

FUNDED  
BY

COMIC  
RELIEF

JRFR

JOSEPH  
ROWNTREE  
FOUNDATION

Crisis

# “In This Together” large grants evaluation report

January 2022

Crisis Research & Evaluation team

Together  
we will end  
homelessness

## Contents

Summary .....	2
The "In This Together" (ITT) Grants Overview.....	5
Methodology.....	7
Context and relevance.....	8
Homelessness levels.....	8
Services and new ways of working .....	9
Alternative funding sources.....	10
Effect of grant as a whole.....	11
Match funding.....	14
People using the services.....	15
At-risk groups .....	15
Demographic groups .....	17
Activities, outputs and outcomes: an overview.....	19
Provision of food and emergency supplies to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.....	20
Provision of IT hardware (such as phones) to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.....	21
Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), including advocacy/casework.....	22
Provision of emotional support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including counselling.....	24
Rehousing into temporary accommodation.....	25
Rehousing into permanent accommodation or preventing evictions.....	25
Supporting people into employment .....	27
Materials to protect staff/clients from COVID-19.....	28
Outcomes: housing.....	28
Implementation challenges.....	30
Service closures.....	31
Limitations of a remote service offer.....	32
Increased complexity of cases: burnout and lack of specialist support .....	32
Going forward .....	34
Learning.....	34
Challenges facing services.....	36
Conclusion .....	38
Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire .....	40
Appendix 2: Interview topic guide.....	56

## Summary

We are very grateful to Comic Relief, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, hush, GlaxoSmithKline, the Vertex Foundation, Microsoft, Spareroom, and QBE Foundation who financially supported the In This Together grants scheme. The money raised by Comic Relief supports charities and projects in the UK and around the world.

- 1 This report evaluates the Crisis “In This Together” (ITT) large grants programme. The ITT large grants programme was set up to support groups and organisations who were financially affected by additional demands on their resources and/or have expanded their provision to accommodate the exceptional circumstances of COVID-19 pandemic. This report seeks to establish whether the ITT grant programme adequately responded to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on homelessness services, document the outputs and outcomes funded, identify what worked well for grantees and the challenges they faced and identify any longer-term learning for grantees that emerged from the funded projects.
- 2 Altogether 23 organisations jointly received £832,685 as part of the ITT large grants programme, with amounts awarded varying between £10k and £50k. 22 grantees concluded their projects by September 2021. This report is based on the survey and semi-structured interviews, in which 20 (91%) and 19 (86%) of eligible grantees participated, respectively.
- 3 Exactly half of grantees who completed the survey reported receiving match funding in addition to funds from Crisis. Overall, funding from Crisis represents 62% of the total funds spent on the grantees’ projects, with match funding accounting for the remaining 38%.
- 4 Grantees typically described that ITT funding allowed them to cope with increased demand and complexity of cases. An overarching theme was greater flexibility allowed for by the funding, which in turn led to service design that was more relevant to the clients’ needs, for example, in the form of blended service models (i.e. combining remote and face-to-face service delivery) or integrated services under one roof.
- 5 Funding from Crisis had a “halo” effect and allowed grantees to attract additional funding from other donors, as it signalled the grantees’ credibility.
- 6 In the early days of the pandemic, the ITT large grants were uniquely positioned due to the speed with which funding was made available. Over time, the programme coexisted with many similar emergency funding initiatives resulting in duplication of efforts. Feedback from some grantees indicates that they had access to a variety of funding, occasionally to the point that they had to refuse extra funds due to not being able to recruit staff in time.
- 7 Grantees reported working with diverse groups of people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, which were identified as driving an increasing service demand in Crisis’ research on the impact of COVID-19 on service provision across Great Britain<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Boobis, Albanese (2020) [The Impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and service provision across Great Britain.](#)

Among the most-reported groups were people sofa surfing (mentioned by 15 grantees or 75%), and those experiencing homelessness due to relationship breakdown (13 or 65%) or domestic abuse (12 or 60%). However, few grantees (seven or 35%) reported working with clients with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) even though this group was particularly affected by the pandemic. A potential explanation for this is that a large proportion of ITT large grantees' projects were housing-led, and relatively few housing options exist for clients with NRPF.

- 8 Based on the grantees' descriptions of the activities, the projects funded by the ITT large grants are considerably more focused on ending or preventing homelessness and less so on emergency relief, compared to the ITT small grants.
- 9 Out of 20 grantees who completed the survey:
  - The majority (19/95%) reported providing information, advice and guidance (IAG), advocacy and casework, supporting a total of 4652 people;
  - Three quarters (15/75%) reported supporting a combined total of 646 people into permanent accommodation or preventing their evictions;
  - 9 (45%) reported providing support and counselling to a combined total of 3000 people;
  - 8 (40%) reported distributing IT devices to a total of 323 people;
  - 8 (40%) reported providing food and emergency supplies to a total of 2393 clients;
  - 7 (35%) reported supporting a total of 272 people into temporary accommodation (a mix of own temporary accommodation and referrals to other providers);
  - 4 (20%) grantees reported supporting a total of 40 clients into employment. Of these, 33 sustained it at least for 12 weeks, and 23 sustained it at least for 26 weeks.
- 10 Grantees collectively reported 3213 instances of providing housing-related support that resulted in someone's homelessness being ended or prevented. Grantees further described 370 instances of improving someone's housing situation where they were still homeless. In both of these cases, the number of unique persons is likely lower due to possible double counting: one person might have been helped more than once.
- 11 The grant further supported at least 285 people to sustain housing for at least 12 weeks, 206 people to sustain housing for at least 26 weeks and 161 – for at least 52 weeks.

- 12 Drawing on the conclusions from a UK modelling study<sup>2</sup> and an observational study in the US<sup>3</sup>, it is reasonable to assume that by funding grantees to support clients into self-contained accommodation and to help them sustain their housing, Crisis ITT programme contributed to the reduction in the spread of COVID-19.
- 13 The ITT programme further contributed to dealing directly with the consequences of the pandemic by supporting grantees to provide food and emergency supplies, distribute IT devices thereby connecting people with services and reducing isolation, and to provide support and counselling, this dealing with the impact of the pandemic on mental health.
- 14 The most frequently reported challenges that the grantees faced were closures of other services, lack of engagement when working with clients remotely and increased complexity of cases. The latter contributed to the feeling of burnout among staff and highlighted a further challenge of accessing specialised support, particularly around mental health.
- 15 The key piece of learning from the projects concerns the effectiveness of blended service offer (combining remote and in-person delivery), which allows reaching a more diverse group of clients and saves time. Some grantees also reported that having multiple services under one roof with the advice service being the point of entry worked well for clients, as it built trust and reduced the need to refer.
- 16 Going forward, grantees were concerned about the effects of the scrapping of safeguards that were put in place during the pandemic: the end of the eviction ban, end of Government funding for “Everyone In”, end of the furlough scheme and the end of the universal credit uplift. Crisis should monitor the effects of these changes on the level of demand for homelessness services and consider making additional emergency funding available for organisations that are struggling.
- 17 None of the grantees identified lack of IT devices, lack of PPE or inability to practise social distancing as challenges going forward, which speaks to the success of the ITT programme or other similar initiatives that tackled the impact of COVID-19.
- 18 The report identified a number of key funding gaps: grantees described the lack of funding for specialised services such as counselling and immigration support, as well as lack of services and funding for people with no recourse to public funds. At the same time, high-profile themes such as digital inclusion appear to be well-funded.

---

<sup>2</sup> Lewer, D., Braithwaite, I., Bullock, M., Eyre, M.T., White, P.J., Aldridge, R.W., Story, A. & Hayward, A.C. (2020) ‘COVID amongst people experiencing homelessness in England: a modelling study’, *The Lancet*, 23rd September, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(20\)30396-9/fulltext#seccestitle70](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30396-9/fulltext#seccestitle70)

<sup>3</sup> Colburn G., Thompson S., Dean T., (2020) ‘Impact of Hotels as Non-Congregate Emergency Shelters: An analysis of investments in hotels as emergency shelter in King County, WA during the COVID-19 pandemic’ [https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study\\_Full-Report\\_Final-11302020.pdf](https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study_Full-Report_Final-11302020.pdf)

## The “In This Together” (ITT) Grants Overview

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has been significant on those supporting people who are experiencing and facing homelessness. Not only do they not have a safe home to self-isolate in or follow sanitation guidance, but people experiencing homelessness are also three times more likely to experience a chronic health problem including respiratory conditions.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore critical for everyone to have a place where they can self-isolate and protect themselves from the risks of COVID-19. This greater exposure to risk has also had an effect on services supporting people facing homelessness who have seen an increase in the volume and need of people coming forward for help at a time when their income and fundraising models are also at risk.

Crisis’ “In This Together” (ITT) programme was set up to support groups and organisations which were financially affected by additional demands on their resources and/or who have expanded their provision to accommodate the exceptional circumstances of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Grantees were expected, where feasible, to explore other funding opportunities especially with their local authority in addition to funding from Crisis. This was to maximise the effectiveness of Crisis funding.

The ITT grants were awarded to local organisations (i.e. providing specific services in a set number of locations – not national or sub-regional) across the UK. ITT grantees had to be registered charities which provide services to address homelessness (homelessness may not have been their primary focus, but the funded activities had to address or alleviate homelessness). Funding could be used to meet additional demand or reduction in staffing or other resources caused by the impact of COVID-19.

Crisis aimed to respond rapidly to the changing environment, using the knowledge of best practice and pre-existing relationships with local providers. The grant programme aimed to be flexible and responsive while satisfying the requirements of good governance.

To prioritise the goal of emergency response, applications were relatively brief, with funds being awarded to successful grantees within a short time frame from the application date.

---

<sup>4</sup> Snyder LD, Eisner MD. Obstructive lung disease among the urban homeless. *Chest* 2004; 125: 1719–25. <sup>5</sup> Lewer D, Aldridge RW, Menezes D, et al. Health-related quality of life and prevalence of six chronic diseases in homeless and housed people: a cross-sectional study in London and Birmingham, England. *BMJ Open* 2019; 9: e025192



Figure 1 Locations of the projects funded through ITT large grants. Interactive version of the map available [here](#)

ITT grants were initially classified into two categories:

- Small grants: awards up to £5k for short-term emergencies (projects within three months), following a limited/fast-tracked application process (payments made in advance)
- Awards up to £50k to fund long-term needs and potential expansion or change in service delivery, following a full application process (payments in advance, but with the potential for staged payments over a specified period)

From across the UK, 340 ITT grant applications (both small and large) were received.

This evaluation report covers the ITT large grants. ITT small grants are covered [in a separate report](#).

A total of 23 grantees received ITT large grants jointly totalling £832,685. The lowest amount awarded was £10,151, the highest £50,000. One of the grantees was funded until May 2022, hence their project is not included in this evaluation report. The remaining 22 grantees finished their projects between December 2020 and July 2021 and are covered in this report.

## Methodology

This evaluation aims to:

- Establish whether the ITT grant programme adequately responded to the grantees' needs brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and how it was positioned in the sector;
- Document the outputs and outcomes funded by the ITT large grants;
- Identify what worked well for grantees and the challenges they faced as part of the implementation of the projects;
- Identify any longer-term learning that emerged from the funded projects.

The evaluation is based on the results of a survey and a semi-structured interview.

The ITT grantees were asked to complete an online survey after the end of the projects in December 2020 – July 2021. The survey method was chosen to capture the information about the hard outcomes of the projects.

Of 22 grantees who received the survey 20 completed it (91% response rate).

In the survey, grantees were asked about eight types of activities that their ITT-funded project could have covered<sup>5</sup> (with space to describe potential other activities not listed below), and the number of people reached by these activities:

1. Provision of food and emergency supplies to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness;
2. Provision of IT hardware (such as phones) to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness;
3. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), including advocacy/casework;
4. Provision of support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including counselling;
5. Rehousing into temporary accommodation;
6. Rehousing into permanent accommodation or preventing evictions;
7. Supporting people into employment;
8. Materials to protect staff/clients from COVID-19 (e.g. PPE, cleaning) (only if these do not fall within the remit of specific services described above).

Grantees were asked to indicate how exactly the ITT funding contributed to these activities. If a grantee indicated that a particular activity was part of the project, but was not funded with an ITT grant, their response was excluded from the tallies reported below.

Several projects encompassed multiple activities. For instance, an organisation may have distributed food parcels, while also providing information, advice and guidance at the point of delivery. In such instances, the same person would have been counted separately under different activities.

---

<sup>5</sup> The list of the categories has been drawn from the applications



Given the larger amounts awarded, a relatively higher proportion of funded projects were housing led, compared to the ITT small grants. Hence, the survey also explored the housing element more in-depth. In particular, grantees were asked to indicate how many people's homelessness has been ended, prevented or relieved through various activities, in line with Crisis' KPI definitions. Grantees were also asked to indicate how many of the people receiving the services sustained housing, where applicable.

Given the smaller number of funded projects and the larger amounts awarded, it was deemed appropriate to supplement the survey with a semi-structured online interview, which explored the aspects covered in a survey more in-depth. An Impact Analyst or a Best Practice Officer conducted the interviews. Prior to arranging the interviews, the Best Practice Officers received training on how to conduct interviews.

A total of 19 grantees (86%) took part in an online interview. Most interviews took place between April and September 2021, except for one which took place in January 2021. The two grantees that did not complete the online also did not take part in an interview, hence no data from the non-responders is featured in the analysis below.

