



THE GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY: THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS FOR ADDITIONAL POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE MAYOR AND ASSEMBLY

Crisis Response to a consultation request from
ODPM

February 2006

CONTENTS

Consultation	3
About Crisis	4
Introduction	5
Crisis Response – Housing	6
Crisis Response – Learning & Skills	9
Crisis Response – Planning	15
Crisis Response – Public Health	17

The Greater London Authority: The Government's proposals for additional powers and responsibilities for the Mayor and Assembly

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is consulting on a set of options and proposals for granting additional powers and responsibilities to the Greater London Authority (GLA) – the Mayor of London and the London Assembly. The ODPM have looked at which powers the GLA, and in particular the Mayor, might assume and considered whether doing so would improve strategic planning and delivery in London.

Crisis' response focuses on three main areas where additional powers for the Mayor are under consultation – housing, learning and skills and planning. We have only responded to questions relevant to Crisis. We have also made additional proposals for extending powers and responsibility for the Mayor to the areas of Supporting People and Public Health.

About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for solitary homeless people.

We work year-round to help vulnerable and marginalised people get through the crisis of homelessness, fulfil their potential and transform their lives.

We develop innovative services which help homeless people rebuild their social and practical skills, join the world of work and reintegrate into society.

We enable homeless people to overcome acute problems such as addictions and mental health problems.

We run services directly or in partnership with organisations across the UK, building on their grass roots knowledge, local enthusiasm and sense of community. We also regularly commission and publish research, campaign and organise events to raise awareness about the causes and nature of homelessness, to find innovative and integrated solutions and share good practice.

Introduction – Single Homelessness

Single homeless people often have multiple needs and need the support of a range of services. They may be dealing with dependency or mental health problems, while trying to find accommodation or work and find themselves making repeated journeys through what can seem to be a maze of services. Being passed from pillar to post, or worse falling through the gaps between services, only compounds the difficulties faced by homeless people.

Trying to tackle issues in isolation is rarely effective, particularly when success in one area is easily negated by failure in another. Homelessness can never be effectively tackled until mainstream public services provide the appropriate level of support to help an individual overcome their homelessness.

Despite the welcome extra investment into mainstream public services, they continue to be delivered by a number of agencies in a disparate manner across the capital. Each agency working independent of the other, sometimes replicating work, sometimes undermining the other, often leaving gaps.

Crisis believes that public services need to compliment one another and point in the same direction to deliver joined up solutions that tackle, in a holistic way, the issues individuals face. To achieve this the different groups must be brought together under strategic leadership to ensure they deliver for those who need them most, such as the homeless. To date the Mayor has proved effective in providing such strategic leadership in London and Crisis would welcome an increase in Mayoral powers and responsibilities particularly in the crucial areas of Housing, Planning and Learning and Skills.

Crisis Response - Housing

Background

Over the last 20 years, London's population has grown from 6.8 million in 1983 to 7.3 million in 2003. By 2016 the population is predicted to grow by a further 800,000 to 8.1 million.¹ New house build declined rapidly in the early 1980's due to the decreases in building of social housing. The supply has generally speaking remained at a constant level since that time and consistently falls short of demand. Lack of supply has made London increasingly unaffordable with the greatest impact upon the unemployed and those on lowest incomes. This in turn contributes to London's very high levels of homelessness.

In 2004 there were 28,050 households accepted as statutorily homeless and in priority need by local authorities in London². At the end of September 2005 63,120 homeless households were placed in temporary accommodation by local authority housing departments in London, as follows³:

- 2,660 in bed and breakfast hostels
- 4,280 in hostels
- 9,300 Local Authority /Housing Association Stock
- 40,060 in private sector leasing schemes
- 6,820 in other forms of temporary accommodation
- A further 4,010 households were registered as being 'homeless at home'

London accounts for approximately one quarter of all statutory homeless cases across England and has the highest proportion of acceptances per 1000 households at 1.7⁴. These statistics do not include all of the London's hidden homeless population. The hidden homeless include predominantly single homeless people living, for example, in overcrowded conditions or sofa surfing. There is no statutory duty to house these people.

Q1: Should the Mayor be able to decide the allocation of the affordable housing portion of the Regional Housing Pot? If so, what would be the benefits?

