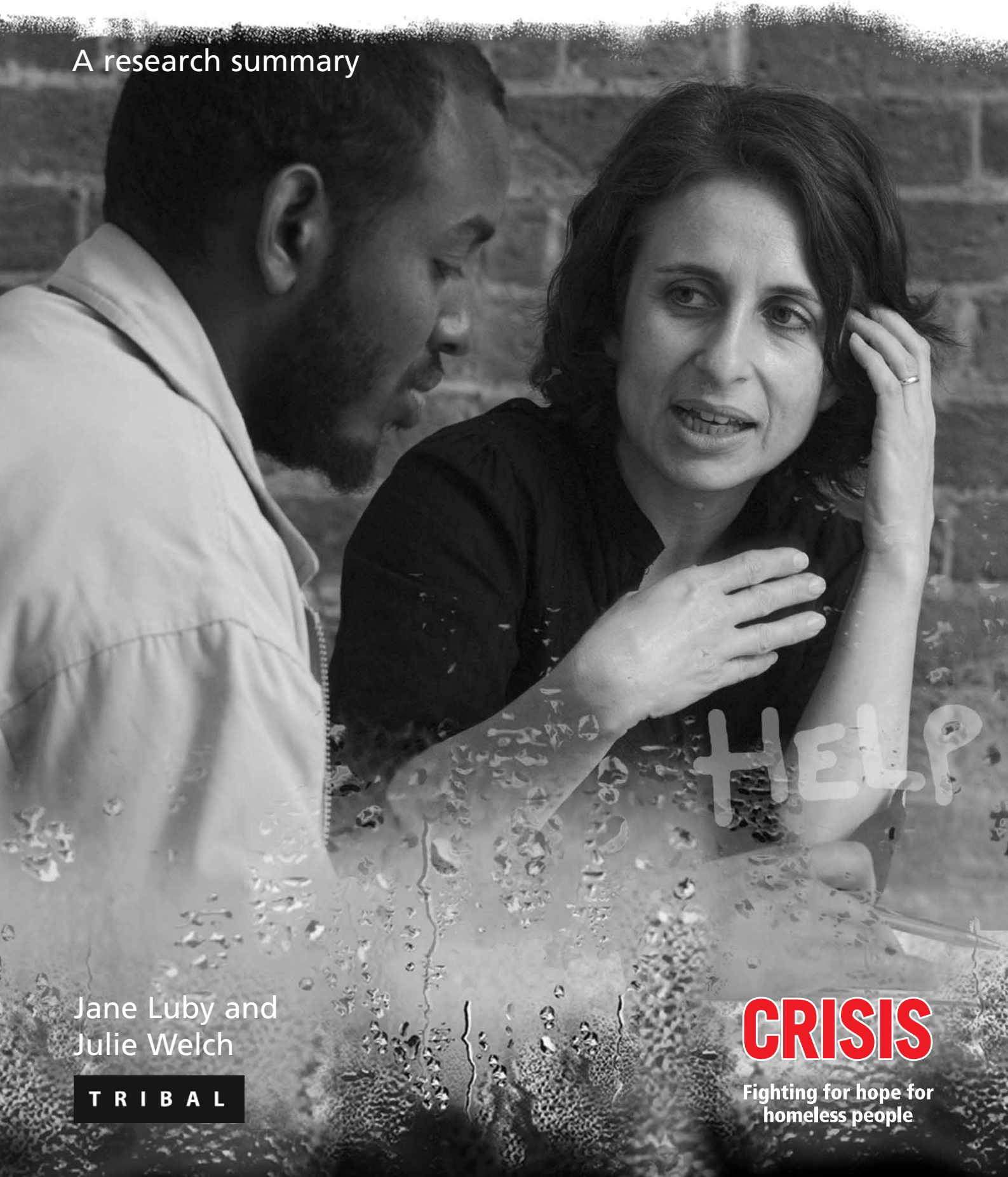


Missed opportunities:

# The case for investment in learning and skills for homeless people

A research summary



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TRIBAL

**CRISIS**

Fighting for hope for  
homeless people



The research highlights how participation in learning and skills can transform the lives of homeless people, at the same time as delivering important policy and financial benefits for a wide variety of Government policies and programmes. Despite this, it found that funding and delivery of learning and skills to homeless people is largely ad hoc and under-resourced at present. It calls upon the Government to make learning and skills a central core of its homelessness strategies and programmes and ensure the creation of effective partnerships to deliver the benefits at the national, regional and local level. This includes identifying homeless people as one of the key target groups within its Skills and Welfare to Work strategies.

