  
Crisis member

Crisis Skylight London has adapted aspects of its delivery model to meet the needs of its members. Publicity and induction materials, for example, have been translated into different languages to help members with limited English to engage with the service initially, and one-to-one sessions may be conducted using a phone-based translation service (see Reflection 9).

Benefit restrictions mean that employment is very important for EU/EEA nationals and the Employment Team have a number of strategies to support these members into work. These include using part-time agency work and volunteering opportunities within Crisis Skylight London (e.g. their café training scheme) to build up a UK work history. Job Coaches are also aware of the kinds of roles that are suited to members who are still developing their English skills (see Reflection 9).

**“Yeah for me it [the induction to the Skylight] was okay because I speak English, but some of the other guys they gave them like translated copies, or people on hand to help out.”**

Crisis member

**“We’re very lucky to have the café training scheme next door. So, people can be trained there twice a week for a number of weeks, and straight away that’s a UK job that can go into your CV... a well-known organization in the UK. We get a lot of agency work [for non-UK nationals], which can be sporadic in terms of stability for the employment. At least that they are paying**

**tax and National Insurance. There’s beginning to be a paper trail for that person.”**  
Crisis staff member

**Reflection 4.** There has been a significant increase in demand for Crisis Skylight London’s housing services during the course of the *Progressing Onwards* project.

**“...the numbers [accessing the housing service] have shot up, ... so probably five and six years ago, because of the tighter referral criteria, we used to get maybe 100, 120 referrals a year. We now get about five to six hundred referrals a year...”**

Crisis staff member

The Housing Team Leader in Crisis Skylight London reported a five-fold increase in the annual number of internal referrals – from other teams within the Skylight – that the team receives compared to five or six years ago. This has partly been driven by the decision to relax the referral criteria. Previously members had to demonstrate good engagement with a coach in another team before they could be referred to the Housing Team, but this requirement was dropped at around the time the Skylight began delivering the *Progressing Onwards* project. The increase in demand for the Housing Team’s services should also be considered in the context of the rising prevalence of homelessness in recent years (see, for example, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2018*). The Housing Team has added three additional Housing Coaches over this period to meet the increased demand.

**“...we changed our entry requirements a little bit, earlier on. So previously you had to meet some criteria before you could get to some things and so forth, but we changed that because members should access whatever team they need when they come into the building without being told then need to go and see a coach first ... So, we changed that. But what that’s done is increase the number of people going through to the main service with is the Housing Team, as you can imagine, being a homelessness charity.”**  
Crisis staff member

**Reflection 5.** Crisis Skylight London has adapted the sequencing of *Progressing Onwards* activities in response to the high demand for housing services and the context of the London private rented sector.

**“For example, their [the Housing Team’s] waiting list is absolutely massive... it may be that person will go to a number of different shelters while they’re working with me. Hopefully get them into employment during that time. Then by the time they’ve kind of got to that point, they’re just reaching the top of the housing waiting list. Which again can cause difficulties, because they’re now working. Then they can access that housing service hopefully get a private rented sector accommodation. Sometimes it works really well, it happens**

**exactly the same time. Because the Housing Team will find it challenging to find accommodation for people who are on benefits. It’s much easier for people who are working. Sometimes it works perfectly. Some of them are going to work, a couple of weeks later into private rented accommodation, and it just really works very well. And sometimes it just doesn’t.”**  
Crisis staff member

**“...we now have probably about 170, 180 members on our [the Housing Team’s] waiting list, which in real time means that it’s going to be about four or five months before we actually even contact them.”**  
Crisis staff member

Due to the long waiting list for the Housing Team members benefiting from the *Progressing Onwards* project will tend to work with a Job Coach while they are waiting to reach the top of the list. The Job Coach offers help accessing temporary accommodation, as well as supporting members to find employment. While it is very challenging for members to find employment before they have long-term accommodation, if they are working when they start to work with the Housing Team they are more likely to find accommodation due to the difficulty of renting in London’s private sector without income from employment.

This conundrum illustrates the ‘catch 22’ that many people experiencing homelessness face. It is hard to find a job without having a home, but it is also hard to find a home without having a job. Within Crisis Skylight London, the tendency to work on employment first is determined

by, firstly, the oversubscription and therefore long waiting list for the Housing Team, and, secondly, the difficulty of renting in London without employment income.

