# Invitation to tender – Research on International Reconnections

## Summary

This document invites proposals to carry out longitudinal research and evaluation on International Reconnections. The research is being managed by Crisis and supported by the Greater London Authority.

The objectives of **Phase 1** of the research are:

- To assess and understand the outcomes achieved through using Reconnection internationally as a tool to address homelessness (i.e. housing stability, health and wellbeing, reduction in drug and alcohol use).
- To assess how effective International Reconnections are as an intervention to solve homelessness.
- To understand how International Reconnections differ by approach/managing agency and what constitutes best practice by examining:
  - Non-supported returns
  - Supported reconnections (e.g. through Routes Home[1])
  - Home Office Voluntary Return Service
- To examine the extent to which outcomes differ by demographics and support needs of the people being Reconnected (e.g. level of support needs, nationality, ethnicity)
- To map the support models being offered and how this differs by destination (e.g. EEA/non-EEA, high income or low income countries, etc)

Subject to further funding being available the objectives of **Phase 2** of the project are:

- To understand the longer term outcomes of using Reconnections internationally as a intervention to address homelessness
- Mapping the types and models of international Reconnections and their prevalence across London (and potentially other parts of England)
- To evaluate and make recommendations about how the Reconnections process could be improved and who it works for

These aims will be further refined and shaped in conversation with the contractor/s.

The first phase of the research is likely to start in March 2023 and report in May 2024. Phase two - if funding is successful - would start in May 2024 and be completed in May 2025

The budget for the work is £50K for phase 1 of the research. Proposals should include a breakdown of project costs based on the specifications in the ITT for phase 1 and phase 2 of the research with phase 2 being subject to further funding of approximately further £50K (tbc).

We are happy to speak to people interested in bidding for this work before their submissions – please get in touch with us if there's anything you'd like to speak about. Please note however that we'll need to issue responses to key clarification questions to all bidders in the interests of fairness.

We are open to bids from individuals, organisations and in partnership which bring together these different areas of expertise.

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[1] Routes Home is being evaluated separately and will feed into the research

**Deadlines for proposals are Monday 23rd January**

**About Crisis**

Crisis is the national charity for people experiencing homelessness. We are committed to ending homelessness.

Every day we see the devastating impact homelessness has on people's lives. Every year we work side by side with thousands of people experiencing homelessness, to help them rebuild their lives and leave homelessness behind for good.

Through our pioneering research into the causes and consequences of homelessness and the solutions to it, we know what it will take to end it. Together with others who share our resolve, we bring our knowledge, experience and determination to campaign for the changes that will solve the homelessness crisis once and for all.

We bring together a unique volunteer effort each Christmas, to bring warmth, companionship and vital services to people at one of the hardest times of the year, and offer a starting point out of homelessness.

We know that homelessness is not inevitable. We know that together we can end it.

# 1. Background and context

'Reconnection' is a process whereby people experiencing homelessness who have a connection to another area (either elsewhere in the UK or internationally) are offered support by a local authority or a charity to return to their country of origin as a route out of homelessness. Reconnections has been increasingly prevalent since they were first recommended in 2006[2] as part of the Government's response to address rough sleeping. Since then they have been widely used but there is little evidence[3] about how often they are used, their effectiveness as an intervention to address homelessness, and the outcomes they achieve.

Crisis undertook a study in 2015 which looked UK reconnections. The evaluation concluded that practitioners generally agreed that reconnection was wholly appropriate and potentially beneficial in some circumstances, most notably where rough sleepers had made an unplanned move and abandoned support in other areas. However, outcomes were rarely recorded and there were concerns around the ethical dimensions of Reconnections especially in relation to:

- Reconnection being a 'single service offer' wherein rough sleepers who refuse to comply are denied access to homelessness services in the identifying area.
- the denial of services to rough sleepers with no recognised local connection anywhere in the UK;
- uncertainty regarding the legitimacy and/or severity of risk to rough sleepers in recipient areas (especially when no proof in the form of police records exist);
- inadequate service responses in some recipient areas; and the fragility or lack of support networks in recipient areas.