*Our work at Crisis gives us first hand experience of the massive difference that learning and skills can make to the lives of homeless people. We owe it to these vulnerable learners to keep up the constant struggle for recognition, funding and results in this field. I welcome this research which confirms that it is not only homeless people who benefit from this work, but Government and taxpayers too.*

**Shaks Ghosh, Chief Executive, Crisis**

# Introduction

The value of learning and skills development to individuals and society is widely acknowledged. The intrinsic value of learning is illustrated by the extent to which individuals engage in learning for pure enjoyment, as well as to develop or improve the skills they need for work and wider life.

This research focused on the specific benefits of engagement in learning and skills activities for the 380,000<sup>1</sup> single homeless people who live in hostels, insecure housing or sleep rough on the streets, and who often have complex needs in addition to their need for a home. It explored the role of learning and skills in helping homeless people and Government to achieve sustainable solutions to homelessness, as well as benefits for a much wider range of strategies and programmes, including:

- The Skills Agenda
- Welfare to Work
- National drug and alcohol strategies
- Reducing offending
- Improving public health
- Sustainable communities.

The research involved a review of existing research literature on the benefits of learning and skills development, in-depth interviews with 21 single homeless people, a review of a wide range of Government strategies and plans, and interviews and workshops with more than 30 agencies, funders and providers of learning and skills activities for homeless people (including officials from HM Treasury, DfES, LSCs, DWP, DCLG and the Home Office).

The term 'learning and skills' was used in the research to refer to activities that enable people to develop vocational and non-vocational skills for their work and non-work lives. It includes a wide range of activities from drop-in art classes and development of the budgeting skills necessary for independent living, through to learning focused on the achievement of qualifications and improved employability. It also includes paid and non-paid opportunities for employment.

*Learning changes lives, transforms communities and can bring people from the margins to the mainstream of life. We abhor the waste of human potential that Crisis's research highlights. By targeting homeless people the Government could deliver on both its social and economic agendas. Every day that goes by without this investment delays changes in homeless people's lives and increases social exclusion and entrenchment into a homeless lifestyle.*

**Linda Siegle, Joint Chief Executive, Campaign for Learning**

# The **impact of learning and skills on homelessness**

Homeless people often have a range of needs in addition to their need for a home. These needs both contribute to and are exacerbated by homelessness. This research found evidence that learning and skills makes a positive contribution to all of these aspects of homeless people's needs. As well as increasing the skills of homeless people and improving their employability, engagement in learning and skills activities can also improve mental health<sup>2</sup> and reduce problematic substance misuse<sup>3</sup> or offending<sup>4</sup>. These benefits were supported by wider research, and powerfully illustrated during the interviews with homeless people carried out during this study.

## **Needs of homeless people**

- 2% are in full time work<sup>5</sup>
- 70% have mental health needs<sup>1</sup>
- 50-75% have a history of problematic substance misuse<sup>6</sup>
- 40% have a history of offending<sup>7</sup>
- 37% have no qualifications (compared to 10% of general population)<sup>8</sup>

The Government has accepted that tackling the multiple needs of homeless people is essential if sustainable solutions to homelessness are to be found. Despite this, levels of repeat homelessness remain unacceptably high, as shown by the next statistics.