**“we received lots rough sleepers and they’ll wait and see a housing coach, so they’re engaging with an employment coach however that focus is just not there until the housing element is sorted out. So, we try to, just keep them engaged, keep them warm, support them as much as we can until they get a housing coach. And then the focus changes, because you know, you can think about a job and you’ve got a roof over your head.”**

Crisis staff member

The Housing Team Leader at Crisis Skylight London believes the long waiting list has caused an increase in the number of ‘no-shows’ to appointments with Housing Coaches. After waiting for three to four months for an appointment, a member may disengage because their life has moved on and their situation has changed, or because they have become frustrated after waiting for so long.

The Skylight has begun to address the issue by dedicating one day of administrative support to the Housing Team each week. The intention is that this will reduce ‘no-shows’ by better coordinating referrals to the team.

**“In the last 10 months across [the Housing Team] we’ve had about 400 failed attendances, which means that that’s about 40 hours a month.”**

Crisis staff member

**Reflection 6.** The Housing Team within Crisis Skylight London have adapted their practice models in response to the pressures associated with extremely high demand for their service.

**“because of being so busy all the time, we’ve had to create other ways that we could reach more of our members...”**

Crisis staff member

In response to extremely high demand for their service, the Housing Team in Crisis Skylight London have adapted their practice models to support more members. Adaptions include group housing inductions instead of one-to-one sessions and ‘dialling down’ post-tenancy support once a member has been in a tenancy for three months. This involves a move from the intensive coach-member relationship in which each member works with only one coach to a model in which the member could be supported by any coach within the Housing Team. This ‘dialling down’ is also designed to facilitate a member’s transition towards independence from Crisis’ support.

**“...there’s two reasons [for dialling down support earlier].**

**One reason is that we can work with more people and not have to remember those post-tenancy clients as well, and then the second thing is that we want to kind of encourage that natural progression out of Crisis.”**

Crisis staff member

**Reflection 7.** Crisis Skylight London has developed strong relationships with local landlords which helps members to secure accommodation.



“Definitely confidence... that kind of confidence in your ability, being more confident with people, dealing with people. That makes a big difference you know. I find sometimes when I’m at interviews, I do lack confidence, but now, I’m alright.”

Crisis member

**“I managed to get a housing coach, they had better leads [than me]. And I ended up getting housing through them.”**  
Crisis member

**“...there is a very high level of trust [between us and Crisis] and it is reflected on the service that we give to them as well because we know that they are our first clients; we need to look after them because they look after us so it's mutually beneficial trust relationship...”**

**...what we noticed is the quality of the tenants is much higher when we go with Crisis. Their tenants are well-trained and educated and aware of their responsibilities as tenants, we found. Yeah, they're generally then taken care of and they're more than selected, they're more serious and responsible and they're reliable as tenants...**

**...the reason why we are able to let properties to Crisis is because most issues are being taken care of by them... We try first the tenant. If we can't get hold of the tenant, then we will get Crisis on board as well.”**  
Letting agent

Crisis Skylight London has developed mutually beneficial relationships with local landlords on the basis that the Crisis members that take up properties with these landlords prove to be very good tenants. Crisis has fostered a reputation amongst

particular landlords of identifying and recommending good tenants. Landlords also value the post-tenancy support provided by the Housing Team and will contact Crisis directly to help if an issue arises between a landlord and a Crisis member. The reputation and trust Crisis has fostered with landlords has helped facilitate housing opportunities for those who may otherwise not be considered by landlord and letting agents, for example, tenants with past convictions. The ongoing maintenance and development of this network is therefore of great importance to the impact of the *Progressing Onwards* project.

**“... having those kinds of networks with landlords and that relationship with our existing network of landlords is we've been able to have those conversations, because most cases what wouldn't accept someone with a ... conviction ... but having that trust between the landlord and us has always helped.”**  
Crisis staff member

**Reflection 8.** Members of Crisis Skylight London report that the biggest changes they experience while working with Crisis are around confidence and mental health.

When asked, “What is the biggest change for you since you started working with Crisis?” a majority of members interviewed reported that the most significant change was an increase in their confidence. In particular, members stated that they are more confident interacting with other people one-to-one and in groups and applying for jobs and accommodation. Members also mentioned an improvement in their mental health as a significant change during their time with Crisis.

This is in line with data on intermediate outcomes collected via member-completed feedback forms. A large number of members reported increased job seeking skills, improved confidence in finding and keeping a home and greater motivation for volunteering, further education or employment. However, it is difficult to tell the extent to which these outcomes have been achieved by all members due to poor data completeness (~53%).