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[2] Communities and Local Government (CLG) (2006a) Getting Connected: Guidelines for Operating Reconnections Policies for Rough Sleepers – Outline Framework. London: CLG
[3] Johnsen, S. & Jones, A. (2015) The reconnection of rough sleepers within the UK: an evaluation. London: Crisis.

Building on the Crisis study this proposal outlines an approach to provide further evidence on International Reconnection interventions in two stages.

- Phase 1: Desk research conducted by Crisis' research team and the external commissioning and delivery of an initial longitudinal study.
- Phase 2: An expansion of the longitudinal study and more detailed evaluation on models of Reconnection and their effectiveness

## 2. The research brief

We are seeking a contractor who has skills and experience in conducting research and evaluation with people experiencing rough sleeping and understanding of the wider context Reconnections services are operating in. As the research is focused on International Reconnections it will involve working with services outside of the UK and experience of conducting research across multiple countries would be preferable.

The research has been divided into two phases. The Crisis research team will be conducting desk research on the prevalence of International Reconnections based on current available data and looking at existing secondary literature to support the research design and key questions for the tracking study. In phase 1 we would be looking to work with a contractor to answer the following research questions:

1. What outcomes are being achieved through using International Reconnection as a tool to address homelessness? (i.e. housing stability, health and wellbeing, reduction in drug and alcohol use). How do these differ by approach/managing agency and what constitutes best practice in the following types of models:
   a. Non-supported returns
   b. Supported reconnections (e.g. through Routes Home[4])
   c. Home Office Voluntary Return Service
2. What immigration advice has been offered to people as part of the Reconnection process
3. How does support needs and demographics of the people being Reconnected affect the outcomes achieved? (e.g. level of support needs, nationality, ethnicity)
4. What is the reality of the support offered at the destination of reconnections? To what extent does this differ by country of destination? (e.g. EEA/non-EEA, high income or low income countries, etc)
5. How effective is International Reconnection as an intervention to solve homelessness? How do people who are reconnected feel about the Reconnection process? What factors support or limit how effective Reconnection is?

Phase 2 is still subject to confirmation of funding and if successful it would be seeking to address the following questions:

1. What are the longer term outcomes of using International Reconnections internationally as an intervention to address homelessness?
2. What are the types and models of international Reconnections and their prevalence across London? (and potentially wider in England)
3. What is the role of Reconnections in the homelessness system? How can it be improved and who does it work for?

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[4] Routes Home is being evaluated separately and will feed into the research

**3. Approach and methodology**

This would be developed with the contractor but an indicative approach is detailed below.

**Phase 1**

Currently there is some Reconnection information recorded on CHAIN. In 2021/22 around 7% of people who were recorded as rough sleeping in London were reconnected to other locations – 44% of these were outside of the UK[5], 247 people in total. More recently, data[6] on support for people rough sleeping published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities also includes some information on Reconnections.

Whilst CHAIN records Reconnection prevalence amongst people rough sleeping it doesn't necessarily capture the outcomes and effectiveness of the Reconnection intervention and what factors can maximise positive outcomes. Any additional research would seek to examine these areas in more detail from both the perspective of people being reconnected and the organisations facilitating this.

The contractor would have access to rapid evidence review conducted by Crisis' research team to inform the project. This will highlight existing evidence and key questions.

*Stakeholder interviews/workshops*

To understand the current issues on Reconnections and inform the topic guides and other research tools, interviews or small workshops would be conducted with organisations and individuals working in this space including local authorities, Feantsa, and previous providers of Assisted Voluntary Return programmes in the UK (Refugee Action and IOM).

*Tracking and understanding Reconnection outcomes*

One of the largest evidence gaps in this area is long term outcomes and experiential information from the perspective of people who are Reconnected. The research would look at engaging a sample of people being Reconnected internationally who would be contacted at multiple points over 12 months to understand the outcomes of being reconnected and the efficacy of the support they received by both the host local authority and the country they return to. Please indicate in your bid suggested sample size taking into account attrition.