In the interview, grantees were asked to describe the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their organisation, and how the grant funding was used to mitigate these. For each of the eight activities mentioned above, they were asked to describe how the activity has been conducted in practice, what were the successful elements of the service delivery and the challenges that they faced. They were also asked to provide any available monitoring data on the outcomes of the activities. Finally, grantees were asked about the trajectories of their services going forward, including plans to carry on with the funded projects, lasting changes to the service models and any financial arrangements made.

The survey questionnaire and the interview topic guide are available in the Appendices 1 and 2.

## **Context and relevance**

### **Homelessness levels**

The impact of COVID-19 on the homelessness sector has been well-documented<sup>6</sup>. The start of the pandemic marked an increase in the number of people experiencing the worst forms of homelessness and thus seeking support. Across the whole of GB there was an increased use of self-contained emergency accommodation to meet this demand such as hotels, which kept infection rates down and drastically reduced levels of rough sleeping.

The increases in need were initially driven by the people who were sofa surfing and living in transient accommodation. Over time, the economic effects of the pandemic further pushed people who were furloughed or newly unemployed into homelessness. In

---

<sup>6</sup> Boobis S., Albanese F. (2020) [The Impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and service provision across Great Britain](#).

Fitzpatrick S., Pawson S., Watts B., Wood J., (2021) [The COVID-19 crisis response to homelessness in Great Britain](#)

Sanders B., Albanese F. (2021) [The homelessness response to the COVID-19 pandemic – what works and what have we learnt? A rapid evidence review to support the Kerslake Commission on homelessness and rough sleeping](#)

particular, the MHCLG statistics on homelessness in England from April 2020 to March 2021<sup>7</sup> show an 18% increase in the number of households applying for a prevention or a relief duty, where the lead applicant was registered as unemployed. These trends were felt by the ITT grantees themselves:

**“[F]or me the biggest change I suppose is probably the volume, ... more people in circumstances where they’ve been furloughed or in difficulties because of being furloughed and still trying to catch up with perhaps debt that they’ve got in to in that time. So not, I would say there’s probably more people that have found themselves in unfortunate circumstances than there was previously”**

**Grantee 1, Wales**

In addition to homelessness, COVID-19 has had an effect on related social problems, such as domestic abuse. In particular, the MHCLG statistics on homelessness in England over the same period also show a 17% in the number of households where the main cause of homelessness was due to domestic abuse<sup>8</sup>. ITT grantees working with victims of domestic abuse noted this trend as well:

**“But one of the biggest impacts has been the increase in referrals. We had a 35% increase in referrals in the first six months of Covid compared to the year before and so we were suddenly faced with a lot of new cases to work with. But what that said to us when it started to stabilise, it didn’t really reduce but it stabilised after that, after six months of increase.”**

**Grantee 2, England**

### **Services and new ways of working**

While the pressure on homelessness services was rising due to increased demand, lockdowns and self-isolation requirements meant that multiple related services stopped operating, putting additional pressures on organisations that stayed open:

**“We did find a lot of services around us disappeared totally, were off the radar for a period of time. A lot of the drug services disappeared. Turning Point disappeared. ... We had a lot of challenges around them asking us whether we would put together plans to administer methadone, and hold methadone, and things like that for the clients, which was something we really didn’t want to do. And we found that very difficult. I think mental health services stopped visiting our clients in projects and things obviously as well and that could have been quite challenging.”**

**Grantee 3, England**

Organisations that remained open also faced additional costs of purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) and making changes to communal areas and supported accommodation to enable social distancing.

---

<sup>7</sup>Gov.uk [Live tables on homelessness](#) - updated 9 September 2021

<sup>8</sup> MHCLG (2021) [Statutory Homelessness Annual Report 2020-21](#), England, p.22

Adjusting to COVID-19 also brought about new ways of working, particularly remote service delivery, which enabled services to be more flexible in meeting clients' needs, but also meant that staff were working alone and were feeling isolated. For services that continued to provide housing during the pandemic, additional pressure on staff came in the form of responsibility for putting COVID-19 prevention measures in place and the direct responsibility for clients' health:

**"I certainly found it very draining that feeling that I was responsible for people's lives in a way that felt fundamentally more dangerous than it had previously. Obviously, as a landlord we are already responsible for, for people's lives in a sense but, yes, that I think was hugely draining for all, for all of the staff that were involved in risk assessing different work areas."**

**Grantee 4, England**

These interrelated pressures created an increased demand for funding which the "In This Together" grants programme sought to meet in a number of ways. Firstly, the grant aimed to close the funding shortfalls, and to do so in a way that would allow uninhibited operation of services. Secondly, the activities that were funded by the grant directly targeted the effects of the pandemic (see [Activities, outputs and outcomes: an overview](#)). All of this speaks to the relevance of the grant.

### **Alternative funding sources**

While the pressures of COVID-19 created a demand for funding, a number of donors responded to this demand by offering emergency funding for charities struggling with the effects of COVID-19. By the way of an illustrative example, CharityBank lists [24 UK-wide emergency funding opportunities](#) (excluding funds restricted to specific regions or nations) specifically aimed at dealing with the effects that the pandemic had on charities. This funding was available for charities working in any sector; however, particularly in the homelessness sector, emergency funding was also available through [Frontline Network's Vicar's Relief Fund](#) and the [Homeless Link's COVID-19 Homelessness Response fund](#). While it is difficult to estimate the total cost of COVID-19 for the homelessness sector, and hence the total increase in the demand for funding, the wide availability of funding sources casts doubts on how uniquely the ITT grants were positioned in the wider sector. This wide availability of emergency funding was apparent in some of the interviews with the grantees:

**"I mean, there's money being thrown at us left, right and centre at the moment"**

**Grantee 3, England**

**"Well, there was quite an initial influx of funding in the early stages of the pandemic and so we were fortunate but the funding was just for a period of time"**

**Grantee 5, England**

Anecdotally, the amount of emergency funding available was so high, that one grantee described having to refuse funding offers as they struggled to recruit relevant staff in time.

One aspect that sets ITT grants apart from the remaining emergency funding programmes is the speed with which the programme operated. In particular, the programme was announced on 31 March 2020, a week after the start of the first lockdown, and more than a month prior to the announcement of the [£6-million emergency funding package](#) from

the Government to support the frontline homelessness charities on the 7 May 2020. The speed of the funding process has allowed bridging funding gaps, as highlighted by the grantees:

**“Without [the ITT funding], we probably would have had to wait, there would have been a gap in the service”**

**Grantee 6, England**

**“The problem we were facing is that we were going to put in a new Big Lottery grant ... we’d just finished one at the end of March ... so we were looking to put a new one in and, plus other funding and of course when Covid hit that, everyone’s funding changed. So we were really grateful to Crisis at the time for funding [staff member] role because we had a funding gap, a big funding gap from that financial year”**

**Grantee 7, England**

**“[I]t’s worth saying that it was really excellent and appreciated, how quickly all of that [funding] was able to put in place when it was needed. ”**

**Grantee 8, Scotland**

The wide availability of emergency COVID-19 funding was, however, not a universal phenomenon. In particular, grantees mentioned lack of funding for specialist support for certain groups of clients, in particular non-UK nationals or people with no recourse to public funds, and people with mental health needs. Lack of funding for these areas remains a persisting challenge for some of the grantees (see [Going forward: Challenges](#)).

Overall, while the ITT grants programme clearly responded to a well-established and pressing need, it operated in competition with other sources of funding. In the early days of the pandemic, it was unique due to its speed, but this advantage waned as a number of other initiatives appeared. To maintain the relevance of Crisis funding in the future, it is recommended that emergency funding is kept short-term, prioritising speed. Longer-term funding should focus on more specialist areas, where there is a demonstrated need among a specific client group, or a known lack of funding.

### **Effect of grant as a whole**

When asked about the impact of the grant on their services, grantees typically mentioned that the grant has enabled them to deliver the service as planned and continue operating in the face of increased pressures brought about by the pandemic:

**“[I]t enabled us to continue to deliver services, and it also enabled us to enhance the level of service that we were delivering. So, it leads to better outcomes for our clients.”**

**Grantee 6, England**

**“[W]e can’t control a lot of what the external environment is but we’ve got the confidence that we’ll be able to bring in the money we need to stay open because staying open for us was a key objective through the pandemic. And I think it’s safe to say we were the only homeless service in [region] that managed to stay fully operational”**

## Grantee 9, England

Some grantees also mentioned using the grant to carry out service expansion, particularly where this had been planned prior to the pandemic and was facilitated by the rise of remote working.

In terms of the services' trajectory, two major themes that emerged from the evaluation are flexibility and relevance to the clients' needs.

On the one hand, grantees spoke about the fact that grant funding has enabled them to be flexible in how they adjusted their services responding to the challenges of the pandemic.

**"I think the flexibility of it really that we were being thrown all sorts of new scenarios very, very quickly as well. And to be able to go and see someone, someone who's about to be made homeless it was the flexibility more than anything else that that brought us I think."**

## Grantee 9, England on the impact of funding

On the other hand, the flexibility in response allowed designing the services in a way that is relevant to the needs of a diverse client group:

**"It is going to be more of an adaptive hub model to make sure that we are catering to people over the coming year depending on what their needs are. So, it, perhaps quiet sessions for people, we're still having that option for one to one sessions. Yeah, so just adapting services"**

## Grantee 6, England

**"Just being flexible and thinking about how you can make something work for someone"**

## Grantee 4, England, on the unexpected positive outcomes of the project

**"So it's reality of what we can provide and the support that we can offer and if it is actually what the person wants and then we can move forward. So we can help more people I would suggest really and the ones that don't want our assistance we can signpost onto other people"**

## Grantee 10, England

The idea of relevance to needs was particularly highlighted in the context of blended service offer: a mix of face-to-face and remote services. Multiple grantees noted that a mix of approaches has allowed them to engage different groups of clients, some of whom would not have otherwise engaged if there was only one way of accessing their services.

**"All the way through we've taken the view that if it was really, really urgent, and we couldn't get something done unless we saw somebody face to face, then we would see them face to face. We definitely found that, especially during the more strict periods of lockdown that was quite rarely necessary. But we're definitely at this point, and certainly when all the restrictions are relaxed, I think it will be as kind of hybrid as possible. ... I think we'll always ask people, do you want to do**

**this virtually or in person really, what suits you? What's easier for you? So I do think flexibility is going to be quite a big thing for us."**

**Grantee 11, England**

Grantees noted that they are likely to maintain the blended service offer going forward (see [Learning](#)).

Besides the impact on services, some grantees also mentioned the role of funded projects in preventing the spread of COVID-19 infections, particularly those who supported clients into settled accommodation:

**"The lack of infection in our cohort has been remarkable really when you think about how it could have been."**

**Grantee 5, England**

**"We had six females over 50 that were all clinically vulnerable sitting in one part of one of our projects. ... we had managed to move really quickly with this direct let through the resettlement team. So it worked really well actually. That's how we managed to get such high numbers coming through really, having access to this accommodation, working with the city, being able to match clients. And that, those three workers were, that was their focus and purely their focus at that time."**

**Grantee 3, England**

Finally, and similarly to what has been highlighted in the ITT small grants evaluation, funding has broader organisational effects. Grantees reported a "halo" effect of Crisis funding: it sometimes allowed them to attract additional funding more easily, as it signalled their credibility to donors:

**"Having this grant enabled us to access more funds from the National Lottery Community Fund who said the grant from Crisis, to be used as Match Funding, made our application much stronger."**

**Grantee 9, England**

**"I mean we did very well in the end last year and we got a lot of funding and it was really great because there was enough other stuff to deal with, without worrying about money. But of course, when you can put we've received ten thousand from Crisis then other people want to match-fund you"**

**Grantee 7, England**

**"[O]n the back of having this funding and the success of what we've done so far, we managed to get continuation funding, which has been absolutely fabulous, so not only for those people we've managed to move out and support with this, with the grant that ... we got from you, we managed to get that continuation, so we're still supporting those clients"**

**Grantee 3, England**

This means that when designing future funding programmes, Crisis can utilise its position in the homelessness sector and fund not only with an aim of supporting projects financially, but also with an aim of raising the grantees' profile.

### Match funding

At the application stage, grantees were encouraged to seek match funding in addition to funding from Crisis. In the survey, we asked them whether they were able to attract match funding, or whether they relied solely on Crisis funds when implementing the project. Hence, the outputs and outcomes reported in the subsequent sections are a product of both Crisis funds and extra funding sought by the grantees.

Exactly half of grantees (10) who completed the survey reported receiving match funding in addition to the funds received from Crisis. The remaining half (10 grantees) implemented the projects relying only on the funds from Crisis. Of the 10 grantees that received match funding, seven reported the exact sums received, which were equal to 148% of the amount provided by Crisis.

Using this figure as a guide (and taking into account the actual amounts awarded), we can approximate the breakdown of the total amount of funding that contributed to the projects' outcomes:

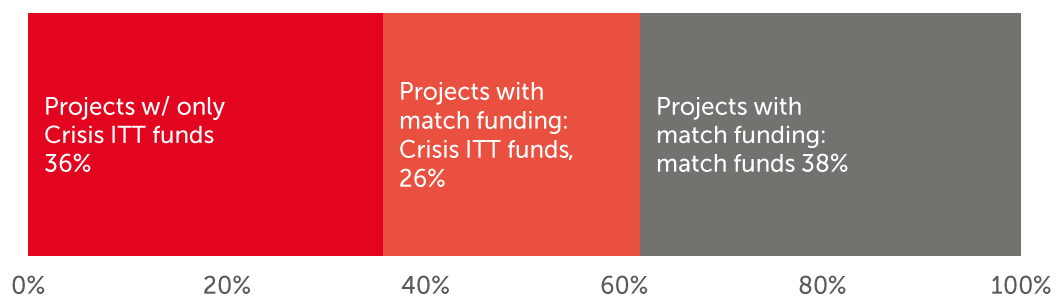


Figure 2 Estimated breakdown of the total cost of projects, delivered by the ITT grantees, based on known sums awarded and reported size of match funding.