**"I can apply for jobs myself, apply for flats. Which three years ago I didn't have the confidence to do that."**  
Crisis member

**"It gave me confidence and it shock my mind about mental health wise, I suffer from mental health and it [Crisis] shift my negative thoughts to positive thoughts to looking forward to waking up in the morning and go to school."**  
Crisis member

**"I used to speak when only one person like you [directed at the interviewer], but when there was more than two people, I get nervous, but English literature has helped me a lot to speak in a group."**  
Crisis member

**"I am starting to feel comfortable around people. And for me that's a very, very big thing."**  
Crisis member

It is not advisable to draw *definitive* conclusions from the small number of member interviews about how these changes come about while working with Crisis Skylight London. However, some mechanisms reported by Crisis members include gaining experience and familiarity in situations similar to job interviews, but in a safer, lower stakes environment; staff having patient and encouraging attitudes towards members; and teaching members techniques to promote positive thinking. See examples from members below:

**"The other thing I should add is, they had an ... employability fair. So it was very, very helpful. I've seen many people here. It was like a mini interview, I had discussions with many groups. So it builds up my confidence, when I'm going in a real interview what to do and before I'm scared, but now I have more confidence."**  
Crisis member

**"I'm getting better. I'm not going, "I feel I'm useless; I'm just going to embarrass myself". This was how it has helped my future because of their patience and I'm now getting better. So, even though maths is my favourite... my teacher is encouraging me. You can do it, you are doing well. More than. I wasn't doing good, but she was just encouraging me."**  
Crisis member



**“I’m trying to just put a positive spin on everything. And she’s talking about some techniques. Stuff, techniques to help your mind, your just general mental state I suppose.”**

Crisis member

**Reflection 9.** Crisis Skylight London helps members to overcome the challenges posed by low levels of English literacy.

**“Literacy skills, especially in English, it can be a real issue. When it comes to application forms, people are not able to complete them independently. Although their verbal English might be very good, written English may be very challenging. That’s also challenging with regards of some of the qualifications that we offer as part of the employment offer, is that most of them are done in English. So those skills do need to get better before people can get those qualifications.”**

Crisis staff member

For many of Crisis’ members in London, a lack of English language skills – written or spoken – is an important barrier to employment. Crisis Skylight London runs ESOL classes for their members and connects them with external education providers in or near the community where they are living to help them improve their fluency more quickly. In-house volunteering opportunities such as the café training scheme give members the chance to practice and improve their English in a workplace environment.

**“They’re able to come and access classes at Crisis. They’ll probably only dip in and out with me, initially, once those English skills improved. It’s unbelievable sometimes, when maybe three or four-month period someone who you couldn’t hardly communicate with will come back to me, “Now I would like to start looking at work.” That continues to get better. So someone’s working in a café for example – their English will pick up really quickly because they’re using it all the time. Going to classes here or externally and also just communicating and work can also do that as well.”**

Crisis staff member

In addition to helping members improve their English, staff at Crisis Skylight London find ways to work with them and help them progress based on whatever language skills they have at the time. When a member’s spoken English is very limited, staff at Crisis Skylight London use a phone-based translation service to conduct assessments and inductions. Housing Coaches may speak to landlords on behalf of Crisis members with limited English. Employment Coaches are also aware of the sectors and roles that are most suitable to members whose English is not fluent and will help members find employment in those positions.

**“We’re quite lucky we’ve got this [a phone-based translation service]. It’s been there for a while now, but we’re able to use Clear Voice. So, for people who just don’t have any English**

**verbal skills at all we can actually at least get good initial assessment and explaining the services fully."**

Crisis staff member

**"Housing Coach ... it is very good because helped me to speak to landlord and any problem in house I tell him, and she tell landlord about anything, fixing, anything."**

Crisis member

**"They have very limited English skills, they don't have any UK job history. By far, catering/hospitality is the easiest to get entry level roles in. Much easier for example than retail... they will want really good level of English because you might be communicating with customers. Whereas your kitchen system type roles – barista roles and kitchen porter roles – you can do those jobs with limited English skills."**

Crisis staff member

**Reflection 10.** Some members reported feeling isolated, something which Crisis Skylight London has been able to partly, but not wholly, address.