## **Experiences of homeless people**

- Two out of every three homeless people have been homeless more than once<sup>5</sup>
- One in ten have been homeless more than 10 times<sup>5</sup>
- A quarter have been homeless for more than five years<sup>5</sup>
- Two thirds of rough sleepers have had tenancies in the past but lost them<sup>10</sup>
- Each tenancy breakdown costs housing authorities more than £2,000<sup>11</sup>

Through its Supporting People and Homelessness Prevention grant funding programmes the Government is encouraging housing authorities and homelessness agencies to develop and implement strategies for preventing homelessness. It has recently invested significant capital funding to upgrade and modernise hostels into places of change for homeless people, with the intention that 'meaningful activity' will be a key part of the services offered. Despite this however, dedicated revenue funding has not been identified to enable hostel and day centre providers to provide these services. Although Supporting People funding can pay for the development of life skills, providers reported that in practice Supporting People administering authorities are cutting funding for this aspect of their work. In one case a provider has lost two thirds of its Supporting

People for life skills training, with no obvious alternative source available.

Engagement in learning and skills development helps to bring an end to homelessness in a number of ways.

- It builds confidence and self esteem – and through these the belief that positive change is possible.
- It gives people structure, purpose and meaning in their lives – all of which are essential first steps to goal-setting and achievement.
- It equips people with the skills necessary to interact successfully both in work and non-work settings – and thereby their chances of ending their social exclusion.
- It tackles boredom and widens social networks – thereby helping individuals to leave behind negative past behaviours and peer influences.
- It improves the ability to access and make use of services – thereby increasing independence and ensuring that wider needs are more likely to be met.
- It improves employability – and thereby the chance of ending financial exclusion.

Many homeless people fear that they have neither the life skills (for instance money management, ability to deal with agencies, communication skills) nor social networks to enable them to live independently.<sup>12</sup>

During the interviews, homeless people frequently reported how engagement in learning and skills activities had helped them to restore or develop confidence and self-esteem and that this not only encouraged them to learn more, but also had a much wider impact by encouraging them to plan for a better life. This need to develop self-esteem applies to all types of homeless learners, including those who have previously had very 'successful' lives (such as 'Dave' overleaf).

*Helping someone to rebuild relationships with family or friends, stay in education or take up training and employment and deal with a drug, alcohol or mental health problem, is as much about tackling homelessness as ensuring a roof over their head*

**Louise Casey in 'More than a Roof' <sup>9</sup>**

### **Case study – Dave**

Dave became homeless when his marriage fell apart, and lived on the streets for three years. Prior to that he was a qualified engineer and owned property.

He has been attending a learning and skills centre for homeless people every day for the last two and a half years. During this time he has learnt to play the guitar and keyboard, put tracks on the internet, and has written a book for which he is currently seeking a publisher. Dave has exhibited and sold his art work at the centre. He has now set up his own company and has developed an item of new technology using his engineering skills in conjunction with a local university, and is awaiting a patent.

Dave feels very proud about what he has achieved. He finds art both therapeutic and motivating, and thinks creative activities are a form of therapy for people with complex needs who have had difficult lives. He thinks it important that learning and skills activities are developed specifically for homeless people, in a 'safe environment' that enables them to establish a routine which would otherwise be difficult to achieve whilst homeless.

The interviews with homeless people revealed the loss of dignity and self-worth that accompany homelessness, and the importance of ensuring that a flexible range of learning opportunities is offered to homeless people to give them a chance to achieve – and thereby build confidence and self-esteem – within their own individual capabilities.

Several studies<sup>13</sup> have confirmed that homeless people themselves also recognise the wide-ranging benefits that participation in learning and skills can give them. The majority of homeless people want to engage in learning and skills development, and yet only a fifth do so at present.<sup>5</sup> Only a third of agencies providing housing related support to homeless people also offer support to engage in wider activities like learning<sup>14</sup>. Research<sup>5</sup> has shown that those who have been homeless for the longest period are much less likely to engage in learning, hence the importance of ensuring that assessment of the need for learning and encouragement of its take-up is addressed at the outset of contact with the individual by homelessness agencies.

## Key findings

- Investment in learning and skills work with homeless people delivers a wide range of benefits which helps to tackle their homelessness, social exclusion and deprivation and should therefore be central to the Government's homelessness strategy.
- The Government recognises the important role that learning and skills plays in enabling lasting solutions to homelessness, yet its delivery to homeless people is ad-hoc and largely uncoordinated at present.
- Despite the role that life skills training plays in enabling homeless people to progress to more independent living, the amount of Supporting People funding being used to support its delivery is being cut by administering authorities.
- More than half of all homeless people want to engage in learning and skills development but only a fifth do at present.