## People using the services

In the survey, grantees were asked about the at-risk and demographic groups of people that they reported working with. The summary of responses is shown in figures 3 and 4.

### At-risk groups

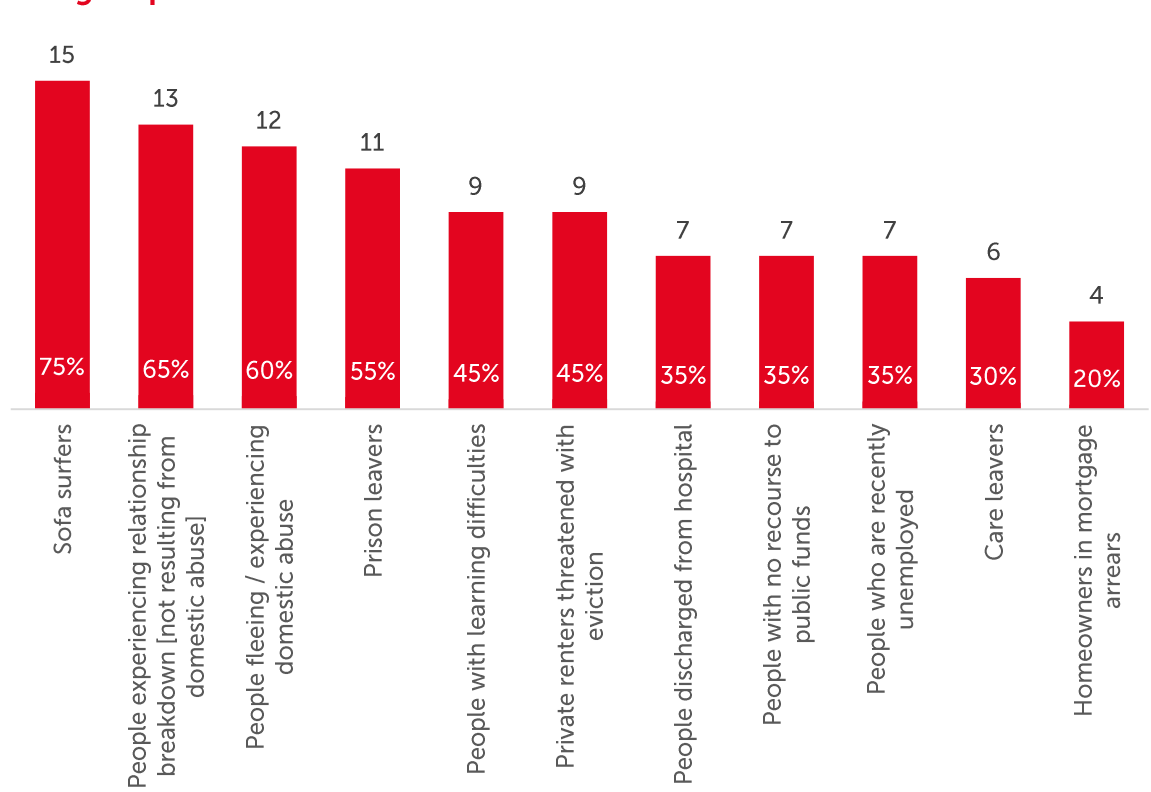


Figure 3 Number and percentage of grantees who reported working with clients from specific groups at risk of homelessness

Five grantees reported working with only one at-risk group from the list. This includes three domestic violence charities that reported only working with people fleeing or experiencing domestic abuse. On average, grantees indicated working with five at-risk groups listed in figure 3.

In terms of most frequently reported at-risk groups, 15 grantees (75%) mentioned working with sofa surfers. This trend is consistent with the findings of the ITT small grants evaluation, where this was also the most frequently mentioned at-risk group. Looking at the broader context, in Crisis' research on the impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and service provision across Great Britain<sup>9</sup>, 60% of homelessness organisations sampled reported an increase in demand among people sofa-surfing. Lockdowns increased the pressure on people sofa surfing, as they effectively had to remain in the same accommodation for prolonged periods overstaying their welcome, or

<sup>9</sup> Boobis, Albanese (2020) [The Impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and service provision across Great Britain](#).



face other forms of homelessness<sup>10</sup>. This increased pressure has driven the demand from this group which was also felt by the ITT grantees.

Thirteen grantees (65%) reported working with people experiencing relationship breakdown. Relationship breakdown was also one of the issues highlighted in Crisis COVID-19 research, which pushed people into homelessness during the pandemic. This issue was particularly acute for young people experiencing homelessness due to relationship breakdown in multigenerational households.

Twelve grantees (60%) reported working with people at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse. As mentioned above, domestic abuse has surged during lockdown and the number of households made homeless due to domestic abuse has increased by 17% between March 2020 and April 2021. This increase in demand required grantees to adapt their services, and part of this effort was supported by the ITT grants:

**“And from that we learnt it’s not an exact science and issues around domestic abuse and sexual violence don’t conveniently happen between 9am and 5pm. We knew that anyway but it was an extra dimension of the way people could get in touch with us and if they needed emergency support it was a way of doing that.”**

**Grantee 2, England**

In terms of key at-risk groups targeted, there is one major difference between ITT small and ITT large grantees. While among ITT small grantees 60% reported working with people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), only 35% of large grantees reported working with this category. This is despite the fact that in Crisis COVID-19 research, over 50% of homelessness organisations reported an increase in presentations among this group. Moreover, since the time of publications of the ITT small grants report, no specific measures have been put in place nationally to assist people with NRPF.

Lower share of grantees working with those with no recourse may be explained by the fact that ITT small grantees’ projects were particularly aimed at homelessness relief and meeting basic needs, which may be more acute for people with NRPF. Alternatively, this may be because a large proportion of ITT large grantees’ projects were housing-led, while relatively few housing options are available for people with NRPF. Grantees that did work with this group spoke of a gap in service provision and lack of accommodation:

**“Interviewer: So thinking of that group particularly in mind do you find that there are specialist services that you’re able to signpost them on to?”**

**Respondent: No. Private sector or nothing. Yes, there’s not really any move on to, to other temporary accommodation.”**

**Grantee 4, England**

**“But the reality of that was that the young people who were there were generally young people with no recourse to public funds, and so we were really limited on what support we could give them.”**

**Grantee 8, Scotland**

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

Thus, there appears to be a gap in services available to people with NRPF, which the ITT large grants did not address, in contrast to support that was provided to other groups driving an increase in homelessness during the pandemic.

### **Demographic groups**

Grantees were asked about the demographics of people they worked with. Sixteen grantees (80% of survey respondents) reported working with young people aged 18 to 24. This is likely a reflection of a wider trend concerning youth homeless: a report by Centrepont highlighted an increase in youth unemployment due to the pandemic which, in turn, drove a surge in youth homelessness<sup>11</sup>. Related to this is the youth homelessness resulting from relationship breakdown.

Working with young people was associated with additional challenges. Firstly, young people experiencing homelessness faced additional barriers as they are entitled to a lower Universal Credit rate, and young people under 35 are further entitled to a lower rate of the housing element of the Universal Credit.

Yet another barrier in working with young people was a reported lack of knowledge of how to navigate the system:

**“But that was one of the main things, that people would reach out to us because we’re known to represent young people who are homeless. Therefore the flood gates opened from calls from people who just want to know how they can get hold of the council, to people who don’t have anywhere to stay that night, and are in absolute crisis.”**

**Grantee 8, Scotland**

Another issue that came up in the context of young people was the unsuitability of accommodation that was offered, particularly for young people with complex needs:

**“From the cases that I’ve seen, young people with quite complex personal circumstances and vulnerabilities are routinely placed in completely unsuitable accommodation.”**

**Grantee 12, England**

---

<sup>11</sup> Centrepont (2021) [‘A year like no other: Youth homelessness during the COVID pandemic’](#)

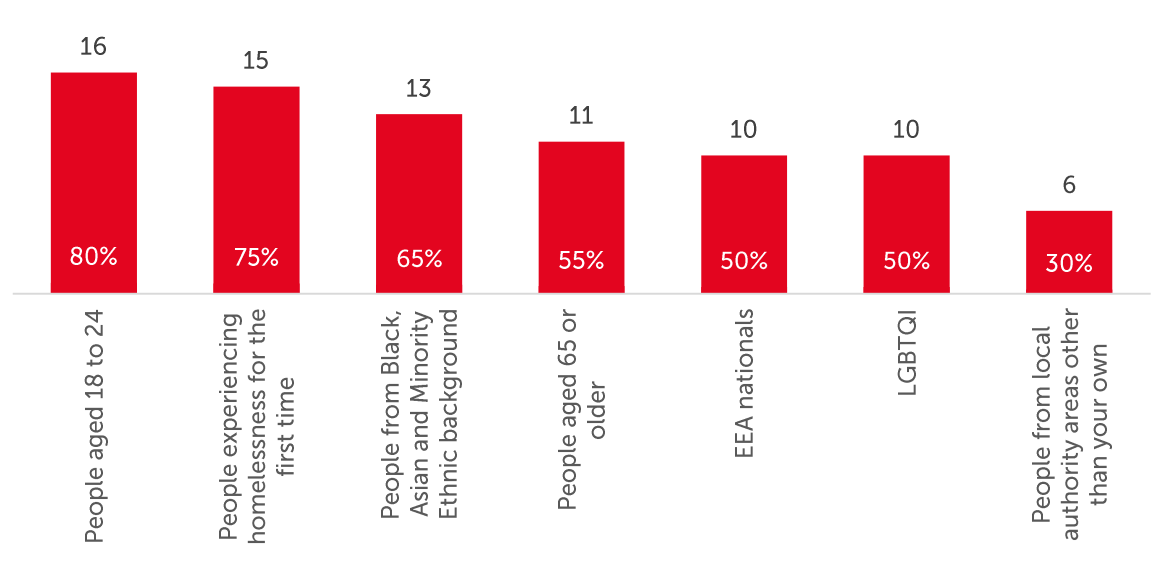


Figure 4 Number and percentage of grantees who reported working with clients from specific demographic groups

When it comes to other demographic groups, fifteen grantees, or 75% of survey respondents also mentioned working with people experiencing homelessness for the first time. This group was also the most frequently mentioned one by the ITT small grantees. Crisis COVID-19 research particularly noted an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness for the first time in the second wave of the pandemic<sup>12</sup>. In the interviews, grantees also noted an increase in presentations driven by this group of clients:

**“So first time users of advice services. The amount of people who came to us who had not used our service before and had found out about it through the internet, not because they lived locally.”**

#### Grantee 13, England

Finally, 13 (65%) of grantees reported working with people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic backgrounds. It is well-documented that people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic backgrounds are more likely to experience homelessness. Particularly in the context of the pandemic, the 2021 MHCLG annual report shows that people from Black backgrounds, and to a lesser extent mixed backgrounds, were overrepresented among those owed prevention or relief duty both in London and in the rest of England. The same, however, was not true for people from Asian backgrounds, who were under-represented<sup>13</sup>.

Overall, at-risk and demographic groups that most grantees reported working with are predominantly the ones that have been hit the hardest during the pandemic as identified by external research and drove an increase in presentations to the homelessness services. This speaks to the relevance of the grant in terms of the groups targeted by service provision. The only exception to this are people with NRPF, which reportedly drove an

<sup>12</sup> Boobis, Albanese (2020) [The Impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and service provision across Great Britain](#).

<sup>13</sup> MHCLG (2021) [Statutory Homelessness Annual Report 2020-21](#), England, p.22

increase in presentations across the sector, yet were reached by relatively few ITT large grantees specifically.

### Activities, outputs and outcomes: an overview

This section provides a general overview of the funded activities and the associated outputs and outcomes as reported by the grantees.

Figure 5 summarises the number of grantees that reported running a specific activity and the number of people targeted by the outputs of that activity. Overall, projects funded by ITT large grants are considerably more focused on ending or preventing homelessness and less so on emergency relief, compared to the ITT small grants.