1.0 Crisis supports Option B in the consultation paper, which would transfer the responsibilities of the London Housing Board to the Mayor and give him responsibility for writing the London Housing Strategy. In addition the Mayor would have powers to make decisions on the Regional Housing Pot.

1.1 Crisis believes that maximising the increase of housing supply, with a focus on affordable housing, and ensuring development of sustainable communities are vital to London. We believe bringing together housing and planning powers at regional level would create the right infrastructure to achieve both.

1.2 The London Housing Strategy has set a target of 23,000 new houses per year with an aim towards 30,000 per year⁵. The GLA's 2004 Housing Requirements study indicates that this target is too low. The study estimated that 35,400 homes a year are needed to meet the current backlog and

¹ London Housing Board (2005) *London Housing Strategy*, pg 16

² ODPM (2005) *Homelessness Statistics*

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ London Housing Board (2005) *London Housing Strategy*, pg 19

future demand. Furthermore, a study by Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research indicates that London house build targets for the period 2008-2011 require an additional 5,330 social rented units per year to meet need.⁶ There is wide acceptance of the need to maximise the increase of housing supply.

- 1.3 Crisis believes the current split structure inhibits the supply of new housing. In addition, as the Housing Strategy is not aligned with other social and economic strategies or investment, the current structure fails to ensure the development of sustainable communities.
- 1.4 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) "*Sustainable Communities Plan*" identified regional bodies as being best placed to ensure adequate supply of housing and sustainable build. The Barker Review of Housing Supply reiterated this point in recommending the merging of regional housing and planning powers to improve regional decision-making and underpin the aim of increased supply. The Chancellor announced in the 2004 budget that he accepted the Barker recommendation. The ODPM Five-Year Plan for housing "*Homes for All*" restates the priority of increasing new supply and the aim to merge regional housing and planning powers.
- 1.5 The ODPM consulted in 2004 on how best to implement the Barker recommendation. This implementation has yet to come into force. Crisis believes that in the Mayor, London has in place the necessary infrastructure and political accountability to implement the recommendation. London's housing needs are more acute than elsewhere in the country and implementation in the capital should not be delayed because of problems in other regions.
- 1.6 Crisis believes the benefits to London of joint regional control over housing and planning powers would be:
 - Improved supply of housing;
 - Improved sustainability of housing through integration of the London Housing Strategy with other key regional strategies including the Mayor's "*London Plan*" and economic development strategy "*Sustaining Success*" as well as transport and environmental strategies;
 - "*London Plan*" targets for new housing supply, including affordable and accessible, would be incorporated into all Local housing strategies.

Q2: Would there be benefits in the London Housing Strategy becoming a statutory strategy, and does having a statutory strategy raise any difficulties?

- 1.7 **Crisis believes the London Housing Strategy should be a statutory strategy to ensure general compliance between local housing strategies and the pan-London strategy. This would be a similar arrangement to planning documents.**
- 1.8 If the London Housing Strategy became statutory, Local Authorities would have to adhere to the strategy and would no longer have an effective veto. This would help bridge the present delivery gap between the London Housing Strategy and local implementation.

Q3: Should further options be explored? If so, what should these be?

- 1.9 Crisis supports the Homeless Link recommendation of a Regional Homelessness Strategy to be developed by the Mayor. Currently homelessness strategies as are developed on a borough-by-

⁶ Shelter (2005) *Building hope: The case for more homes now*, pg21

borough basis, yet homelessness is a problem that does not recognise borough boundaries. The result is disjointed service provision across London, which represents a poor use of resource and delivers poor outcomes for homeless people. A pan-London strategy with local implementation would offer a more effective and coherent solution.