# The **impact on wider Government strategies and programmes**

The multiple needs of homeless people should put them at the forefront of a number of priority agendas for Government, however this often is not the case. They also mean that single homeless people are often intensive users of public services. The annual costs to the public purse of each homeless person can be up to £50,000<sup>1</sup> per year if the costs of temporary accommodation, unemployment, the cost of health services, criminal justice costs and support are taken into account.

As this section will show, the benefits of learning and skills generally are widely accepted by Government across a number of different agendas. Our research found that investment in learning and skills for homeless people would deliver important policy and economic benefits, not only for the homelessness agenda, but also across a much wider range of Government strategies and programmes. To ensure that these benefits are delivered in practice, the targeting of funding for learning and skills development for homeless people should become a cross-cutting Government priority.

**The Skills Agenda** – The Government’s Skills for Life strategy<sup>15</sup> recognised the impact that poor literacy and numeracy have on homeless people’s ability to find a place to live and a



place to work. Employers have emphasised the importance of ‘soft skills’ for employability, such as communication skills, ability to teamwork, self-presentation. It is these same skills that enable homeless people to reintegrate successfully into society<sup>16</sup>. However feedback from funders and homelessness agencies has highlighted the much narrower range of basic skills that is generally funded by learning and skills councils, and an increasing focus on achieving the level 2 targets (equivalent to five GCSE at grades A-C) and working with those closest to achieving qualifications at that level.

Improvements in the UK’s skills base are seen to be essential to its sustainable economic growth. In the interim report<sup>17</sup> from the review

*Evidence suggests that skills gaps exacerbate social deprivation including poverty, poor health and crime.*

**Lord Leitch, ‘Skills in the UK: the long term challenge’**

of skills in the UK for Treasury, Lord Leitch recognised the wider social benefits that accrue from investment in skills. The review concluded that investment in basic skills offers similar value for money to investment in higher level skills – *even before the wider social benefits have been taken into account* – and gives greatest opportunity for reducing the gap between rich and poor. Although the report does not mention homeless people specifically, it clearly supports the view that investment in skills for homeless people can deliver wide ranging benefits, irrespective of whether a work outcome is achieved.

#### **Skills of homeless people**

- 37% have no qualifications (compared to 10% of general population)<sup>5</sup>
- 19% have difficulties reading and writing English (compared to 2-3% of general population)<sup>14</sup>
- Just over a third have qualifications at level 2<sup>5</sup> or above (compared to two thirds of general population)<sup>17</sup>

**Welfare to work** – Lack of work is both a cause and consequence of homelessness. Continued worklessness erodes skills and confidence further, and acts as a real barrier to getting and maintaining a home. Yet most homeless people have worked at some point in their lives and a high proportion want to work again. In January 2006 the Government set out its proposals for reforming the welfare benefits system<sup>18</sup>. The primary focus is to increase the

proportion of the population in work to 80 per cent, focusing particularly on people claiming incapacity benefit, lone parents and older workers. Homeless people are a key group that will be affected by the proposals as 32% claim incapacity benefit and a much higher figure are out of work.<sup>5</sup>

It is intended that the voluntary sector will play a key role in implementing the proposals from 2008 because of their knowledge of and expertise in engaging with ‘hard to reach’ groups. It will therefore be important that homelessness agencies are involved in shaping the Government’s proposals and can ensure that the approaches developed are responsive to the wider needs of homeless people and the barriers they face. This should include recognition of the need for a stepping stone approach for many people for whom work is not a realistic short term goal. It will also be important that contracting arrangements for the new programme encourage and enable the participation of homelessness agencies in its delivery.

#### **Every homeless person out of work costs:**

- £7,758 per year in welfare benefits payments<sup>20</sup>
- £1,341 per year in income tax and national insurance payments foregone (based on minimum wages)
- £12,000 per year in lost economic output<sup>1</sup>.

**National Drugs and Alcohol Strategies** – The National Treatment Agency and substance misusers themselves recognise the importance of including education, training and employment in the package of aftercare put in place following treatment. The Government invested £537m in drug treatment programmes alone in 2004/5. With each residential treatment and rehab costing in the region of £14,000 it is imperative that treatment outcomes are supported and sustained by aftercare services.