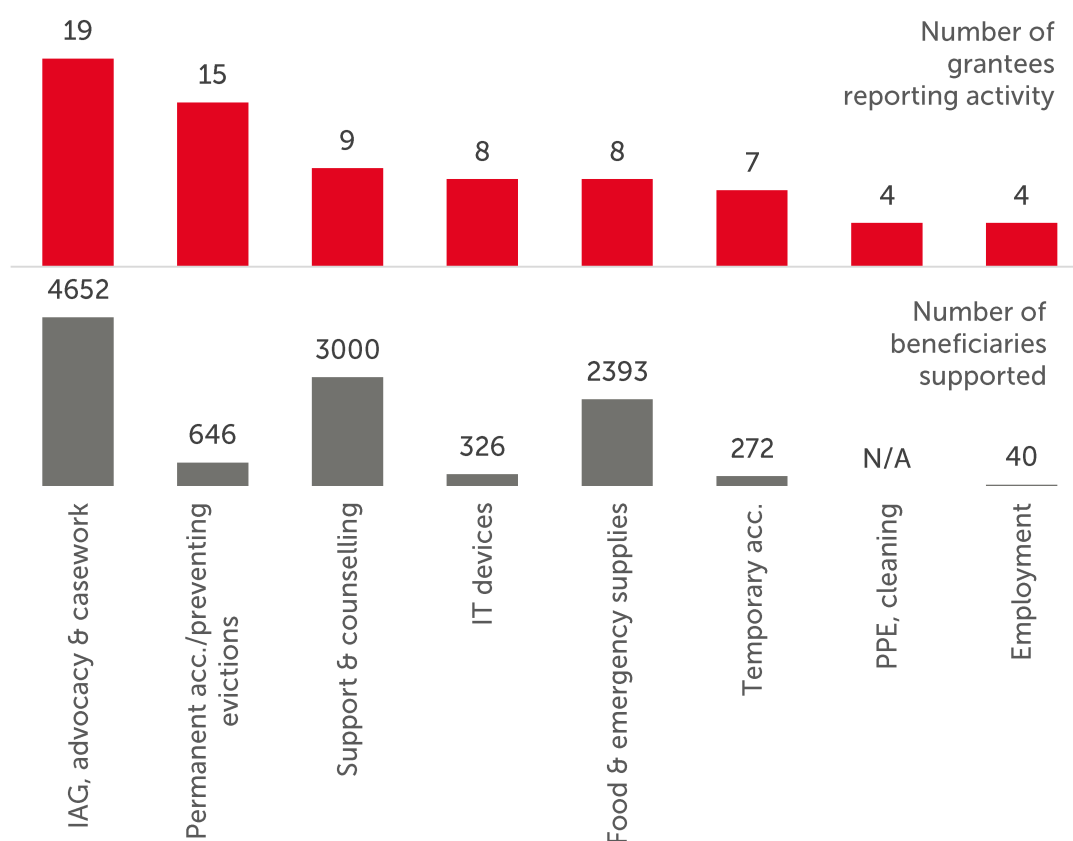


Figure 5 Number of grantees who reported using the ITT funds to run specific activities (top panel) and the number of people collectively reached by those activities (bottom panel). Grantees were not asked to report the number of people for purchase of PPE and cleaning of premises, as these provided a collective benefit.

Almost all grantees who completed the survey (19 or 95% of respondents) reported providing information, advice and guidance (IAG), casework or advocacy. This was mainly either in the form of large advice services or intensive casework with a small group of clients (e.g. debt advocacy). Overall, 4,652 people were collectively targeted by these services.

The ITT large grants were significantly more housing-focused compared to the ITT small grants. 15 or 75% of respondents reported spending funding to provide permanent accommodation or prevent evictions (compared to 15% of recipients of ITT small grants).

The use of temporary accommodation was less prominent - only seven (35%) of ITT large grantees reported providing temporary accommodation. Collectively, grantees reported

resettling or preventing evictions of 646 people and providing temporary accommodation to a further 272 people.

Nine grantees (45%) reported providing support and counselling, although only a minority of them described providing specialist mental health care as opposed to more light-touch befriending and check-ins. Collectively, they reported that 3000 people were able to access these services.

Eight grantees (40%) reported spending the funding to provide food and emergency supplies, compared to 70% of ITT small grantees. Collectively, ITT large grantees provided food and emergency supplies to 2393 people.

Overall, the scope of the activities funded by the ITT grants speaks of the relevance of the programme, as grantees engaged in dealing with the immediate consequences of the pandemic. The examples of this are the distribution of IT devices to combat digital exclusion and isolation, providing food and emergency supplies, purchasing PPE and providing support and counselling to deal with the impact of the pandemic on mental health. Supporting people into self-contained housing, as opposed to communal shelters, and helping those in self-contained housing to sustain it has likely reduced the incidence of COVID-19 infections, as evidenced by the findings from existing studies<sup>14</sup>.

The sections below provide more detail on how these activities were ran, how exactly the funding was used, and outcomes achieved by grantees.

### **Provision of food and emergency supplies to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness**

A total of eight grantees reported providing food and emergency supplies to 2393 people overall. This activity was a lot less prominent in the projects funded by the ITT large grants, in contrast to the smaller grants.

Grantees who provided food and emergency supplies were responding to a growing demand in the early days of the pandemic brought about by the economic pressures (such as lack of access to benefits) and closure of services. For most grantees this was a new activity they were not used to previously:

**“We did something we don’t normally do which is we had food cooked and delivered to us, we would then bring that around to people who couldn’t get out, it was a huge amount of benefits support where people were in danger of not being able to meet their payments. I think we forget as well that Universal Credit pretty much crashed in the first pandemic and just trying to get people who were already in accommodation making sure their payment stayed in place was a huge amount of work”**

**Grantee 5, England**

---

<sup>14</sup> Lewer, D., Braithwaite, I., Bullock, M., Eyre, M.T., White, P.J., Aldridge, R.W., Story, A. & Hayward, A.C. (2020) ‘COVID amongst people experiencing homelessness in England: a modelling study’, The Lancet, 23rd September, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(20\)30396-9/fulltext#seccestitle70](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30396-9/fulltext#seccestitle70)

Colburn G., Thompson S., Dean T., (2020) ‘Impact of Hotels as Non-Congregate Emergency Shelters: An analysis of investments in hotels as emergency shelter in King County, WA during the COVID-19 pandemic’ [https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study\\_Full-Report\\_Final-11302020.pdf](https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study_Full-Report_Final-11302020.pdf)

**“[The service] was oversubscribed. We went from having, I’d say 15 to 18 clients, some of whom were regular returners, to over 50 clients every week. And across the borough, a huge amount of foodbanks popped up.”**

**Grantee 13, England**

Given that a large proportion of recipients of ITT large grants were homelessness charities working with clients in supported accommodation, emergency supplies mostly went to these clients. An exception to this were for two grantees who ran in-person advice services and drop-in centres. These organisations worked with larger numbers of clients, provided food and emergency supplies at drop-in centres and collectively account for most of the people reached.

One grantee described additionally assisting clients with fuel costs as fuel poverty was an issue for their client group.

Of eight grantees, five reported spending funding on food that was distributed, three reported buying and distributing personal hygiene products, one reported using the funding to buy and distributed clothing. Two grantees reported funding staff costs and one transportation costs using the ITT grant.

### **Provision of IT hardware (such as phones) to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness**

One of the most clear-cut trends of the pandemic is the shift towards remote working and, in the context of homelessness services, remote service delivery. This, in turn, exacerbated the importance of digital inclusion. Particularly for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness, having a device and necessary digital literacy to connect to the Internet played a major role in having access to services and reducing isolation.

Eight of the ITT grantees reported using the funding to provide IT devices such as mobile phones or laptops to individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Collectively, they provided devices to a total of 326 individuals.

In terms of how the activity was funded, six grantees reported spending the ITT funds on the purchase of devices; three on top-ups; and one on staff costs (as devices themselves had been donated). One grantee additionally described funding software purchases and training. One grantee did not describe how the funding was spent.

In the interviews, grantees described how having the IT devices has enabled their clients to access services or get in touch with the right support:

**“We all know how difficult it is to try and see a GP at the moment, it has to be done over the phone, people are not being seen in person. You’re being sent to A&E for things that are relatively minor if you need to be seen. So, by having a device it’s just added value across the services, because it’s stopping people from accessing A&E when, actually, it could be resolved over the phone. It’s giving people a method of communication. It’s allowing for that counselling.”**

**Grantee 6, England**

**“[M]y colleague, who worked at the project with probation, discovered was that her client is dyslexic and quite really struggled with his letters ... So he ended up being introduced to WhatsApp and he could quite confidently take a photo of the**

letter and then send it to [his support worker] and then [his support worker] could read it, phone him, she could do a voice message”

Grantee 7, England

Another reported outcome was reduced feeling of isolation due to being able to contact the loved ones or just being able to use the devices for entertainment:

“The digital inclusion, it really helped to stop people from being isolated ... If somebody’s in temporary accommodation, if they’re not in permanent housing, and they’re already potentially having mental health difficulties, which would come along with being homeless, then they’d be even more isolated, because they’ve got no way to connect to people, and then the additional financial worries”

Grantee 6, England

“[A] lot of our residents don’t have smartphones and things like that, so just having broadband wouldn’t have really meant a lot for them, so actually having the opportunity to be able to go online, play games and do other things. A couple of them have actually since bought second hand PlayStations and things like that, so that they can play games.”

Grantee 1, Wales describing the purchase of Smart TVs

The distribution of IT devices was linked with some challenges. Firstly, grantees were concerned that giving an expensive device to someone might put them at risk of violence. A bigger problem, however, was the lack of IT literacy. To resolve this, some grantees also provided additional training to equip the people with the necessary skills to use the devices or implemented a buddy system to share experience.

“To give them that training and support whilst social distancing is actually pretty hard; We would do a combination of a support worker doing the initial training and then buddying them up with somebody.”

Grantee 4, England

### **Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), including advocacy/casework**

IAG, advocacy and casework were the predominant activity funded by the grant. 19 out of 20 survey respondents indicated that they provided any of the above, collectively reaching 4652 people. The intensity of the services offered varied between grantees, with some offering light-touch advice and others offering highly specialised advice and advocacy.

Of 19 grantees, that reported running the activity in the survey, 12 reported that the grant was spent on remuneration of staff providing advice or casework, three grantees spent the grant on facilities that enabled the service (such as a webchat) and five did not specify how exactly they spent the grant.

Some of the most common issues that advice services were working on were housing and evictions and domestic abuse. In the interviews, grantees were keen to draw attention to the provision of advice on benefits and debt, which ties in with the broader economic impacts of the pandemic that increased the pressure on people at risk of homelessness. A

case study below supplied by one of the grantees illustrates how they intervened to prevent an eviction from taking place:

---

Person A came to [Grantee 14] asking for help with debts on the 12th August 2020 and had rent arrears of £1500 and council tax arrears of £500. She was being pressured by her housing association to get the arrears cleared or face eviction. Person A has anxiety and depression and this was made worse by the letters which the client received from the local housing association.

After completing a financial assessment, the Debt Adviser could see that there was no excessive spending or unusually high bills. Person A had very little disposable income due to being furloughed from her job.

The Debt Adviser applied for a discretionary housing payment on behalf of Person A. This cleared £1000 of the rent arrears and £400 on the council tax arrears. The Debt Adviser also supported her to apply to the COVID hardship fund. The application was successful, and she was awarded £75 in Morrison's vouchers and had a substantial top up on her gas and electric account. Person A was referred to a number of other support agencies to help in other areas of their life and also accessed our Foodbank for emergency food.

The housing association recently reported that person A was now in credit with her rent, she said she is in a better place mentally and feeling a lot less anxious.

---

In addition to situations where advice helped resolve clients' individual queries, grantees also described how information and advice successfully served as a gateway to other services.

The case study above shows how the pressures brought about by the pandemic were frequently interrelated: the loss of income due to being furloughed caused increased anxiety for the client and also increased the risks of being evicted. Given that multiple support needs frequently arise together, it is thus not surprising that an integrated model where multiple specialist services are provided under one roof with the advice service being the point of entry has proven to be quite effective:

**"The feedback we get is that [clients] like the idea that everything is under one roof, that they're receiving all the services from Community Link, so they don't have to be referred or signposted out to another organisation."**

**Grantee 13, England**

**"We're looking at building a new service, [where] things like the wellbeing offer, things like the digital inclusion offer, things like the mentoring and befriending offer are embedded. I think sometimes these things are really easy to be thought of as nice tag ons, but actually I think what we've learnt over the last year is that they are a really essential part of the service provision"**

**Grantee 6, England**



**“[W]e want to actually start to roll that out across the organisation so that we can keep an eye on everybody’s mental health. But not so much keep an eye on it, but potentially demonstrate the value of integrated services, and that kind of thing.”**

**Grantee 8, Scotland**

With regard to service transformations, occasionally grantees reported having plans to pursue a new service model prior to the pandemic, but the pandemic served as a catalyst for the change which was supported by the grant.

In addition to serving as a gateway to other services, IAG, advice and casework contributed to a range of housing outcomes (see [Outcomes: housing](#))

### **Provision of emotional support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including counselling**

Another activity that was closely related to providing information, advice and guidance was emotional support and counselling. Nine grantees reported providing these services, collectively reaching 3000 individuals. Of these, only two grantees provided formal counselling (and one more reported referring people to access formal counselling), as the majority provided more light-touch emotional support. Counselling was typically offered to existing residents in accommodation managed by the grantees. Otherwise, support typically was in the form of befriending services (in person or remote) or helpline for domestic abuse victims.

Out of nine grantees who reported running these activities, eight reported spending the funding on staff costs, one additionally reported spending funding on facilities for the service and one grantee did not describe what was funded.

Grantees described various ways in which support and befriending services helped clients who were struggling with mental health and reduced the feeling of isolation and loneliness which inevitably arose due to being alone in the pandemic:

**“[T]he staff talk to me about a number of clients. They go and visit them and they didn’t look very well and they looked a bit dishevelled and looked a bit down. And they’d take them out for a walk and then they’d talk about how they were feeling quite lonely and isolated, and how much better they felt after having that walk. I suppose, there’s that sort of element of isolation and loneliness and how you build that in at a time when everyone’s socially having to be on their own.”**

**Grantee 3, England**

**“There was a big, big rush of people wanting to help in the first wave ... and they came on board and became the befrienders so we were able to use that energy in a positive way and some of the people who are suffering with their mental health and lonely we were able to match them up. And we get lots of messages from the befrienders saying how much they enjoy chatting to the clients and how much the clients get back. So it’s a very, very equal benefit for both sides and that’s a really nice outcome”**

**Grantee 5, England**

For services working with the victims of domestic abuse, support and counselling services also worked as an entry point and linkage with other types of service:

**“So they might have needed ... some instant support or some temporary support on the phone and then they went on to other things with us as well from the range of services that we offer of which counselling is one.”**

**Grantee 2, England**

### **Rehousing into temporary accommodation**

Seven grantees reported using the ITT funding to put people directly into temporary accommodation. Collectively, they rehoused 272 individuals.