**"But in Haringay [I have] no friends, no anything because when I came here [I had] no family, no friends not anything."**

Crisis member

**"I [have to] practice because I don't have friends, just somebody in my school and I [don't] speak with them in English."**

Crisis member

**"You know, people choose to come here. Whether it be because they don't want to sit on their own or whether it be they've got nowhere to sit, they come to do their lessons."**

Crisis member

In some interviews, members disclosed feelings of isolation – especially those who had moved to London from countries outside the UK without their family. Some members reported that attending classes, appointments and events at Crisis Skylight London helped with their isolation. The Skylight offers members a chance to make friends and provides a supportive and welcoming environment. Nevertheless, it seems that members continue to feel isolated in their communities and this may be an important barrier to their progression away from Crisis' support according to the Skylight model of change.

**Interviewer: How do you find this social side of it [Crisis Skylight London]?**

**Crisis member: Yeah, it's nice. Especially when you start talking to people seeing their situation, and some of them have got it really bad, but I mean, they're in the right place. But just, not necessarily comradery, but you know, having a laugh, meeting friends and looking forward to coming in a seeing them again.**



“... we don't have our parents or relatives, or families. I have some friends but... I need somebody to help me, spiritually and also helping me to find different things, so Crisis is the right place.”

Crisis member

# 「Conclusions」

## Conclusions and recommendations

This section provides a series of recommendations the Crisis Skylight London could consider in the future. The project has achieved most of the targets set at the outset of this evaluation, and many of these have been far exceeded. The reach of the project in particular has been much greater than anticipated, with the number of members attending a functional skills course and the number seeing a Job Coach exceeding their target by a factor of ten. Improving confidence and self-esteem of members and improving members housing stability have both met and exceed targets, as has members' self-reported motivation for volunteering, further education or employment. The data shows that long-term outcomes for housing and employment have been met and exceeded, while the number of functional qualification gained by members is significantly below the target level.

**Recommendation 1.** Crisis Skylight London could establish a mechanism for landlords to refer in tenants who are experiencing difficulties.

**“So, if we would have a tenant that would run into issues, if we would refer them to Crisis? No, we don't do that ... I didn't know that Crisis would be interested having more cases.**

**I didn't want to put more on their plate but ... Yeah, absolutely, I would probably ask them.”**

Landlord

Crisis Skylight London currently maintains a strong relationship with a network of landlords across the city (see Reflection 7). There is an opportunity to build on this by formalising a procedure by which

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landlords can refer to Crisis tenants they know are experiencing difficulties. These potential beneficiaries of Crisis' services would meet the Skylight's eligibility criteria as they would be at risk of homelessness.

The creation of such a referral pathway has the potential to be mutually beneficial for Crisis and landlords. Crisis Skylight London may be able to reach more people who are at risk of homelessness, before they become homeless, and work with them to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. Landlords could benefit from increased stability of tenancies as well as the protection of rental income that may be lost if a tenancy breaks down.

**Recommendation 2.** Crisis Skylight London should consider its existing resources and good quality evidence to determine how it can further help members experiencing social isolation and loneliness.

During several interviews conducted for this report, members disclosed feelings of isolation (see Reflection 10). Members reported that coming to the Skylight for appointments, classes and events does help, but there seems to be an opportunity for Crisis to do more. It is especially important for Crisis to support members to make friends and find activities in the area around their tenancy as part of their transition away from the Skylight, following the model of change.

Loneliness and social isolation are issues that are currently receiving a good deal of public attention – in the media and on the political stage. Corresponding funding streams are becoming available, including a £20 million fund announced by central government in June 2018.

Staff at Crisis Skylight London might think about what existing resources could be redirected towards tackling isolation and how. There is also an emerging evidence base on best practice and effective interventions

to tackle loneliness on which Crisis Skylight London might draw to design responses to members' social isolation. Good starting points include an evidence review by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination at the University of York and the NICE evidence services.

**Recommendation 3.** Undertake 'user-centred' research to understand exactly why a long waiting list is associated with 'no shows' at appointments.

The Housing Team Leader reported that the long waiting time for their team's services may be connected to the significant proportion of appointments that are missed by members (see Reflection X). This has been recognised by the Skylight and extra administrative support has been put in place to address the issue.

In addition to this, Crisis Skylight London may consider undertaking 'user-centred' research to understand why the long wait time is connected with 'no shows'. Methods for achieving this include exploring scenarios – or 'member journeys' – with Crisis members to find out the impact of different waiting times, activities and messages on member's motivation. Findings from this research could inform new practices within the Skylight that help sustain member motivation and reduce 'no shows'.

**Recommendation 4.** Develop relationships with a network of employers offering longer-term opportunities with more potential for progression.