There was compelling evidence from our interviews with homeless people, as well as from other research, of the role that learning and skills can play in enabling substance misusers to develop structure, purpose and meaningful activity in their lives, and a wider social network to support their efforts to

reduce or end substance misuse. As 50-75 per cent of single homeless people are problematic drug users<sup>6</sup>, the funding of learning and skills with homeless people will have a direct impact on the achievement of sustainable treatment outcomes.

**Reducing offending** – A significant proportion of homeless people have a history of offending and/or anti-social behaviour. Offenders not engaging in education and training are three times more likely to re-offend<sup>4</sup> and investment in developing offenders' skills, particularly where this leads to sustained employment, is estimated to reduce offending by 12 per cent.

Evidence suggests that a high proportion of homeless offenders commit repeated offences receiving sentences of one year or less, with the result that they have a frequent but

#### **Case study – Scott**

Scott was a prolific offender living in a probation hostel. He was keen to get a job but suffered from very low self esteem and felt unable to 'face' potential employers in interviews. With support from a member of staff at the hostel, he agreed to get involved in a project focused on engagement in the arts as a means of improving participants' confidence and employability.

Scott was given a chance to make a film about his past life of car crime and desire to change and leave his old peers behind. Whilst working on the project, he was referred to a course that enabled him to complete his Forklift Truck qualification and was eventually able to secure a job.

Scott has now been working on a temporary basis for over 3 months and has for the first time in his life started to save, with a view to securing his own accommodation in the near future.

fragmented engagement with the criminal justice system and with the dedicated learning provision offered through the Offender Learning and Skills Service. If this group of offenders is to sustain their learning long enough for positive outcomes to be realised, then the support and involvement of homelessness agencies is crucial. Government has recognised the key role of the voluntary sector in this work through the promotion of Community Alliances and, for the National Probation Service, the 'development of long-term business alliances with other providers who bring complementary capabilities'<sup>21</sup>. Partnerships between mainstream learning providers funded to work with offenders and homelessness agencies would help to ensure engagement from this particularly hard to reach group.

#### **Offending and crime**

- 40% of single homeless people have a history of offending
- Single homeless people are 47 times more likely to be a victim of violence<sup>22</sup>
- Each reported crime costs £359 on average<sup>23</sup>
- The cost of re-offending is £126,000 on average<sup>23</sup>

**Improving public health** – Half of all hostel residents have a long standing physical illness or disability<sup>12</sup> and 70 per cent are estimated to have mental health problems<sup>1</sup>. There is widespread evidence to support the positive

impact that learning and skills has on physical and mental health<sup>24</sup>, and the Government has recognised the important role that work in particular can have on the social inclusion of people with a physical disability or mental ill health. As the research statistics below show, homeless people are intensive users of acute hospital based medical care, therefore any investment in services to end homelessness will have an impact on both health outcomes and budgets. The Government has been encouraging Primary Care Trusts to invest in learning and skills work with people with mental ill health<sup>25</sup>, however as many homeless people remain undiagnosed and/or unwilling to use 'mainstream' services, little of this targeted funding is likely to benefit homeless people directly.

#### **Homeless people are:<sup>23</sup>**

- 5 times more likely to use Accident and Emergency @ £86 per visit
- 4 times more likely to be admitted to hospital @ £2,500 per admission
- 11 times more likely to use acute mental health services @ £6,000 per serious episode

**Building stronger communities** – There is a range of evidence of the value of learning and skills work to neighbourhood renewal, social cohesion, active citizenship and social integration<sup>26</sup>. Volunteering contributes to the building of social capital both by engendering greater understanding of homeless people

within the wider community and by addressing their social exclusion. Around 13 per cent of homeless people are engaged in voluntary activity at present<sup>5</sup>, however a much greater proportion are interested in volunteering as a route to work and other benefits<sup>13</sup>. There are also economic benefits from volunteering; there is a payback of between £2 and £8 for every £1 invested in volunteering for organisations employing volunteers<sup>27</sup>, and even greater returns if the benefits to individuals and wider society are also included.