Five grantees reported spending the funding on the salaries of staff working with clients, three on the cost of accommodation. One grantee did not indicate how the funding was spent.

As described by the grantees, temporary accommodation was an intermediate step for some of the clients where more permanent accommodation was not immediately available.

**“We had three routes off the street, if you like, the simplest probably way to say it. One would have been the pods which, other, another one would have been if we could go straight into accommodation, and the third one would be the assessment beds. So we had two assessment beds that we could have access to where we would be able to work with the client while we worked through the next stage into accommodation.”**

**Grantee 5, England**

Additionally, two of the domestic abuse charities that were funded ran refuges, which also fall under the definition of temporary accommodation.

Increased risks of contracting COVID-19 in hostel-type accommodation meant that grantees sought to reduce their reliance on temporary accommodation (also see [Learning](#)). One grantee described using the grant to use a more housing-led approach and support former rough sleepers directly into private rented accommodation, which they did not normally do. This was partially successful to the extent that the grantee managed to utilise the stock of private rented accommodation that became available due to the pandemic; however, it was complicated by challenges in dealing with the landlords (see below). Another grantee described utilising extra staff time funded by the grant to move people from temporary into permanent accommodation more quickly. These anecdotal examples show that the ITT funds were enabling grantees to shift away from using temporary accommodation for their clients.

### **Rehousing into permanent accommodation or preventing evictions**

Fifteen grantees reported spending the funding to directly support people into permanent accommodation or prevent evictions. Collectively, they reported rehousing and preventing evictions of 646 individuals.

Eleven grantees spent the grant funding on the salaries of staff running the service, three reported spending it on accommodation costs, including one organisation which used the grant to refurbish the properties they manage. Two grantees did not indicate how exactly they spent the grant on this activity.

This activity covered a mix of services, including advocacy aimed at preventing evictions, casework to support clients into private rented sector or social housing, and rehousing directly into supported accommodation provided by grantees or by other services.

A case study below provided by one of the grantees illustrates how the service worked for two young people who were sofa-surfing following relationship breakdown – all typical client profiles based on the survey data. It also illustrates how other activities funded by the grant, such as mental health support, provision of IT devices and employment support, fed into housing sustainment.

---

Person B began working with [Grantee 8] in June 2020 after she and her older cousin were asked to leave the family home. They wanted to get a tenancy together. Both Person B and her cousin were sofa surfing.

As both young women had experienced trauma and were finding their homelessness situation very stressful, they were both referred to Health and Wellbeing. Person B's cousin required a lot of emotional support as she was struggling with anxiety and panic attacks. She was also finding her employers to be unsympathetic and had a complex situation at work with a senior worker who she felt was bullying her. [Grantee 8] advised her to speak to her GP in order to access mental health services. [Grantee 8] discussed how to approach her employers to improve her situation. This helped her to keep the job, resolve the issues, and eventually she gained a promotion.

Person B enrolled at College on a part time course. She had a lot of difficulties accessing the finance that she was entitled to due to bureaucracy and needed a laptop to attend her classes, which were delivered online. [Grantee 8] were able to use the emergency COVID fund to get Person B a laptop and were able to advocate on her behalf to get her finances sorted out.

Person B and her cousin were able to access the Rent Deposit Scheme and were supported through this to move into a private tenancy. By this point, their sofa-surfing situation has deteriorated, so [Grantee 8] liaised with the letting agent to arrange an early move-in. They were also referred to Nightstop to arrange an emergency placement but did not need it in the end.

Since Person B and her cousin have moved into their tenancy, money has been quite tight for the first few months, so Person B had to access a foodbank. Person B has also been referred to other organizations for employability support to improve her financial situation.

---

Supporting people into permanent accommodation was associated with a set of challenges. One grantee described attempts to access a stock of unused properties in a private rented sector that became available due to the pandemic facilitated the transitions from temporary into permanent accommodation. However, the challenge of this was

dealing with the landlords who were reluctant to offer properties to people experiencing homelessness.

**“In one context, when it comes to, some people are wanting to offer us certain types of accommodation. We have taken on a care home, for example, a care home that a private landlord approached us about, and we’ve done that and we’ve created that as part of our pathway in some capacity for this winter. They were coming to us and saying, do you want 15 units of student accommodation? ... When it came to single rented properties, there was a lot, there seemed to be lots floating about but they were very reticent to take up our client group”**

**Grantee 3, England**

Resistance and discrimination coming from private landlords was a common theme in the interviews. For instance, one grantees described a situation where a landlord asked six months’ rent upfront for a property. Another grantee described landlords’ reluctance to offer properties as they were anxious that residents might catch COVID-19. In this instance, however, outreach work with landlords has proven to be beneficial:

**“We’ve worked very hard with our landlord relationships but the last year was critical for landlord relationships because landlords were panicking that they had this time bomb ticking, all these people under one roof with the potential of catching Covid and all of them dying. ... [T]he landlords were a bit resistant but actually Covid meant that when we turned up and said, oh gosh you must be worried about your residents, how can we help? They were very welcoming of us and very grateful that we were there.”**

**Grantee 7, England**

### **Supporting people into employment**

Despite the economically-challenging context of the pandemic, four grantees reported supporting people into employment, particularly in the sectors that were still operating such as construction. Collectively, they helped 40 clients find new employment.

Employment support was not the primary purpose of the projects but contributed towards housing sustainment where it matched clients’ goals:

**“It is tied with the support worker’s role and it’s done when people are housed. So we know that when they’re homeless work is obviously a goal but it’s not the first goal, so home is the first goal and secondary then that’s when they come in. There’s tenancy training but from that moment on they start working to, those that will want to engage in looking for work.”**

**Grantee 5, England**

One grantee reported that ITT funding contributed to the staff time of caseworkers who supported clients into employment, two grantees did not specify what was funded and one grantee indicated that new employment was an unexpected outcome of other grant-funded activities.

Grantees that supported their clients into employment were also asked about sustainment. Of 40 people who gained employment, 33 sustained it at least for 12 weeks, and 23 sustained it at least for 26 weeks<sup>15</sup>.

### Materials to protect staff/clients from COVID-19

Only four grantees described using the funding to purchase materials to protect staff or clients from COVID-19, such as PPE, cleaning materials, hand sanitisers etc. In all instances, grantees described spending the funds to purchase the materials directly.

This reportedly contributed to uninhibited operation of the services and potentially minimised the exposure of staff and clients to COVID-19.

Despite the widely-reported shortage of PPE in the early days of the pandemic, few grantees reported facing challenges with sourcing PPE or cleaning materials.

### Outcomes: housing

Given Crisis' mission of ending homelessness and the role that housing plays in it, we asked grantees about a range of housing outcomes. Specifically, grantees were asked to indicate the number of people whose homelessness was ended or prevented as the result of project activities. This includes not only the people who were housed directly, but also those who accessed housing as a result of other activities, for example, advice and advocacy.

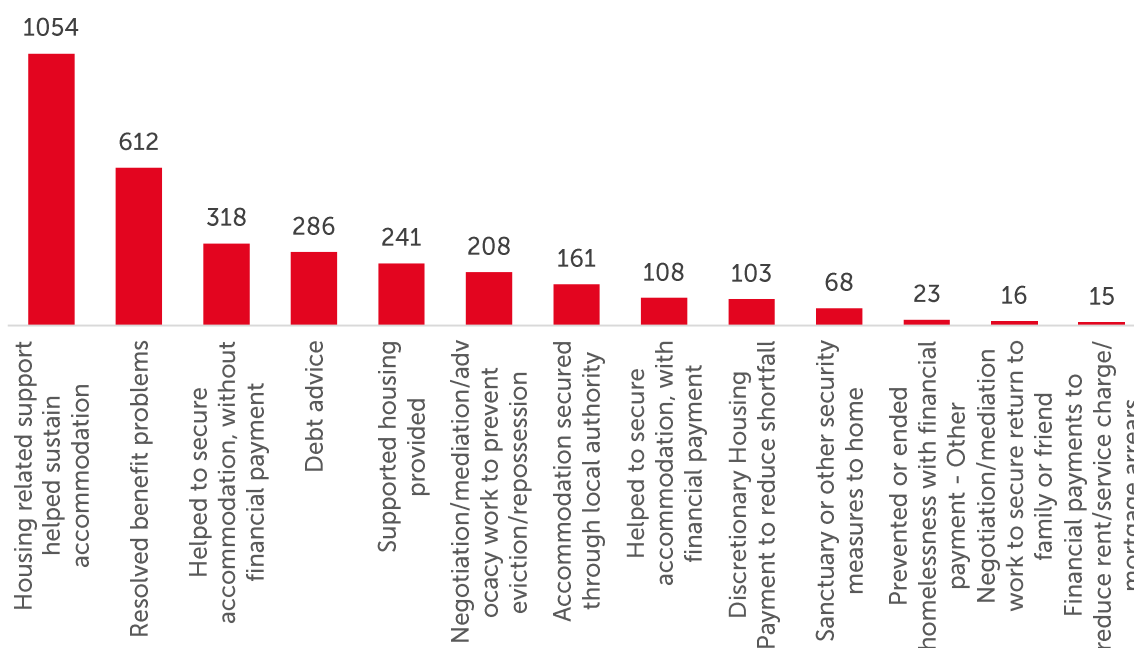


Figure 6 Number of people whose homelessness has been ended or prevented by ITT grantees, by intervention type (Crisis KPI 3.3 definitions)

The definitions above are consistent with the definitions of Crisis' KPI 3.3 (Homelessness prevented)<sup>16</sup>. Altogether, these account for 3213 instances of housing related support.

<sup>15</sup> Among the remaining 17 beneficiaries, at least in one instance, the start date of the beneficiary's employment was less than 12 weeks before the date of the survey completion, hence sustainment could not be measured.

<sup>16</sup> This describes situations where Crisis member's case is still open, they are at risk of homelessness, but their homelessness has been prevented and at no point they are without a home.

However, the total number of unique individuals who benefitted from the support is lower, as one person may appear under multiple categories.

The categories listed above broadly reflect the nature of the housing-related support provided by the grantees' services. Over a thousand people received some form of housing-related support to sustain accommodation, which represents the most frequent category. Additionally, since a large number of grantees worked with clients to resolve benefit issues, 612 people reportedly were able to access housing as a result of this. One grantee described the nature of this work as follows:

**"The external prevention work we were finding and we're still, and that's our, I think our growing trend is people who had never, ever had to claim benefits, so the people who'd worked and had their couple of months in the bank perhaps but that had gone."**

### Grantee 5, England

318 people were able to access housing as a result of advocacy on their behalf, without financial payment. Finally, 286 people accessed housing through the resolution of their debt issues via debt advice.

Grantees were also asked about the instances where people's homelessness may have been relieved through the improvement of their living conditions, but where they were still homeless. This is consistent with Crisis KPI 3.5 (Improved accommodation situation (Still homeless))<sup>17</sup>. The figure below represents the people's target housing situation, where it was an improvement compared to their previous housing situation. Collectively, the data accounts for 370 instances where someone's homelessness has been relieved due to the grant funding. Again, the total number of unique individuals benefitting from this support is likely to be lower due to double counting, as one person may appear under different categories.

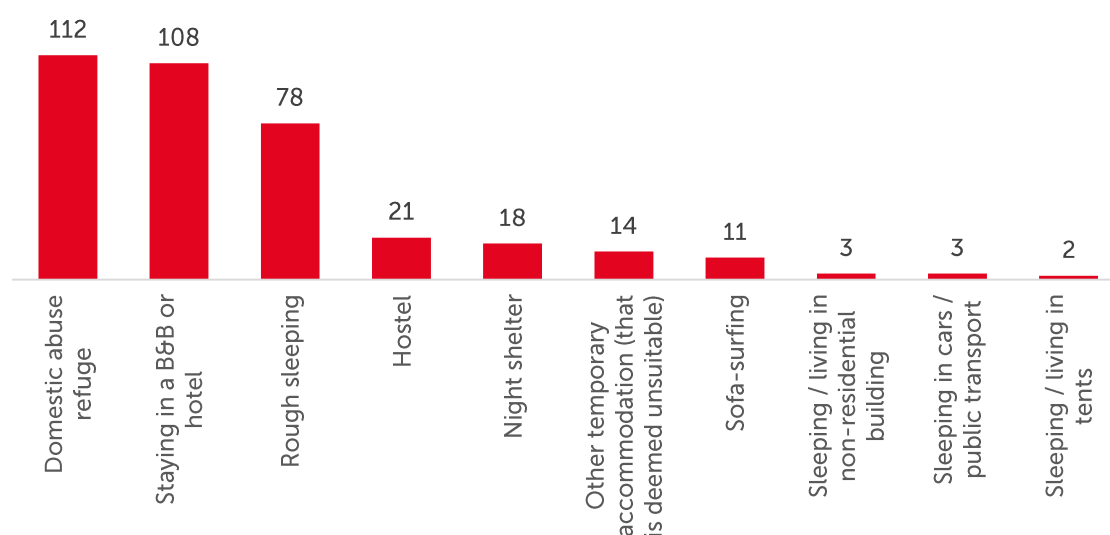


Figure 7 Number of people whose housing situation has been improved by ITT grantees, but who were still homeless by new housing situation (Crisis KPI 3.5 definitions)

<sup>17</sup> This describes situations where Crisis member's case is still open, they are still homeless, but their accommodation situation is better than before, and more recent accommodation situation falls under one of the options in Figure 7.