- 1.10 ODPM is currently consulting separately on a strategy for the Supporting People programme. As part of its response to that consultation, Crisis will be making the point that there is a particular problem in London whereby the majority of provision for homeless people, whether accommodation-based, floating support, day centre or learning provision can only be realistically planned and funded on a cross-borough basis.
- 1.11 Whilst the majority of commissioning of services should remain at the Borough level, there also needs to be a body who can take a strategic view across London to assess what provision is actually needed, to ensure that there is the right balance between different types of provision, that services are effectively delivered, particularly cross-borough, and are linked into mainstream provision and that homeless people are treated consistently across the city.
- 1.12 Crisis would therefore argue that alongside his responsibilities for Housing and Planning and a new duty to have a Homelessness Strategy, the Mayor should have a strategic monitoring role over services for homeless people funded by the Boroughs through Supporting People and other resources and he should be able to make recommendations that are binding on the Boroughs. Boroughs should be required to ensure that the aims and objectives they set in their local housing, homelessness and Supporting People strategies are consistent with the priorities set out in the London Housing and homelessness strategies.
- 1.13 In addition to this strategic role, Crisis would argue that there are projects of national but particularly regional significance, such as our own Urban Village project, that do not fit within the current funding and organisational arrangements of the Supporting People programme. Therefore an element of Supporting People (or additional funding) should be held back under the control of the Mayor for those projects of particular significance, or that could only be funded on a cross-borough basis, or pilot projects which would never get the go-ahead if left to individual Boroughs.
- 1.14 In addition, with Urban Village and similar projects, the outcomes and invest to save cost-savings from the project will flow to a number of different policy agendas, agencies and Departments who will not necessarily be the body paying for the services under existing revenue streams - particularly Supporting People. There needs to be someone, therefore at a suitable centralized, strategic level who will be able to see the benefit of a project in the round and who will then be able to ensure other bodies, such as PCTs, drug action programmes etc. do support such projects and commit the necessary revenue funding. Such a strategic "grand commissioning" function is best undertaken at a regional level by the Mayor.

Crisis Response - Learning and Skills

Background

Research suggests that education and skill levels are generally much lower among homeless people than the rest of the population with around 50% of homeless people having no skills at all⁷. Unemployment within the homeless population has increased dramatically over the last 20 years⁹, despite the majority of homeless people wanting to work¹⁰.

At Crisis our mission is to empower people who are homeless or with a history of homelessness to transform their lives and fulfil their potential, so enabling them to permanently overcome homelessness and re-integrate fully into society. Learning and Skills are fundamental to this process and must be understood in the sense of building the individual's capacity to participate in the range of activities society offers, principally economic activity and social activity. Building capacity involves the process of both reconstructing the ability to learn and amassing skills through learning.

Learning programmes are an essential part of solving homelessness by building basic skills, confidence and self-esteem, aiding the route back into the employment market and reintegration within society. Crisis aims to re-establish each person's self worth and help them gain the confidence to rebuild their own life.

There is strong international evidence that low-skilled adults are more likely to experience unemployment, are less likely to re-enter employment sooner, are more likely to be in low-paid employment, are less likely to access services and are likely to be the least healthy in society¹¹. As such, low skills are recognized to be strongly linked to social exclusion and increased vulnerability. Developing skills offers socially excluded people more choice and leverage in their lives and can help people to access services and use them appropriately, thereby further improving their lives¹². As was evidenced by a recent international study by OECD¹³, low skills not only represent a cost to the individual, but also represent a severe cost to the nation, acting as barriers to innovation, productivity, economic growth and resilience to change.

Tackling learning and skills is not a cast-iron guarantee that a person will not cycle back into homelessness but improving skills and providing employment opportunities plays a significant part in helping homeless people get their lives back on track.

⁷ The Foyer Federation Policy Brief (2001) *Make or Break – How homeless young people struggle to fulfil their potential*, London; Anderson et al (1993) *Single Homeless People*, London – HMSO

⁸ This evidence has emerged in a number of one-off small-scale surveys however a more comprehensive skills audit of a cross-section of homeless people is necessary - Lownsborough, H (2005) *Include Me In: How life skills help homeless people back into work*. Pg18

⁹ St Mungo's survey identified that 5% of London's homeless are in some form of employment but that this proportion has decreased from 86% in 1986 – St Mungo's (2005) *'Hard Work for Homeless People'*

¹⁰ Research undertaken by OSW found that 77% of respondents wanted to work at the time of the research and 97% wanting to work in the future. Singh, P (2005) *'No Home, No Job: Moving on from transitional spaces'*, OSW.

