



Evaluation of the Brent Place-Based Approach

Invitation to tender

March 2023



Together
we will end
homelessness



Summary

This document invites proposals to evaluate the place-based approach to ending homelessness in Brent since 2019.

Taking a retrospective approach, the evaluation will aim to understand how different stakeholders perceive the changes brought about by the place-based approach in Brent in relation to:

1. **Strategic Learning**
2. **Systems Change**
3. **Individual Change**

The Crisis Skylight in Brent has a long history of place-based work, including founding the Harlesden Working Together initiative, a multi-agency Homelessness Forum, supporting two work streams on migrant homelessness and people with complex needs, and delivering a peer research project on vulnerable people's access to online services.

Generous support from the Berkeley Foundation has, since 2019, enabled Crisis Skylight Brent to continue building and developing new elements of its place-based work. The focus of the evaluation will be the place-based work in Brent since 2019 to date.

The evaluation findings will provide learning to inform and influence:

- how the partnership between Crisis, the Berkeley Foundation and Brent Council might be further developed to work towards ending homelessness more effectively;
- the development of Crisis' future place-based work in other local areas;
- the development of a Built for Zero¹ programme within Brent.

Findings should be presented in an accessible format for the needs of different stakeholders, both within and external to Brent.

Total funding of up to £40,000 (including VAT, travel and subsistence) is available for this evaluation.

The evaluation should be completed and a final report submitted by 31 January 2024.

The deadline for evaluation proposals is 28 April 2023.

¹ <https://community.solutions/built-for-zero/the-movement/>



Context: Place-Based Approaches

“In order to make deep and durable progress on tough economic, social, and environmental issues, we must change the systems underlying those issues, the systems that keep them in place”².

In 2018, Crisis set out a bold plan for evidence-based policy solutions to end homelessness in England, Scotland and Wales³. National policy change is essential. However, this alone cannot achieve an end to homelessness. Local communities have a role to play in ending homelessness in their own areas.

Therefore, through our 2018-2023 organisational strategy, Crisis set out the ambition to work with local authorities and other partners both inside and outside of the homelessness and housing sectors to drive change and demonstrate that homelessness can be ended in local areas⁴. This focus on systems within a defined area and therefore local context represents an area of work referred to as a place-based approach which ‘describes a style and philosophy which seeks to achieve ‘joined up’ systems change’⁵.

Focusing on one need, problem or population group at a time will not end homelessness. This has been demonstrated in previous attempts to end rough sleeping. Whilst the Rough Sleepers Initiative in the 1990s did bring rough sleeping numbers down, the failure to address wider forms of homelessness in local areas meant that as soon as political focus and funding shifted, numbers across all forms of homelessness went back up.

People at risk of or experiencing homelessness must navigate multiple systems to fulfil even their most basic needs (e.g., health, social care, housing, asylum, etc). To create profoundly better outcomes for people, there is a need for imaginative, bold, and ambitious responses to drive transformation that cuts across service and sector boundaries. People are affected by, and have an impact on, the places where they live. Social and physical environments impact health, wellbeing, and safety. Therefore, we need to think holistically and systemically to understand how systems impact on people’s lives. In doing so, we can acknowledge that communities are complex and challenging, but that we can apply methodical approaches to help navigate this.

² Cabaj, M. (2019) *Evaluating Systems Change Results: An Inquiry Framework*. Canada: The Tamarack Institute. Available at:

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/Paper%20Evaluating%20Systems%20Change%20Results%20Mark%20Cabaj.pdf?hsCtaTracking=2797ccdf-cfd3-4309-a6e0-c70b6a7ed5de%7Cfb84904f-568e-4e7f-b063-8040401998b4>

³ Downie, M., Gousy, H., Basran, J., Jacob, R., Rowe, S., Hancock, C., Albanese, F., Pritchard, R., Nightingale, K. and Davies, T. (2018) *Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain*. London: Crisis. Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/international-plans-to-end-homelessness/everybody-in-how-to-end-homelessness-in-great-britain-2018/>

⁴ Crisis (2018) *Crisis 5 Year Strategy 2018-23*. London: Crisis. Available at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239521/cris0101_5yearstrategy_digital.pdf

⁵ Taylor, M. and Buckley, E. (2017) *Historical Review of Place-Based Approaches*. London: Lankelly Chase. Available at: <https://lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Historical-review-of-place-based-approaches.pdf>



The Crisis Place-Based Approach in Brent

The Crisis Skylight in Brent has a long history of place-based work, including four years' experience of working intensively to influence a local ecosystem in the neighbourhood of Harlesden; Harlesden Working Together which was established in 2015. Since then, Crisis Skylight Brent has shifted the focus of its place-based work to the homelessness system in Brent, setting up a multi-agency Homelessness Forum, supporting two work streams on migrant homelessness and people with complex needs, and delivering a peer research project on vulnerable people's access to online services such as making a homelessness application or managing housing benefit.

Generous support from the Berkeley Foundation has, since 2019, enabled Crisis Skylight Brent to continue building and developing new elements of its place-based work.