In terms of most widely-reported outcomes, collectively, grantees reported 112 people being placed in a domestic abuse refuge (three of the grantees are domestic abuse charities). A further 108 people accessed B&Bs, which represented an improvement compared to their previous accommodation situation. And finally, grantees reported improved living conditions of 78 persons who were still sleeping rough.

Given the context of the pandemic, it is unsurprising that hostels and night shelters appear relatively low on the list, with only 39 individuals being placed into any of these.

Where relevant, grantees were also asked about housing sustainment, i.e. people staying in their housing. Eight grantees who provided detailed data on housing sustainment have collectively supported 285 people to sustain housing for at least 12 weeks, 206 people to sustain housing for at least 26 weeks, and 161 for at least 52 weeks<sup>18</sup>.

Four more grantees reported helping 148 more people sustain housing for an undefined period of time.

A housing-led approach, where people are moved quickly into permanent accommodation with the support they need, is the most effective way of helping people out of homelessness and improving housing outcomes. Moreover, there is reason to assume that every move into self-contained accommodation instead of, or from, communal accommodation was reducing the spread of COVID-19.

A UK modelling study<sup>19</sup> estimated that preventive measures, such as closing of dormitory-style hostel accommodation, resulted in 21,092 fewer cases of COVID among people experiencing homelessness in UK in the first wave of the pandemic.

Furthermore, an observational study based on a pilot in the US<sup>20</sup> found that people experiencing homelessness who were housed in *individual* hotel rooms had lower incidence of COVID-19 compared to individuals in de-intensified *communal* shelters, and also compared to the same cohort prior to moving into the hotels.

These outcomes are hard to evidence for the ITT-funded projects directly due to absence of a control group. However, drawing inferences from the studies above we may conclude that the ITT funding similarly contributed both to the reduced spread of coronavirus.

## Implementation challenges

While implementing the ITT-funded projects, grantees experienced an array of interrelated challenges.

---

<sup>18</sup> In the survey, grantees were not required to indicate what type of housing (permanent or temporary) sustainment figures were referring to. However, all 8 grantees who provided sustainment data reported housing beneficiaries into permanent accommodation or preventing evictions as one of the activities, and collectively reported securing accommodation for 301 individuals. The figures reported above should be seen as the lower-bound estimate, as other beneficiaries might have sustained their housing but grantees did not collect any data on this.

<sup>19</sup> Lewer, D., Braithwaite, I., Bullock, M., Eyre, M.T., White, P.J., Aldridge, R.W., Story, A. & Hayward, A.C. (2020) 'COVID amongst people experiencing homelessness in England: a modelling study', *The Lancet*, 23rd September, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(20\)30396-9/fulltext#seccestitle70](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30396-9/fulltext#seccestitle70)

<sup>20</sup> Colburn G., Thompson S., Dean T., (2020) 'Impact of Hotels as Non-Congregate Emergency Shelters: An analysis of investments in hotels as emergency shelter in King County, WA during the COVID-19 pandemic' [https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study\\_Full-Report\\_Final-11302020.pdf](https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study_Full-Report_Final-11302020.pdf)

## **Service closures**

A major and widely-reported challenge in the early periods of the pandemic was the closure of other services that grantees previously could refer their clients to. This had a knock-on effect on the grantees, which had to take up additional service roles. Part of this was supported by the ITT grant in the form of funding for food delivery, advice services and additional staff time.

**“What we saw was a lot of services, obviously, having to close their doors. A lot of services, where people would normally engage in groups or physically in person closing. And all of a sudden, I think, I remember our staff saying they felt like they had to become everyone, that you had one staff member who their normal role would be a key worker, but they found out they were having to support with housing applications, mental health, physical health, doctors, how to engage with family and friends.”**

**Grantee 6, England**

Grantees also mentioned that the difficulty of accessing Housing Options or helping clients in claiming benefits due to the respective offices being closed:

**“It’s great if you know that a person needs to register as homeless with the council, needs to go to the DWP and get their benefits sorted, that’s great. But if they can’t get hold of those services, then that puts them into more crisis. So it just meant that the complexity and difficulty of the cases increased, because of the nature of the working, as well as the nature of the cases that were coming into the service.”**

**Grantee 8, Scotland**

No specific learning arose from dealing with this challenge, as grantees had to cope by putting in more resources into working more intensively with the client, picking up the aspects of work previously handled by other services. Alternatively, they could mobilise existing networks and relationship and refer to different services, which was effective, but equally resource-intensive.

**“And again, a lot of the things that came out of the pandemic, a lot of it comes down to relationships again, a lot of it could be individual relationships with the individual members of staff. So it helped to be able to have that, to build that knowledge base, to be able to support, and give the right advice. Because sometimes it’s not general, housing advice is great in an ideal world, but actually, to be able to give people practical support, there’s no point in saying go to one place, if you know that that’s not going to be open, or they haven’t got the ability to deal with that”**

**Grantee 8, Scotland**

A related issue that was mentioned by some grantees was the fact that even aside from the pandemic, homelessness services provided by charities may be short lived and difficult to navigate, and a lot of time can be spent on identifying the right service for the client and making appropriate referrals:

**“It just, it would be so much simpler if someone could just phone up their GP and be referred to counselling or wellbeing services within the GP’s surgery but it’s not. It’s like, oh you can try VitaMinds and it’s a different phone number and it’s a**



service that's provided by a charity. But I know that, you know, a year ago it wasn't VitaMinds it was Wells Spring Community Centre, yes. ... It's kind of a waste of charity money to be having to figure out who's doing what all the time and trying to put together this jigsaw puzzle. But like the same point as I made before, if you're trying to navigate that as an individual I mean that's, that's impossible."

Grantee 4, England

While this is not an issue that could be resolved on a small-scale, as a donor, Crisis could support the creation of long-term partnerships with stable referral routes which would reduce of the uncertainty and difficulty in navigating the support systems.

### **Limitations of a remote service offer**

The rise of remote working and remote service delivery has been a near-universal response to the pandemic and has had its successes. In particular, it has allowed reaching new clients, it allowed for increased flexibility when delivering services and has proven to be time-saving.

However, remote service models had their limitations, which were noted by multiple grantees. One of the limitations was the difficulty in engaging with certain groups of clients:

"I do think there are some people who have struggled a bit not being able to just walk in and see us, particularly some of the longer term rough sleepers that we work with who really just know where we are and want to be able to walk in and say hello and get some help."

Grantee 11, England

Overall, it appears that remote services worked best where only limited engagement was required (e.g. advice services) or where they allowed clients to engage at their own pace which sometimes avoided re-traumatisation (e.g. remote court hearings from one's own accommodation). Remote services worked less well where high level of engagement was required to build trust with a client. Examples of the latter are counselling and debt advice:

"And one of the things we've found is face to face is 1000 times better than phone advice, particularly for debt advice because it is so intrusive you need that relationship, you need that level of trust"

Grantee 14, England

The limitations of remote service delivery highlighted a related issue of digital exclusion. Some of the grantees were directly supported by the ITT grant to distribute IT devices to their clients who struggled to stay connected otherwise (see Provision of IT hardware (such as phones) to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness).

A long-term solution to the limitations of remote service delivery, however, was a blended service model which allowed combining the benefits of both approaches and reaching a diverse group of clients (see Learning)

### **Increased complexity of cases: burnout and lack of specialist support**

While the pandemic resulted in an increased demand for services, the complexity of cases also increased. This was partly due to the fact that clients could not access support at the right time and their condition deteriorated.

**"We're seeing the top, the tip of the iceberg really, we're seeing our support sessions are longer, they're more complex, people have got more mental health issues, people have got more substance misuse. That's not going to go away."**

**Grantee 15, Wales**

Increased complexity of cases presented two inter-related challenges. On one hand, it resulted in burnout of staff who were already struggling with increasing workloads.

**"Will be experiencing this personally as well professionally, and, yeah, I think that, I think a big challenge for us now is burn out, and continuing to support our wellbeing, and having the staff that we need to provide services."**

**Grantee 6, England**

To deal with burnout some grantees reported running counselling sessions for frontline staff:

**"We put more people on call, we invested in BUPA, having that counselling kind of support line for staff. We applied for funding for extra clinical supervision, because we just thought, we just need to put as much things in place as possible really, to check that they were OK."**

**Grantee 15, Wales**

A second challenge related to the increased complexity of cases was lack of specialist support. The first major area where specialist support was lacking was again mental health.

**"You see quite a lot of funding for mentoring and befriending, but quite often it might look at older people. And I think when we started the service locally we were one of the few organisations that were looking at it with regards to people experiencing homelessness, or people with challenges around their mental health. ... Sometimes, what you're offering is attractive to be funded to a certain group of people, but not necessarily the group of people who we work with."**

**Grantee 6, England**

**"We would like to offer counselling services moving forward, there's a massive shortage for specialist counselling for domestic abuse victims. I think it's very much kind of like, our services are kind of based on reacting to the immediacy of experiencing that domestic abuse"**

**Grantee 15, Wales**

Yet another area where funding is reportedly scarce is immigration advice (as is the case with other support for non-UK nationals). Lack of dedicated immigration support has proven particularly challenging and time-consuming for some grantees:

**“We lack organisations that provide free immigration advice and if a triage officer has to spend a long time on the phone trying to assist somebody to access immigration advice by researching on LawWorks, just trying to phone up firms of solicitors to see if they’ll help, that then means that other callers can’t get through on the advice line”**

**Grantee 13, England**

## **Going forward**

### **Learning**

When asked about the service trajectory going forward, most grantees stated that they would continue the funded projects in some form. Four exceptions were grantees who were funded for a distinct one-off spending (such as property refurbishment – Grantee 1, Wales), and three who decided to discontinue the services provided during the pandemic. In one instance, this was due to the fact the end of COVID-19 restrictions meant that more clients could access help in other ways, rather than through an out-of-hours helpline which was funded by the grant. In all three cases, this was also due to lack of funding.

In terms of learnings from the projects, the key one that stands out is the effectiveness of a **blended service model**, which combines in-person and remote service delivery. Most grantees said they would continue to rely on such a model going forward. Blended service models allowed streamlining the work to reach new clients, but also working with larger volumes of clients at once. Even grantees who provided services that required face-to-face communication such as supported housing or advocacy mentioned that they would carry out some initial assessments remotely as this was time-saving.

**“That was a big, big lesson for me, because we had been in the habit of assuming that we needed to see people, we needed people to come to clinics, come to meetings, bring all their paperwork into the office ... And although I still believe that that’s important and has a place, I have now realised that there was a lot of stuff that we could’ve been doing differently that we hadn’t really ever considered, because we hadn’t been forced to think differently”**

**Grantee 11, England**

A closely related element of learning highlighted the importance of **digital inclusion** in making sure that clients can access the services offered remotely. This prompted grantees to facilitate clients’ access to technology and multiple grantees reported working to ensure this. The importance of digital inclusion has been a recurring trend in the discussions about the changes brought about by the pandemic.

**“Because not all of our service users were online, we invested in tech for everybody”**

**Grantee 1, Wales**

Given the high profile of the issue of digital inclusion, it is unsurprising that grantees reported that significant amount of funding was already available to support this work.

The rapid change in the ways of working due to the pandemic also prompted some grantees to reconsider previously established models in different ways. Firstly, the closure of the drop-in centres prompted some grantees to focus more on **outreach work**. The focus on outreach work has allowed reaching new clients and ultimately is likely to persist as the services emerge from the pandemic. Secondly, the pandemic created some scope for **expansion of successful service models**. Three grantees reported that they were planning to or were in the process of expanding their service to neighbouring regions. This was facilitated by the time-saving nature of remote work, which meant that travel times have been reduced. Finally, one charity trialed a new way of working with **volunteers**. Prior to the pandemic, they used a large number of volunteers to assist with food deliveries and events. The pandemic meant that they had to stop relying on high numbers of volunteers. However, having two debt advisors in place (funded by the ITT grant), they were able to train a small number of regular volunteers to provide debt advice, meaning that they could cope with increasing demand more effectively.

While the main learning from the projects that grantees spoke of concerned the ways of working and service delivery, interviews also touched upon the role of housing and organisations becoming **housing-led**. In the survey, out of 15 grantees that reported rehousing people into permanent accommodation, nine indicated that the grant has led to a change to a more housing-led model, i.e. they now rehoused people into permanent accommodation where previously they would first be housed in temporary accommodation.