¹¹ OECD (2005) *Learning a Living; First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*; Singh, P (2005) *'No Home, No Job: Moving on from transitional spaces'*, OSW; SEU (2004) *Breaking the Cycle: Taking Stock of Progress and priorities for the future* <http://www.socialexclusion.gov.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=262>

¹² Lownsborough, Thomas and Gillinson (2004) *Survival Skills; Using life skills to tackle social exclusion. Demos and Crisis*

¹³ OECD (2005) *Learning a Living; First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*

Q4: Do you consider that there is a case for change to current arrangements for learning and skills in London?

2.0 Crisis believes the current arrangements for learning and skills fail to reach the most disadvantaged groups, particularly the homeless. We believe there is a need for a multifaceted learning and skills programme that targets groups such as the homeless. The programme should be organised strategically on a regional level, in London by the Mayor, and be delivered by high quality local providers.

2.1 Crisis believes there is a strong case for change to current arrangements for learning and skills in London. In addition to low skills and high unemployment, homeless people can suffer from a combination of disadvantages including substance misuse, mental health problems and relationship breakdown. The 2003 White Paper '*21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential*' was bold in its commitment to ensure that unemployed and disadvantaged people have the skills they need to meet employer demand and to succeed in the modern workforce. Crisis supports this commitment of the white paper to help groups, such as homeless people, build the skills they need to meet employer demand and to succeed in the modern workforce.

2.2 However, as the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) concluded, "*More than two million of the 2.4 million people taking up courses by July 2004 undertook them in further education. 'Hard to reach' learners such as homeless people are least likely to be attracted to learning in an institution such as a college*"¹⁴.

2.3 The PAC went on to say "*There is a risk of 'mission drift' in that more than half of the qualifications in the first three years of the Skills for Life strategy were gained by 16 to 18 year olds. The Skills for Life strategy is intended to meet the needs of adults. But a large proportion of its resources are taken up by recent school leavers*"¹⁵.

2.4 Crisis believe the following structural problems undermine efforts to make the commitment set out in '*21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential*' a reality on the ground:

- Nationally prescribed targets are too rigid, causing Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) to fail to reach unemployed and disadvantaged adults;
- The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have related objectives but these have not been effectively aligned. This in turn undermines partnership working between the departments' key agencies;
- Though interrelated, DfES and DWP have not effectively aligned LSCs and Jobcentre Plus priorities with each other or with the regional economic development strategy of the LDA.

Taking each of these points in turn:

Nationally prescribed targets are too rigid, causing Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) to fail to reach unemployed and disadvantaged adults.

2.5 The 2003 '*Skills for Life*' Strategy guarantees free tuition for any adult lacking good foundation employability skills. The DfES target is to improve the basic skills of 1.5m adults by 2006 and for

¹⁴ Public Accounts Committee (2005) *Skills for Life: Improving adult literacy and numeracy*. House of Commons.

¹⁵ *ibid*

2.25m adults to have achieved qualifications by 2010. These targets provide the national framework within which all LSCs operate.

- 2.6 The LSC London region, comprising 5 local LSCs, has been successful in achieving its share of the national targets. Indeed in relation to the Skills for Life target London is the strongest performing region. The national framework, however, requires LSC delivery focused upon increasing the proportion of recent school leavers (those aged 16-18) qualified to level 2. Funding is, therefore, directed towards the 16-18 age group. This has led to a reduction in funding for post-19 learning for unemployed and disadvantaged people and a lack of funding for much needed ESOL provision. In turn this further excludes people already on the periphery of society.
- 2.7 The LSC focus is upon raising the proportion of people with basic skills and level 2 qualifications. This leaves no incentive to match training to employer demands. Unemployed and disadvantaged people are consequently left without the skills required to meet employer demand and to succeed in the modern workforce.

The DfES and the DWP have related objectives but these have not been effectively aligned. This in turn undermines partnership working between the key agencies, the LSC and Jobcentre Plus.