Brent's place-based approach has two key themes:

- **Theme 1: Partnerships & Influence**

Influence the local ecosystem further so that it adopts approaches that are in line with Crisis's Plan to end Homelessness.

- **Theme 2: System Change through individual advocacy**

Continue to work with individual members to end their homelessness through direct services and collect data and learnings from the service to inform and evolve our partnerships and influencing work.

The overarching outcomes that the place-based approach is aiming to achieve are:

- **Outcome 1:** To increase opportunities to end homelessness in Brent through strengthened, multi-agency partnerships and co-ordination of combined efforts to tackle the issues around homelessness
- **Outcome 2:** To add to Crisis's learning about how ending homelessness can be delivered locally, and the role Skylights can play in achieving this



The evaluation

Crisis is seeking a skilled and experienced contractor to undertake an evaluation of the Crisis place-based approach in Brent since 2019 to date.

The aim of the evaluation is to understand how different stakeholders perceive the changes brought about by the place-based approach in Brent by answering the following questions⁶:

1. Strategic Learning

- a. What have we learnt about what the Brent place-based approach is doing (strengths/limitations of activities, practices, processes, relationships, capacity, resources)?
- b. What have we learnt about the assumptions, understanding and thinking about the systems and context of the challenge the Brent place-based approach is addressing?
- c. What have we learnt about how the Brent place-based approach is operating (principles, responses, norms, dynamics, values, narratives)?
- d. How might learning about the experience in Brent inform decisions about adopting a place-based approach in other local areas, both where Crisis does and does not operate services?

2. Systems Change

- a. What changes have happened in the “drivers” that shape the way the system behaves?
- b. What changes have happened in behaviours of system actors?
- c. What changes have happened in overall system behaviours?
- d. How might learning from the experience in Brent inform the approach to systems change in other local areas?

3. Individual Change

- a. Which changes have been experienced by individual people?
- b. Which changes have been experienced by target groups?
- c. Which changes have been experienced for specific populations?

⁶ Cabaj, M. (2019) *Evaluating Systems Change Results: An Inquiry Framework*. Canada: The Tamarack Institute. Available at: <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/Paper%20Evaluating%20Systems%20Change%20Results%20Mark%20Cabaj.pdf?hsCtaTracking=2797ccdf-cfd3-4309-a6e0-c70b6a7ed5de%7Cfb84904f-568e-4e7f-b063-8040401998b4>



- d. To what extent might such individual changes be experienced in other local areas if a similar place-based approach were applied?

The findings of the evaluation will be used to inform:

- how the partnership between Crisis, the Berkeley Foundation and Brent Council might be further developed to work towards ending homelessness more effectively;
- the development of Crisis' future place-based work in other local areas;
- The ongoing development of a Built for Zero⁷ programme within Brent.

Methodology

Traditional approaches to evaluating the efficacy of programmes (e.g. randomised controlled trials) are not appropriate for highly complex and dynamic initiatives⁸, and therefore do not serve us well when trying to understand place-based transformation. Summative methods of evaluation (i.e., where the focus is on the outcome) are only useful when we can broadly predict what might happen as the result of an intervention. For place-based change, we need approaches to evaluation that can respond much more flexibly and focus on real-time learning. We are dealing with complex problems within systems, and systems influenced by economic, social and policy changes, all of which make it difficult to determine causality, and create issues of attribution. Rather than focusing on simple cause and-effect relationships, evaluations should seek to understand the interactions across multiple pathways over time.

Evaluation approaches have previously been criticised for treating place-based efforts as if they are 'complete' when there is a need to take a longer-term view to assess the viability of a projects' sustainability. In many cases, work in place is aimed at creating the conditions for impact, rather than directly having an impact. Evaluations have also been limited by a failure to separately evaluate the efficacy of partnerships or collaboratives, from the efficacy of the action planning and strategies delivered by these entities. Whilst there is existing evidence around how to improve the processes of collaboration, it is notoriously difficult to measure the effects of greater coordination on outcomes. Evaluation methodologies used for place-based change must also take into consideration population changes – people may leave the community, but new cohorts of people experiencing homelessness may also arrive.

It is helpful to think about the evaluation of place-based approaches at three different levels, which can be associated with different types of outcomes:

⁷ <https://community.solutions/built-for-zero/the-movement/>

⁸ Patton, M.Q., (2010). *Developmental evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use*. Guilford press.



1. **Building place-based partnerships (or collaboratives)** and the structures required to support them – outcomes may include level of community engagement, appropriate governance structures, and policy-level commitment to organisational learning
2. **Place-based action planning and intervention** - considering changes in systemic working as well as individual activities that form part of systems change, focusing on delivery outcomes such as the number or suitability of referrals, or uptake to a support offer
3. **Continuous monitoring and improvement efforts** – for example, using population-level indicators; considering outcomes such as numbers of people rough sleeping

It has been suggested that developmental⁹ and realist¹⁰ evaluations may be the most appropriate methods for place-based change as they are particularly useful in situations where outcomes are emergent and changing (Pawson & Tilley, 2007; Patton, 2011). 'Public value' is also a suggested framework for understanding the impact an organisation, partnership or collaborative makes at the societal level. For data collection with individuals, it is also important to consider the power structures that have created academic frameworks for measuring change, and how certain measures or instruments may actually be a part of the problem (e.g., asking someone how lonely they feel today, compared with a week ago, makes them feel lonelier).