**“my philosophy around this is basically: smaller quantity of employers, bigger number of opportunities – and more progressive opportunities. So, it's not just a cleaner**

**somewhere – which for some people works fantastically as a place to get back into the routine and structures and that's brilliant – but there's nowhere to progress. So, we're looking at employers that provide those opportunities ... Crisis is going to be measuring homelessness over three years, ending homelessness over three-year period. And the only way you can do that is with income and housing is to make sure it's a sustainable income.”**

**Crisis staff member**

In order to help members achieve longer-term stability and independence – one of the aims of the *Progressing Onwards* project – Crisis Skylight London could work to develop relationships with a network of employers who offer roles with a longer duration and greater scope for progression. While shorter placements can be beneficial for members in terms of readjusting to full- or part-time employment and building up a CV with UK jobs, Crisis' success in helping members reach a stable housing situation over the long term depends on members securing a sustainable income. Crisis Skylight London has begun work in this direction through its Job Brokerage Executive. In light of this recommendation, the work of the Executive could become more focused towards longer-term employment opportunities.



“I’ve been in and out of work, so I’ve done some taxi driving, I did some proofreading and copyediting work, the proofreading, at one time was quite good because it was quite a regular, quite stable, but then it kind of, backed down. With the academic year, it goes up and down...”

Crisis member

## Appendix 1. Data tables

### Reach

	Actual	Target
Unique members in period	5,165	
Attended functional skills course	118	280
Saw a Job coach	354	240
Saw a Housing Coach	405	300

### Contact time with coach (average hours face-to-face)

Job Coach	Housing Coach
3.0 hrs	3.2 hrs

### Intermediate outcomes

	Actual	Target
Increased job seeking skills	89	144
Improved confidence in finding and keeping a home	48	135
Motivation for volunteering, further education or employment	166	243

### Long-term outcomes

Outcome	N	Target
Progressed to employment or volunteering	74	93
In private rented accommodation	136	96
Functional qualification gained	111	270



## Appendix 2. Construct definitions

### 1. Reach

**Definition:** The numbers of members who have been part in *Progressing Onwards* since 01/08/2015 until 31/07/2018, those who have seen a housing coach or a job coach at least once in the period face-to-face.

**In this report:** Data focuses on the number of unique members in *Progressing Onwards* or who have seen a housing coach. Time spent face-to-face with each coach is also reported.

**Data quality:** Number of clients being served by Crisis, or specific services within Crisis, are well recorded in the data system.

### 2. Qualifications

**Definition:** This is the number of functional qualifications gained and number of members attending functional skills classes on the *Progressing Onwards* project.

**In this report:** Qualifications gained are a part of the journey towards stable employment. We consider the total count.

**Data quality:** Qualification data comes from a single source of qualifications gained records.

For qualifications, the data quality is good. Qualifications are categorised into wide groupings, but the detail is also kept. This makes it easy to understand what sort of courses are being run and what level the qualification gained is at.

### 3. Intermediary Outcomes

**Definition:** These are outcomes that are key to the sustainment of more tangible or “hard” outcomes (such as employment and stable housing) and a part of the Crisis model. They are indicators that a member is progressing in the right direction and should act as early warnings when things are not on track. These include:

- Increased skills in finding a job
- Improved confidence in finding and keeping a home
- Desire to progress to further education, volunteering or employment.

**In this report:** Self-reported measurement of job seeking skills, confidence in finding and keeping a home and desire to progress all come from course feedback forms.

**Data quality:** Feedback forms are collected at the end of a course and are self-completed by members. The forms are several pages long and data completion low. Approximately 53% of members reaching the end of a course submit a completed feedback form. There are multiple challenges: the forms are entirely voluntary; tutors often do not have time in group sessions to support each member to complete the form; members are also asked to complete forms at various stages during their involvement with Crisis, which increases ‘form fatigue’. Revisions to the feedback forms and data collection process form part of the Lab’s recommendations to Crisis. Low form completion rate prevents the evaluation from accurately assessing whether members have progressed.

#### **4. Stable housing, employment and volunteering ('hard outcomes')**

**Definition:** The stated hard goals of Crisis, including:

- Sustained employment and volunteering
- Housing stability (private rented housing)

These are the tangible outcomes that are easy to measure but hard to achieve. Ultimately, housing and employment sustainment are the outcomes Crisis want to influence.

**In this report:** The focus of this evaluation is upon 'hard' outcomes for the *Progressing Onwards* project.

**Data quality:** These hard outcomes are well recorded and flagged within the system. They are hard to achieve but much easier to record.



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