- 2.8 DfES aims to help people increase their skills and productivity. DWP's principal aim is to maximise the number of people, particularly the disadvantaged, who find work. The net result of this is that skills and training provision and infrastructure are split across the LSC and Jobcentre Plus.
- 2.9 The National Employment Panel Skills Advisory Board states, *"Local LSC and Jobcentre Plus district(s) are very likely to be purchasing the same service from the same college at the same time. In doing so, they will be using different contract forms, performance standards, payment and data systems. And rarely is performance information on the results of the contracted provision shared systematically by the two organisations"*¹⁶
- 2.10 Crisis recognises and welcomes the extra investment the Government has invested into improving skills and tackling worklessness. However, we believe that the complexity and duplication in the current skills and training provision and infrastructure are likely to undermine the effectiveness of this investment.
- 2.11 An example of this can be seen through the DfES *"Success for All"* strategy. Core funding was provided to support organisational development in the Learning and Skills sector. Yet only 40% of Jobcentre Plus providers are also LSC contractors¹⁷. This means that the majority of organisations providing skills and training for unemployed and disadvantaged people through Jobcentre Plus are unlikely to benefit from DfES investment to improve quality and performance.

Though interrelated, DfES and DWP have not effectively aligned LSCs and Jobcentre Plus priorities with each other or with the regional economic development strategy of the LDA.

- 2.12 Under the current arrangements the LSC performance is measured against the number of individuals who gain qualifications. As previously discussed, for unemployed and disadvantaged people qualifications do not guarantee that the training is relevant and likely to lead to

¹⁶ National Employment Panel Skills Advisory Board (2004) *Welfare to WorkForce Development*, pg 8

¹⁷ *ibid*, pg9

employment. The measure may fail to reflect the skills needed by either the individual or the employer.

- 2.13 Under current arrangements Jobcentre Plus performance is measured against job entry numbers. This does not reflect the need to help individuals stay in employment and increase productivity. In addition it fails to acknowledge distance travelled towards reintegration into society for those for whom work is not realistic.
- 2.14 The Government's skills and training strategies, efforts to tackle worklessness and London's strategy for economic growth all highlight the need to engage with disadvantaged groups. Though interrelated the strategies are not aligned and do not add value to each other. On the ground this lack of added value is represented by the fact that only 30% of jobseekers that start basic skills training receive a qualification¹⁸. Far too many disadvantaged people quit their training as soon as they find employment. This drop out rate perpetuates the effect of low skills both on the individual and the economy.
- 2.15 Evidence from the voluntary sector also suggests that current Jobcentre Plus and New Deal provision is not working for homeless people who face significant personal, structural and service design barriers to accessing and benefiting from these mainstream services¹⁹.
- 2.16 To conclude, despite the Government's intentions, unemployed and disadvantaged people such as the homeless, are not being effectively serviced by current Learning and Skills arrangements. To achieve the commitment in '*21st Century Skills: Realising Our Potential*' Crisis believes Learning and Skills arrangements must change.

Q5: Do you agree that the Mayor should have a greater say over learning and skills in London? If you do, which option (or series of options) do you favour?

- 2.17 Crisis supports Option 4 in the consultation paper, under which the five LSCs would be rationalised into one regional organisation accountable to the Mayor, on a similar basis to the arrangements for the LDA. All budgets related to learning, skills and addressing worklessness would be managed under a constant London-focussed 'brand'.**
- 2.18 Crisis believes significant benefits can be gained by aligning learning, skills and worklessness strategies with economic development at a regional level. At this level strategic leadership can be provided whilst commissioning local providers, who are close to the client group, to deliver the appropriate service for their locality.
- 2.19 Crisis believes that aligning learning, skills and worklessness strategies would be most effectively delivered through political leadership. Crisis believes these public policy interventions are crucial to the welfare of disadvantaged groups. It is important that the strategies benefit from political willpower. Strategies must also be available for scrutiny with direct political accountability. The Mayor is the strategic political lead in London, with a track record of delivery for disadvantaged groups.