The research should consider involving people who are being reconnected via different models of support, countries, demographics (including nationality and ethnicity) to understand how outcomes and effectiveness differ by type of support, location of reconnection and level of support needs. The sampling frame would seek to include min numbers of characteristics to explore this in more detail.

**Phase 2**

After the first phase of the research is completed the feasibility and use of extending the research would be considered. The data from phase 1 could be used to map and understand the different models of international Reconnection interventions and the reason they are used.

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[5] CHAIN Annual Report, Greater London April 2021 – March 2022
[6] Support for people sleeping rough in England, September 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

If pursued further areas would include:

*Longer outcomes*

Where consent has been given the research we would be seeking for the contractor to conduct follow up interviews with individuals who participated in the first phase of the research. This would also include agencies and organisations who were part of the Reconnection process. There is likely to be higher attrition rates beyond 12 months and approaches to prevent high attrition should be included as part of the bid.

*Modelling prevalence and type of Reconnection*

Using data from phase 1 the contractor should identify a range of organisations and agencies to work with to understand and map the type of Reconnections services on offer. This could include:

- Working with a sample of local authorities and commissioned and non-commissioned services to trial data collection on Reconnections to improve outcome recording
- Mapping the type and prevalence of Reconnections and how these services work alongside other interventions to address homelessness
- Looking at the feasibility of recording more data in CHAIN

*Best Practice guide*

Drawing on the evidence base from both phases of the research and working with practitioners, a best practice guide on International Reconnections could be developed to inform how statutory services and organisations should develop Reconnections where this is an appropriate solution to an individual's homelessness.

## 4. Deliverables

The main outputs for the project would be:

- End of phase 1 report
- End of phase 2 report and best practice guide (tbc)

## 5. Timeline

For the purpose of your proposal, please assume the following timeline.

| Milestone/Output | Date |
|---|---|
| Tender published | Tuesday 29th November |
| Deadline for proposals | Monday 23rd January 2023 |
| Selection of contractor – this will likely include an online interview | w/c 30th January 2023 |
| Project start and inception meeting for phase 1 | w/c 13th February |
| Fieldwork started | April 2023 |
| **Outputs submitted for phase 1** | **May 2024** |

## 6. Budget

Research bids should include a breakdown of costs by day and activity.
If the allocated cost to conduct the outlined specification exceeds £50,000 for phase 1 please can contractors set out what is possible within this budget and how much of the full specification falls outside of this amount and what the additional expenditure would add to the work.

Whilst the budget for phase 2 is still unconfirmed could contractors please set out how they would answer the research questions and objectives with an additional £50K.

## 7. Project Management

The overall research project will be managed Crisis with support from the GLA. The contractor/s will be responsible for managing the elements of the project for which they are responsible.  We will work closely with and support the contractor/s with this.
Crisis contact lead is Francesca Albanese Francesca.Albanese@crisis.org.uk

## 8. Proposal information

Your proposal should set out:
1. An explanation of how your work will address the brief.
2. Details of methodologies
3. A breakdown of costs by specific project elements, and estimated timeframes.
4. A schedule for completion of the work.
5. The relevant experience of the organisation and/or individual delivering the project, including where possible examples of similar work you have carried out.
6. A summary of challenges and risks you foresee and how these will be mitigated.
7. We would also like recommendations on how we can ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of this project.

Evaluation criteria

We will assess research bids according to the following criteria:
1) The extent to which the proposal meets the brief;
2) The contractors' experience of similar work, knowledge in the subject area and awareness and experience of doing work on racial inequalities
3) Costs and value for money;
4) Ability to meet the specified timescale.

Please note that we are open to joint proposals from organisations and individuals who may wish to pool their expertise.

Proposals will be based on a written bid and a subsequent interview. If you are invited to an interview we will share the main questions with you in advance.

We accept bids in PowerPoint, Word or PDF format.