In the interviews, some grantees further highlighted the importance of stability that housing offers in achieving a range of other outcomes, and how this notion became more widely accepted in their networks:

**“This grant has given us a great leverage to provide that specific housing support for those women and actually build on that moving forward. So what we have seen is that when we are able to get stable accommodation and it’s appropriate and safe that then results in other things falling into place for the women.”**

**Grantee 16, England**

**“I think there’s been great strides actually in understanding that it is that stability and that decent house for everybody is the beginning, the core of what makes a person thrive, you get that right you can do the rest.”**

**Grantee 5, England**

The ITT funding also reportedly facilitated the creation of a new citywide **partnership** involving the local council, whereby the grantee had direct access to the properties managed by the council. This allowed moving clients into permanent accommodation directly and more rapidly:

**“So we created what was a pathway together. And I think having this resettlement money that came to us gave us an opportunity to sit round the table and say, we’ve got the resource now to help with flow and a pathway for this, for the city ... They can start to do assessments because [the clients] were just sitting in the bed and breakfast. ... So not only could they go into the bed and breakfast and start to make assessments and see what people really needed and working with the housing options team to do that, they could also assess people in our**

accommodation and the city council’s accommodation to see what they needed to get them moved on”

**Grantee 3, England**

This partnership was sustained and ultimately allowed the grantee to influence the scope of the local commissioning services. The grantee described proactively contacting the council and suggesting a longer-term commissioned service (two years as opposed to six-month emergency provision) with a pathway into settled housing, which ultimately went forward.

**Challenges facing services**

Grantees were asked about the challenges facing their services in the six months following the completion of the funded projects. While for the recipients of the ITT small grants, (who completed the survey in autumn 2020) funding shortfalls and helping clients address basic needs came up on top, the picture for large grantees looks markedly different.

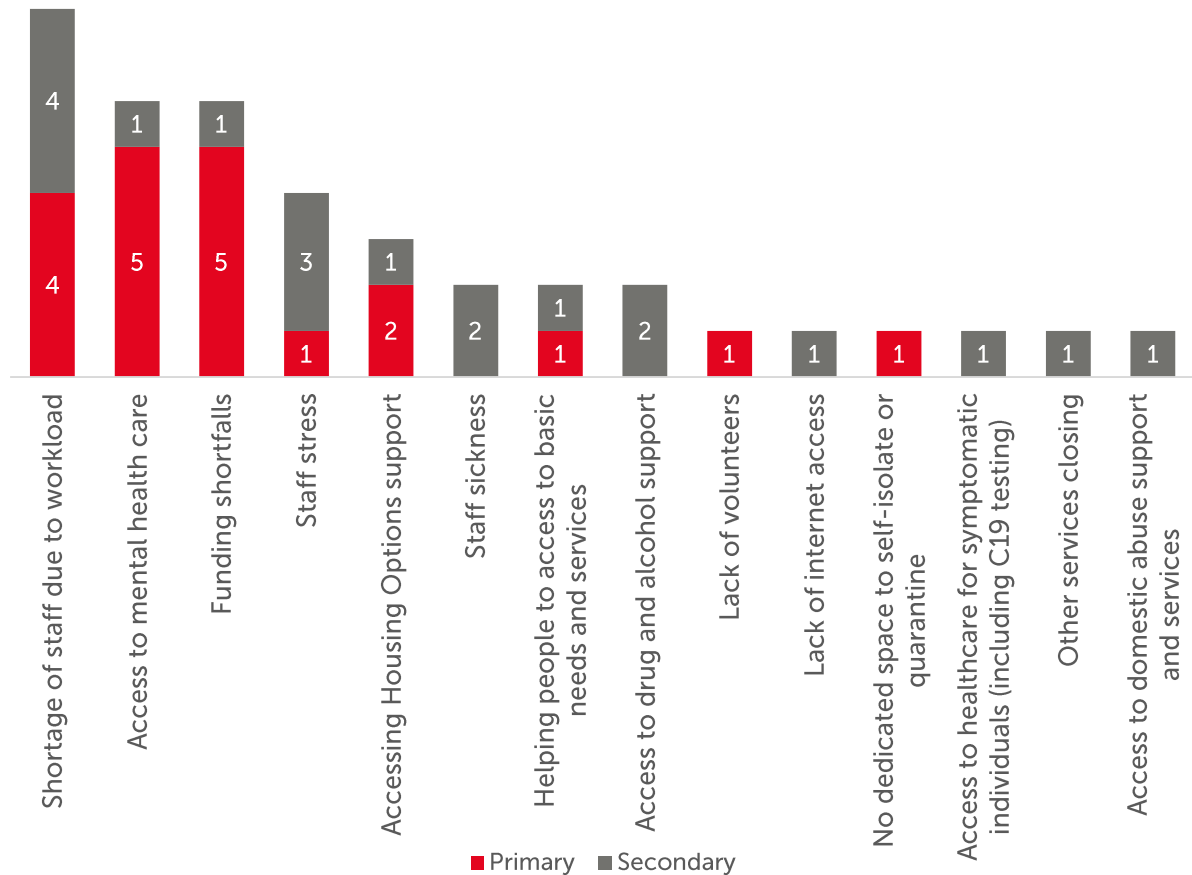


Figure 8 Challenges facing grantees’ services in the next six months following the completion of the survey. Grantees were asked to indicate one primary and one secondary challenge each.

Here, eight grantees (or 40% of survey respondents) indicated the shortage of staff due to increased workload as the main challenge. Interviews with grantees shed more light on this issue. A common theme mentioned in the interviews was the fact that various preventive measures and safeguards that were put in place by the government during the

pandemic were coming to an end, which either already resulted or was about to result in increases in presentations.

**“And I think for us, there is a sense an impending tsunami coming our way and we’re just seeing it now”**

**Grantee 14, England**

Firstly, the end of government funding for the ‘Everyone In’ scheme, which provided emergency accommodation for rough sleepers, meant that approaches were now varying widely by council. Some councils were ending the support around the time when the interviews were being held, which meant that grantees were in the process of finding new accommodation for those who were about to be evicted from the hotels to make sure they do not end up sleeping rough.

**“Now June 27<sup>th</sup> [2021] is when the accommodation ends so there’s a real push now, so we are continuing some work and I can let you know how many of those, I think there’s 20 people left in the hotels and the temporary accommodation, so we’re continuing to work, meeting on a weekly basis and offering accommodation to the people.”**

**Grantee 10, England**

This challenge was exacerbated for grantees who were working with those with no recourse to public funds, as support available for this client group is generally limited:

**“And we saw that at the end of the Everybody In programme as well, that the people left in the hotels in Bristol were all of those with no recourse to public funds.”**

**Grantee 4, England**

Secondly, the end of the eviction ban in England on 31 May 2021 caused further worries, particularly for grantees who were working to prevent evictions as this meant a sudden increase in demand. One organisation reported that the messaging around the eviction ban has been particularly unhelpful in itself, as it created a false feeling of security for clients in arrears, which meant that they delayed contacting services until the last minute even though their situations could have been resolved easier had they come forward earlier.

**“We’ve felt the message of, “it’s all OK, during the pandemic nobody’s going to come and take your home from you, nobody’s going to come and take your, the bailiffs aren’t going to be coming” -, that has been so unhelpful for our clients because the situation has just got worse.”**

**Grantee 14, England**

Finally, the end to the universal credit uplift on 1 October 2021 and the end to the furlough scheme on 31 September 2021 (both still upcoming at the time of writing) are likely to create additional pressures on people at risk of or facing homelessness. This spells further worries for grantees regarding a potential sharp increase in the demand for services. It is thus recommended that Crisis closely monitors the effect of these changes on people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and considers allocating additional funding to

organisations working with the most vulnerable groups and struggling with increased demand.

The second and third most-frequently mentioned challenges in the survey were accessing mental health care and funding shortfalls (each mentioned by six grantees – 30% of respondents). As mentioned above, even though at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic charities faced a twin challenge of increased demand and funding shortfalls, at the later stages of the pandemic, a relatively large pool of emergency support funding was available. This could be one of the reasons why funding shortfalls did not come up on top in the list of challenges for ITT large grantees, in contrast to the ITT small grants evaluation.

Interviews with grantees suggest that the issues of funding shortfalls and accessing mental health are closely inter-related as the availability of funding is largely uneven across different areas of support. As mentioned above, there is reportedly a lack of specialist mental health support and these services are routinely underfunded. While the mental health services lack funding, the pandemic has increased the pressure. Due to the feeling of isolation and not being able to access the right support in time, situation typically deteriorated for people experiencing homelessness, and grantees described having to work with more complex cases. This, in turn, increased the demand for specialised health support.

Finally, as a prolonged effect of the pandemic, staff stress came up close to the top in the list of challenges, with four respondents (or 20%) mentioning it as a challenge.

Against this backdrop, the areas where grantees reported no challenges are worth mentioning. At various stages of the pandemic, lack of personal protective equipment, and later lack of IT devices have been a source of challenges across many sectors in the society. Supporting people at higher risk of COVID-19 and an inability to practice social distancing have proven challenging to some organisations, particularly some of the recipients of the ITT small grants. None of the recipients of the ITT large grants mentioned any of the above as a challenge going forward, which speaks to the successes of the funding from Crisis or the effects of other support that was available.

## **Conclusion**

The ITT large grants programme was set up to support local homelessness organisations across the UK with expanding their service to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme reached a diverse range of grantees, including providers of supported housing, debt advice services, domestic abuse charities, young people's charities and others.

In the early days of the pandemic, the programme was unique due to the speed with which the funding was made available. Over time, it coexisted with a range of other emergency funding initiatives, resulting in duplication of efforts.

An unexpected positive effect of the ITT large grants programme was a "halo" effect of Crisis funding: it allowed grantees to attract additional funding as it signalled credibility to donors.

Compared with the ITT small grants, the ITT large grants were significantly more focused on ending or preventing homelessness, as opposed to homelessness relief, despite the challenges of operating under lockdown conditions.

Drawing on the findings from a UK modelling study and an observation study in the US<sup>21</sup>, we may infer that by funding grantees to support people into self-contained housing and to help them sustain their accommodation, the ITT programme contributed to the reduction in the spread of COVID-19.

Some of the activities funded by the ITT programme also dealt directly with the effects of the pandemic on homelessness services and the people using these services. For instance, distribution of food and emergency supplies helped address the basic needs of people experiencing homelessness, while the distribution of IT devices ensured that people could access services, which were increasingly offered remotely, and could get in touch with their loved ones. Finally, support and counselling dealt with the effects of the pandemic and isolation on mental health. All of this speaks to the successes of the programme.

Feedback from grantees indicates that some of the service delivery needs funded by the ITT large grants, such as purchasing IT devices or PPE, no longer present a challenge going forward. Similarly, funding shortfalls do not appear to be the most pressing challenge for grantees, although there is a reported shortage of funding for specialised services such as mental health counselling and immigration advice. The general availability of funding, however, may be a short-term result of a specific set of circumstances surrounding the pandemic, and homelessness charities may soon find themselves in a more typical situation where shortfalls are a persistent issue.

Furthermore, grantees were increasingly concerned about the effects of the scrapping of the safeguards put in place during the pandemic, such as the ban on evictions, Universal Credit uplift and the furlough scheme, and how these may drive an increase in presentations.

---

<sup>21</sup> Colburn G., Thompson S., Dean T., (2020) 'Impact of Hotels as Non-Congregate Emergency Shelters: An analysis of investments in hotels as emergency shelter in King County, WA during the COVID-19 pandemic' [https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study\\_Full-Report\\_Final-11302020.pdf](https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impact-of-Hotels-as-ES-Study_Full-Report_Final-11302020.pdf)



# **Appendix 1:**

# **Survey questionnaire**

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Introduction

The effect of the COVID-19 has been significant on those supporting people who are experiencing rough sleeping and homelessness. Crisis is calling on national governments and local councils to take emergency measures to ensure people experiencing homelessness can receive the same care as other vulnerable population groups. We also want to support groups who are financially affected by additional demands on their resources and have established an emergency grant fund for this purpose.

Congratulations on receiving a grant through the In This Together grants programme.

The Crisis Best Practice Team is working with all grantees to understand how the grants have been used, what difference they have made, what has been working well with funded projects, and where there are opportunities for improvement. We are also interested to see where learning from the grants can help to strengthen the evidence base for what needs to change in government policy.

We would like to invite you to complete this survey. We will also contact you to set up an interview with a member of the Best Practice team to explore the areas covered in the survey in more detail.

We will use what you tell us to identify opportunities for learning to inform practice and policy on what works to end homelessness.

The information you provide in the survey will be kept confidential and all data will be stored electronically in a password-protected folder in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This will only be accessed by the Crisis Best Practice and Research & Evaluation teams. The data and the findings from the interview will not be published or used externally by Crisis independently of a final evaluation report.

**For more information, please contact:** [bestpractice@crisis.org.uk](mailto:bestpractice@crisis.org.uk)

If you would like more information about privacy (including how your information will be used and stored by Crisis and your rights under data protection law) please see the Crisis Research Privacy Notice (we can email or post you a copy).

### Consent form

\* The purpose of this survey has been explained to me

- Yes  
 No

\* I understand that the information I submit in the survey may be used in the final evaluation report

- Yes  
 No

\* I understand that the final evaluation report produced based on the information I submit may be used for external purposes such as marketing or communications about the grants programme

- Yes  
 No

I am happy for my contact details to be shared with other grantees for the purpose of sharing learning between the projects included in the evaluation (optional)

- Yes  
 No

In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

Organisation and grant details

**Address**

Contact name

Organisation

Address

Address 2

City/Town

Postcode

Email Address

Phone Number

Please enter the grant amount

Please describe the purpose for which grant was made (please provide a short summary)

\* Did you receive any match funding or add any of your own resources to achieve the aims of the funded project?

Yes

No

In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

Match funding details

Please provide details of any match funding received or own resources added to achieve the aims of the project:

In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

Grant details (cont'd)

\* Was the whole grant spent on the purpose for which it was given?