¹⁸ *ibid*, pg 3

¹⁹ Randall, G. & Brown, S. (1999a) *Prevention is better than cure: new solutions to street homelessness from Crisis* London: Crisis; Randall, G. & Brown, S. (1999b) *Ending exclusion: employment and training schemes for homeless young people* York: York Publishing Services

- 2.20 Specific benefits of a regional alignment of learning, skills and worklessness strategies with economic development include:
- Funding streams would be rationalised, so reducing duplication and allowing for a proper strategic approach to developing a multi-faceted network of learning, skills and employability programmes, which meets the needs of disadvantaged groups;
 - Shared objectives between major delivery agencies would help deliver effective, integrated services with resources efficiently directed;
 - Delivery agencies working to a joint delivery plan would help improve the impact of targeted public policy interventions.
 - Delivery agencies working to a joint delivery plan would present a more coherent and attractive partner for employers;
- 2.21 Aligning DWP and DfES strategies at national level would only perpetuate national frameworks with all their existing problems. As previously discussed national targets ignore local need and do not allow for flexibility or innovation.
- 2.22 Local alignment creates artificial boundaries not recognised by employers or the labour market and form an incoherent picture across the region. This would prove difficult to navigate both for the unemployed and for employers.
- 2.23 For the reason outlined above, Crisis believes the Mayor is best placed in London to take on responsibility for learning, skills and addressing worklessness.

Q7: What would the benefits of change be to learners and/or employers? Do those benefits outweigh any risks of destabilising learning and skills provision?

- 2.24 London has the lowest employment rate in the UK, with 69% of working age adults in employment. The national average is 75%. London has the lowest proportion of the population with level 2 or 3 qualifications at 35%. 14% of London's population has no qualifications²⁰.
- 2.25 Over the period 2000 to 2012 the percentage of the workforce employed in the higher skills sector, level 4 or above, will grow from 42% to 53%²¹. 95% of all new jobs between 1999 and 2010 will be at level 2 or above²². Forecasts predict that in London this will be more acute.
- 2.26 As more employers demand a higher level of skill and greater productivity, the employability of an individual with low or no skills will fall. It will become increasingly difficult for individuals with low or no skills to break free from poverty. It will be more likely that unemployment for these individuals becomes entrenched. As earlier statistics have shown, this pattern is already true amongst homeless people.
- 2.27 For London to overcome these challenges there is a particular need for a high quality learning and skills offer that is compelling to unemployed and disadvantaged groups and increases the availability of skilled, productive candidates for employers. This is not delivered through the current system and only a radical reorganisation in policy and delivery will produce the required step-change.

²⁰ LDA (2005) *Sustaining Success*

²¹ HMT (2004) *Skills in the Global Economy*

²² *ibid*

- 2.28 The benefits of such a step-change to learners would be significant. Currently vulnerable and socially excluded people are less likely to take up learning because they feel that formal qualifications are beyond their reach²³. Learning and training activities they do take up are likely to be through voluntary sector providers who have limited access to funding²⁴.
- 2.29 The Mayor has suggested that with him having control, major delivery agents – LSC, Jobcentre Plus, LDA – would work to a common agenda to improve the employment rate, with a focus on disadvantaged groups. As a result learners would work with services, which provide learning opportunities that match their particular needs and that allow for progression through to job readiness.
- 2.30 Furthermore, a commitment to improving the employment rate for disadvantaged groups must incorporate the need for employment to be sustainable. To achieve this disadvantaged individuals need to receive all encompassing support, including a holistic assessment of the challenges they face. Research has also shown that continuing support for at least the first six months of employment is crucial to maintaining the job. Research has also shown this to be cost effective.
- 2.31 Crisis believes that in order to deliver appropriate learning for homeless people, it is essential to streamline and rationalise the current arrangements under the clear leadership of the Mayor. Any change would have to be managed effectively to ensure continuity in successful existing programmes. With regard to any potential disruption we believe this is outweighed by the benefits change would bring.

²³ Public Accounts Committee (2006) *Securing Strategic Leadership in the Learning and Skills Sector*. House of Commons pg 5

²⁴ Public Accounts Committee (2005) *Skills for Life: Improving adult literacy and numeracy*. House of Commons.

Crisis Response – Planning

Background

In 2005 Crisis lodged the planning application for our Urban Village development. Our experience with Urban Village is one example that effectively highlights the problems with the current planning system and helps to establish the case for increased Mayoral responsibility in this area.