Whilst we are looking for the successful contractor to develop and finalise the methodology for this evaluation, it should address the following elements:

- Appropriate evaluation methods should be employed to address each of the evaluation questions.
- A survey with stakeholder organisations and system actors should be employed to understand the perceived change as a result of place-based initiatives in Brent. This is to ensure that some quantitative findings are produced.
- The evaluation design should be informed by the voice of people with lived experience of homelessness. The contractor is requested to provide details of how they would meet this requirement, for example by supporting peer evaluators or engaging existing working groups of people with lived experience in Brent.

⁹ Developmental evaluation is grounded in a systems paradigm and is innovative and adaptive in its approach. An evaluator adds value by becoming part of the programme team, allowing the evaluation to respond to the realities of a complex programme or model and supporting its continuous development.

¹⁰ Realist evaluation is grounded in a learning paradigm and considers what works, for whom, and in what circumstances. Realist evaluations are strengths-based and focus on the interaction of context, mechanisms and outcomes.



Terms of reference

The evaluation will require consultation with internal stakeholders of Crisis and its partner organisations. Stakeholder management and communication will be a key part of this project.

The evaluators will develop an approach in consultation with the Crisis Evaluation Manager and the Head of Research & Evaluation, to ensure that this addresses the evaluation aims. Support will be provided by the Crisis Evaluation team.

Outputs

The main outputs of this evaluation project are:

- A framework for the evaluation, including a detailed work plan and timetable;
- Regular progress updates at intervals agreed with the Evaluation Manager;
- Summary interim reports to be shared with the Berkeley Foundation;
- A final evaluation report and presentation of findings in a format/formats tailored to the needs of different stakeholders within Brent;
- Innovation in dissemination: External and internal dissemination are vital parts of this evaluation process. As well as supporting engaging communications to our internal stakeholders, we expect the evaluators to assist in the development of innovative dissemination to external stakeholders, including at key launches and events.

Funding available and timetable

Total funding of up to £40,000 (including VAT, travel and subsistence) is available for this project.

Key dates:

- The deadline for evaluation proposals is 28 April 2023
- The successful bidder will be expected to begin work as soon as possible; no later than 1 June 2023
- A detailed evaluation framework, including work-plan and timetable, will be required no later than 1 July 2023
- The final evaluation report should be completed no later than 31 January 2024.



Format of bids

The tender proposal should clearly identify:

- Relevant experience in similar projects/initiatives
- CVs of key members of the evaluation team, including details of two referees
- The proposed method(s) to be used
- A draft work plan with milestones and deliverables
- The basis on which the fee would be calculated, broken down into different phases as appropriate, and showing the relevant daily rates against each member of the team to be employed on the project
- The staff to undertake key areas of work, and where management responsibility for the project will rest. A single point of contact for all correspondence relating to the project should be provided
- Confirmation that work can start by 1 June 2023 at the latest.

Evaluation criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- Full understanding of the specification, including the purpose and scope of the project
- Demonstration of relevant skills and experience of the evaluation team in impact and process evaluation, and in working with vulnerable adults
- Suitability of proposed method(s) and approach for involving different stakeholder groups, in the evaluation.
- Demonstration of how the voice of people with lived experience of homelessness informs the evaluation design
- Clarity and feasibility of a detailed work-plan, including analysis of risks to successful completion.
- Value for money



Management of the project

Responsibility for this project will lie with the Evaluation Manager, with whom the contractor will be expected to agree a programme of work and deadlines for its deliverables.

The contractor will be expected to keep the Evaluation Manager informed of progress with periodic summary reports. Crisis, and other members of the project group, will have the opportunity to comment on any draft reports before they are finalised.

Intellectual property

Any information gathered during the course of the project and not already in the public domain is deemed to be the property of Crisis. The information provided in the reports, and the rights to all other outputs, shall become the property of Crisis.

Data Protection and confidentiality of data

The project team must act in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Submission of proposals and enquiries

Proposals should be submitted as a Word or PDF document via email.

The deadline for proposals is 28 April 2023.

Proposals must be received by the deadline. Late proposals will not be accepted. Proposals and enquiries must be addressed to:

Erika Moisl (Evaluation Manager): erika.moisl@crisis.org.uk

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview and required to deliver a detailed presentation of their project plans.

66 Commercial Street, London E1 6LT

Tel 0300 636 1967 Fax 0300 636 2012

Email enquiries@crisis.org.uk Website www.crisis.org.uk

Crisis UK (trading as Crisis). Registered Charity Numbers: E&W1082947, SC040094.
Company Number: 4024938