- Yes
- No (different purpose)
- No (underspent)

In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

Grant underspent or different purpose

If applicable, please explain why a part of the grant was spent on a different purpose:

If applicable, please explain what has been underspent:

In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

Grant beneficiaries

Certain people are more at risk of homelessness than others. Please indicate if the main beneficiaries of your project were in the following at risk groups (tick all that apply):

- People fleeing / experiencing domestic abuse
- People experiencing relationship breakdown [not resulting from domestic abuse]
- Care leavers
- People with learning difficulties
- Prison leavers
- People discharged from hospital
- People with no recourse to public funds
- Sofa surfers
- Private renters threatened with eviction
- Homeowners in mortgage arrears
- People who are recently unemployed
- Other (please specify)

Please indicate if the main beneficiaries of your project belong to any of the following groups (tick all that apply):

- People aged 18 to 24
- People aged 65 or older
- EEA nationals
- People experiencing homelessness for the first time
- People from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background
- LGBTQI
- People from local authority areas other than your own
- Other (please specify)

In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

Activities and outputs (introduction)

This section seeks to understand what activities you undertook and what were the outputs.

**Outputs:** A specific description of which activities took place. E.g. if your activity is 'we provide training', the outputs could be 'we trained 50 people to achieve a qualification'

We will ask questions about activities that may have been wholly or partially funded through the Crisis "In This Together" grant. Please reply "yes" to the questions below if the grant was used to fund any of the following:

- The output directly. For example: food and emergency supplies;
- A change to your services enabling your organisation to engage in certain activity. For example: Emergency cleaning allowing to provide temporary accommodation;
- Staff time or expenses of volunteers engaged in a particular activity.

Below is the list of activities you will be asked about:

- Provision of food and emergency supplies to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Provision of IT hardware (such as phones) to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), including advocacy/casework
- Provision of support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including counselling
- Rehousing into temporary accommodation
- Rehousing into permanent accommodation or preventing evictions
- Supporting beneficiaries into employment
- Materials to protect staff/clients from COVID-19 (e.g. PPE, cleaning) **(only if these do not fall within the remit of specific services described above)**
- Other **(if the grant was used to fund an activity not described above)**

You will have space to explain which part of a certain activity was specifically funded by the ITT grant.

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Food and emergency supplies

\* As part of the ITT-funded project, did your organisation provide food and emergency supplies (excluding IT hardware such as phones and tablets) to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness?

- Yes
- No

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Food and emergency supplies (cont'd)

How many people did your organisation provide food and emergency supplies to as part of the project?

Please explain which part of the activity was funded by the ITT grant

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### IT hardware

\* As part of the project, did your organisation provide IT hardware (such as mobile phones or tablets) to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness?

- Yes
- No

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### IT hardware (cont'd)

How many people did your organisation provide IT hardware to as part of the project?

Please explain which part of the activity was funded by the ITT grant

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### IAG, advocacy and casework

\* As part of the project, did your organisation provide information, advice and guidance (except counselling) or engage in casework and advocacy on behalf of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness?

- Yes
- No

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### IAG, advocacy and casework (cont'd)

How many people did your organisation support with information, advice, guidance, casework or advocacy as part of the project?

Please explain which part of the activity was funded by the ITT grant

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Support and counselling

\* As part of the project, did your organisation provide support or counselling services to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness?

Yes

No

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Support and counselling (cont'd)

How many people did your organisation provide support or counselling to as part of the project?

Please explain which part of the activity was funded by the ITT grant

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Temporary accommodation

\* As part of the project, did your organisation provide rehousing into temporary accommodation for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness?

*Examples may include hotels and B&Bs*

Yes

No

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey



## Temporary accommodation (cont'd)

How many people did your organisation rehouse into temporary accommodation as part of the project?

Please explain which part of the activity was funded by the ITT grant

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Permanent accommodation / preventing evictions

\* As part of the project, did your organisation provide rehousing into permanent accommodation or prevent evictions from permanent accommodation?

*This might include:*

- accommodation secured through the local authority
- accommodation secured with or without financial payment
- supported housing
- accommodation in the private rented sector

Yes

No

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Permanent accommodation / preventing evictions (cont'd)

How many people did your organisation rehouse into permanent accommodation or how many peoples' eviction has been prevented?

Please explain which part of the activity was funded by the ITT grant

\* Has the project supported people into stable housing who would have previously been supported into temporary/emergency accommodation?

*i.e. has the grant led to a change to a housing-led model?*

Yes

No

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Change to a housing-led model

Can you provide data to illustrate how the project started supporting more people into stable housing?

*For example:*

*% of people supported into temporary/emergency accommodation before and after the grant*

*% of people supported into stable housing before and after the grant*

*or you can use your own measure*

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Employment

\* As part of the ITT-funded project, did your organisation support people into employment?

Yes

No

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Employment (cont'd)

How many people did your organisation support into employment as part of the project?

Please explain which part of the activity was funded by the ITT grant

Can you provide data to show the number of people who have sustained their employment as the result of the project activities?

For example:

- number of people who have sustained their employment to 12 weeks
- number of people who have sustained their employment to 26 weeks
- number of people who have sustained their employment to 52 weeks

Or you can use your own measure

In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

#### Materials to protect staff/clients from COVID-19

\* Was the ITT grant used to fund the purchase of materials to protect staff or clients from COVID-19 (such as PPE, cleaning)?

**Please reply “yes” only if the purchase of materials to protect staff or clients was not linked to delivery of the specific services mentioned previously, but was used to support the organisation overall.**

- Yes
- No

In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

#### Materials to protect staff/clients from COVID-19 (cont'd)

Please explain which part of the activity was funded by the ITT grant

How did the purchase of materials to protect staff or clients impact your organisation?

In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

## Other activities

\* Was the ITT grant used to fund any other activities not falling into the previously listed categories?

Yes

No

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Other activities (cont'd)

Please provide the description of these activities below:

Please explain which part of these activities was funded by an ITT grant

How many people were supported through these activities?

*If there is more than one activity, please provide separate figures*

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Outcomes

In this section we will ask you about some of the outcomes of the ITT-funded project

**Outcomes:** what changes/benefits did your project achieve? E.g. someone supported by your project secured stable housing, feels more motivated, increases their skills

In this survey, we will only ask you about the following outcomes:

- Homelessness ended or prevented
- Housing situation improved
- Housing sustained

You will be asked about other outcomes that may not fall under these categories in the interview.

**Outcomes: Homelessness ended/ prevented**

One of potential outcomes of the project may be ending or preventing homelessness. Has your project stopped people from becoming homeless either through keeping them in their own home or helping them to find another one?

If so, please indicate how many individuals' homelessness has been ended or prevented by entering numbers next to each category below:

Accommodation secured through local authority

Helped to secure accommodation, with financial payment

Helped to secure accommodation, without financial payment

Supported housing provided

Negotiation/mediation work to secure return to family or friend

Negotiation/mediation/advocacy work to prevent eviction/repossession

Financial payments to reduce rent/service charge/ mortgage arrears

Discretionary Housing Payment to reduce shortfall

Prevented or ended homelessness with financial payment - Other

Housing related support helped sustain accommodation

Debt advice

Resolved benefit problems

Sanctuary or other security measures to home

**Outcomes: Improvement in housing situation**

If an intervention did not end or prevent homelessness, it still could have improved someone's housing situation. Has the project supported people to improve their housing situation, even if they are still homeless, compared to their previous situation?

If so, please indicate the number of people, who moved to each of the following arrangements:

Rough sleeping	<input type="text"/>
Squatting	<input type="text"/>
Night shelter	<input type="text"/>
Sleeping / living in tents	<input type="text"/>
Sleeping / living in non-residential building	<input type="text"/>
Hostel	<input type="text"/>
Sleeping in cars / public transport	<input type="text"/>
Staying in a B&B or hotel	<input type="text"/>
Sofa-surfing	<input type="text"/>
Other temporary accommodation (that is deemed unsuitable)	<input type="text"/>
National Asylum Support Service (NASS)	<input type="text"/>
Domestic abuse refuge	<input type="text"/>

**Outcomes: Housing sustainment**

\* Has the project supported people to sustain their housing?

- Yes
- No

In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

Housing sustainment (cont'd)

Can you provide data to show the number of people who have sustained housing as the result of the project activities?

For example:

- number of people who have sustained their housing to 12 weeks
- number of people who have sustained their housing to 26 weeks
- number of people who have sustained their housing to 52 weeks

or you can use your own measure

## In This Together emergency grants: Medium and large grants survey

### Looking ahead

What is the biggest challenge your service is facing in the next 6 months?

Please select one primary and one secondary challenge

	Primary challenge	Secondary challenge
Staff stress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff sickness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shortage of staff due to child care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shortage of staff due to increased workload	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of PPE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of IT hardware e.g. laptops, smartphones	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of internet access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping people to access to basic needs and services (e.g. food, hygiene)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying or supporting people at higher risk of COVID-19	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inability to practice social distancing in current accommodation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Primary challenge

Secondary challenge

No dedicated space to self-isolate or quarantine

Access to healthcare for symptomatic individuals (including COVID-19 testing)

Access to mental health care

Access to drug and alcohol support

Accessing and storing opiate substitutes

Access to domestic abuse support and services

Accessing Housing Options support

Supporting people with hospital discharge

Supporting people with prison release

Funding shortfalls

Other services closing (e.g. food banks)

Other (please specify)



# **Appendix 2:**

# **Interview topic guide**

## **In This Together emergency grants: Large grants (up to £50k)**

This form is designed as a guide for a structured conversation with grantees.

**Introduction (read out before the start of the interview or include into the intro email)**

The effect of the COVID-19 has been significant on those supporting people who are experiencing rough sleeping and homelessness. Crisis is calling on national governments and local councils to take emergency measures to ensure people experiencing homelessness can receive the same care as other vulnerable population groups. We also want to support groups who are financially affected by additional demands on their resources and have established an emergency grant fund for this purpose.

Congratulations on receiving a grant through the In This Together grants programme.

The Crisis Best Practice Team is working with all grantees to understand how the grants have been used, what difference they have made, what has been working well with funded projects, and where there are opportunities for improvement. We are also interested to see where the outcomes already evidence what needs to change in government policy.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete our service. We would like to invite you to take part in an interview with the Best Practice team to explore the areas covered in the survey in more detail. The interview will last up to 45 minutes and will be recorded.

We will use what you tell us to identify opportunities for learning to inform practice and policy on what works to end homelessness.

The information you provide in the interview will be kept confidential and all data will be stored electronically in a password protected folder in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This will only be accessed by the Crisis Best Practice and Research & Evaluation teams. The data and the findings from the interview will not be published or used externally by Crisis independently of a final evaluation report.

If you would like more information about privacy (including how your information will be used and stored by Crisis and your rights under data protection law) please see the Crisis Research Privacy Notice (we can email or post you a copy).

### **Consent**

**Prior to the interview, please obtain the respondent's consent by asking them the following questions:**

- Do you understand the purpose of this interview?
- Do you understand that the information you provide will be used in the final evaluation report?
- Can we record this interview?
- Can we quote you in the final evaluation report?
- When quoting you, can we mention your name and organisation, or can we only quote you anonymously?

### **Impact of COVID**

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your organisation's services?

Have you made any permanent changes to your service delivery as a result of the pandemic?

If so, what have these been?

### **The grant**

Please describe the project that was funded by the ITT grant

What difference has the grant made to your service overall?

To what extent did the grant mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your service delivery?

What would have happened to your services had you not received the ITT grant from Crisis?

### **Outcomes**

**For each of the activities, which the grantee mentioned in the survey please ask the following questions (see full list below):**

#### **Activities:**

1. Provision of food and emergency supplies to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
2. Provision of IT hardware (such as phones) to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
3. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), including advocacy/casework
4. Provision of support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including counselling
5. Rehousing into temporary accommodation
6. Rehousing into permanent accommodation or preventing evictions
7. Supporting people into employment
8. Materials to protect staff/clients from COVID-19 (e.g. PPE, cleaning)
9. Other activities not listed above

#### **Questions:**

Please describe how the service/activity worked in practice?

In your opinion, what worked well?

Have there been any challenges?

If so, please describe them?

If so, what did you do to resolve these challenges?

What were the successful outcomes related to this activity?

Read out if the respondent asks to clarify the question: changes, benefits, harm reduction that have happened as a result of the project's outputs

Can you demonstrate any data that you collected to support these outcomes? (these can be sent after the interview)

**Note:** if the organisation offered support and counselling services, also ask the following questions:

Did you collect data on the service users' wellbeing?

Can you provide the data supporting improvement in the people's wellbeing following the service delivery? (these can be sent after the interview)

Could you provide the details of the scale used to measure wellbeing?

**Once you cover all activities mentioned in the survey, proceed to the following questions**

Thinking about your project overall, were there any unexpected outcomes?

Prompt: any outcomes that were in addition to your original aims, or any difficulties/challenges experienced)

If so, what were they?

Were there any negative outcomes?

**Going forward**

Do you plan to continue the current project?

If so, in what form?

Could you please describe the arrangements that you've made (incl. financial)?

Do you plan to do anything differently in the future in terms of this project or overall service delivery?

If so, what specifically?

Is there anything that you would like to add that has not been covered already?

Prompts: Anything about what difference this grant has made to your ways of working, what you have learnt from this, what you would do differently in the future...

66 Commercial Street, London E1 6LT

Tel 0300 636 1967 Fax 0300 636 2012

Email [enquiries@crisis.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@crisis.org.uk) Website [www.crisis.org.uk](http://www.crisis.org.uk)

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