Urban Village is a development of 373 flats on an inner London site. Approximately 100 of the flats will be sold on a shared ownership basis for key workers. The remaining 270 will be rented to a mixture of low income-workers and 135 formerly homeless people as 'permanent' homes. As well as housing, the Urban Village will also incorporate:

- A community and lifelong learning centre, open to residents and the wider community, and which will include a fitness centre, computer lab, arts centre and a range of educational classes;
- A Social Enterprise Village, open to residents and the wider community;
- A Skylight Café offering training and work to residents;
- A team of support workers who will primarily work with residents who need additional support to maintain their tenancy and integrate successfully into the surrounding community.

The development is based upon a successful housing model that has been in operation for fifteen years in a number of cities in the United States, including New York.

Urban Village contributes to a range of national and local Government priorities and targets to deal with homelessness, substance misuse, offending, mental health, poverty and inequality. In addition, Urban Village embodies many of the principles set out by the Government for services working with homeless, socially excluded and other vulnerable people, including, targeted, specialist services; mainstreaming; social inclusion; building strong communities; enabling, preventative services; holistic, integrated service delivery; combining the best features of accommodation based and non-accommodation based support.

Q8: Is there evidence from the operation or delivery of the planning system in London to justify fundamental change to the current arrangements?

3.0 Crisis supports option B) which provides some limited new Mayoral powers to direct on Local Development Schemes and Development Plan Documents, and to direct refusal or approval for more broadly defined categories of strategic planning.

3.1 Crisis believes there to be significant evidence from the operation and delivery of the planning system in London to justify change to the current arrangements.

3.2 Urban Village is a development of national significance. Although tried and tested in the United States, it offers a new model of working with socially excluded people in the UK. Urban Village brings with it a host of potential benefits across government departments.

3.3 Urban Village is also a development of regional importance, fitting closely with the Mayor's Rough Sleepers Strategy and the London Plan. The Mayor's Rough Sleepers Strategy highlights concerns around the provision of appropriate support to enable sustainable tenancies. The Mayor's strategy also acknowledges a current shortage of move-on hostel accommodation. Urban Village would provide permanent accommodation for 135 formerly homeless people and on-going support for

those who require it, so making a significant contribution towards the demand for permanent move-on and permanent supported accommodation.

- 3.4 The London Plan sets a target for additional homes of 41,280 in the Urban Village host borough for the period 1997 to 2016. 2070 homes per year. The London Plan also sets a strategic target for 50% of all new build to be affordable housing. Urban Village would significantly contribute to the affordable housing target by adding 373 units of social and shared-ownership housing in the Borough.
- 3.5 In addition to alignment with national and regional strategies, the Urban Village development has won support both from Government and from the Mayor. Despite this, the operation of the planning system in London threatens the delivery of the development. Current definitions of strategic importance are too narrow tending to ignore developments of less than 500 units. Despite Mayoral support Urban Village does not currently match the definition for strategic importance. Consequently the Mayor has no say over the approval of the development and there is no opportunity for the Mayor to support the scheme through the planning process.
- 3.6 Crisis believes, therefore, the definition of strategic importance must be broader and that they Mayor should have direct power to approve or refuse applications defined as being of strategic importance.**
- 3.7 The planning application was lodged in October 2005, but stakeholders are still uncertain of a planning committee date. With each quarter that passes the costs of the development rises by approximately 2%, or £1 million. The delays in the planning system mean the affordability of the proposed development comes under increased pressure.
- 3.8 Delays in the planning process have caused the decision date to approach the time of local elections. As a consequence the development is now vulnerable to local election politics or faces further delays, jeopardizing key funding sources and the financial viability of the development.
- 3.9 Crisis believes that the Mayor should have power to direct a local planning authority not to adopt a Local Plan if it is not in general conformity with the London Plan. This would allow coherence between local, regional and national development plans. It would, therefore, be less likely for local authorities to delay, refuse or fail to determine strategic planning applications.**

Crisis Response - Public Health

- 4.0 There is an association between poor health and other indicators of deprivation including poor housing, poor skills, and unemployment. Public health strategies to reduce health inequalities should be aligned with housing, skills and worklessness strategies. Crisis believes that the Mayor should have an explicit responsibility to reduce health inequalities across London with a clear role in the governance of London's health bodies, particularly Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs). The Mayor should be able to make recommendations to the SHAs and have the power to order a re-assessment of a particular proposal when the Mayor considers it to run contrary to Mayoral strategies.



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