## Key findings

- Investment in learning and skills work with homeless people offers significant policy and economic benefits across a range of key strategies and programmes but which often goes unrecognised.
- The multiple needs of homeless people mean that investment in learning and skills for this group should deliver the enhanced value for money recognised in the Leitch review.
- Unless homeless people are recognised as a target group in their own right for learning and skills investment, delivery of these benefits will depend upon their willingness and ability to access services targeted at other groups or mainstream provision.
- The pivotal role that the voluntary sector can play in engaging with and delivering learning and skills to disadvantaged groups has been recognised by Government, and yet there is little evidence at present of the necessary partnerships being in place between mainstream learning providers and homelessness agencies.

# The **barriers to delivery of the benefits**

The research revealed strong evidence both of the benefits that can be gained from investment in learning and skills work with homeless people, and of homeless people's interest in engaging. These findings are inconsistent with the finding that only a fifth of homeless people are currently engaged in learning and skills activities and begs the question 'Why?'.

The research found a number of barriers preventing greater engagement by homeless people in learning and skills, some of which are personal to homeless people but others are attributable to current service delivery and funding arrangements.

## **Personal barriers**

There are significant barriers that can prevent homeless people becoming engaged with or sustaining learning and skills development<sup>13</sup>.

Overcoming these barriers to learning is critical to the achievement of the benefits described above, and can be done if the right mix of services and funding is in place. There is recognition that successful engagement of homeless people and other excluded groups requires the development of flexible models of learning<sup>28</sup>. This includes offering a wide range of learning opportunities that build on people's interests and capabilities and which take account of their wider needs. Despite this, homelessness agencies report that it is their

delivery of 'first rung' learning opportunities and engagement work that is most difficult to fund.

### **Personal barriers to learning:**

- Anxiety arising from poor self-esteem
- Negative attitudes built up due to past experiences of learning and education
- Fears about ability to interact with other learners
- Feeling ashamed due to poor basic skills
- Problems concentrating and committing to regular learning due to wider needs
- Lack of peer support
- Lack of knowledge of the opportunities available
- A belief that there is no financial benefit to engage in work-focused activities due to the high rents charged in hostels and benefits tapers

The role of the voluntary sector in encouraging and supporting engagement has been widely recognised<sup>29</sup>. The Public Accounts Committee<sup>30</sup> noted that 'hard to reach' learners such as homeless people are least likely to be attracted to learning in an institution such as a college, and are much more likely to agree to being helped through voluntary or community groups they already know. However the feedback from both funders and homelessness agencies was that dedicated funding for learning and skills work with homeless people is decreasing. We

also found little evidence of widespread partnership working between 'mainstream' learning providers and homelessness agencies.

### **Structural and service barriers**

Homeless people report much higher rates of satisfaction with the flexible range of learning and skills opportunities delivered by the voluntary sector than the more standardised learning opportunities delivered through New Deal or Jobcentre Plus<sup>5</sup>. Their perception is that mainstream providers are, generally, insensitive to their needs, and they reported the pivotal role that homelessness agency staff can play in encouraging and supporting take up of learning and skills opportunities.

As noted above, only a third of homelessness services offer support for participation, and feedback from homeless people has revealed that some actively or passively discourage it<sup>13</sup>. Funders and mainstream learning providers reported problems in developing partnerships with some homelessness agencies due to high staff turnover, lack of interest amongst frontline staff and, in some cases a lack of professionalism. The ability of homelessness agency staff to support the development needs of homeless people has been the subject of a recent Homelessness Sector Pilot funded by the Learning and Skills Council. To ensure its success, funding must be identified for its wider implementation.

On the other hand, some mainstream learning providers have been shown to be reluctant to work with disadvantaged groups who are least likely to achieve the qualifications and work outcomes required by their funders<sup>31</sup>. Given the reported trend towards large scale contracts, which are more likely to be won by mainstream providers, it is important that the responsiveness of mainstream services to homeless people's needs is improved.

Participation in work-focused learning in particular can be affected by the high costs of rents and services in hostels, and the benefits tapers that apply once people begin to work. A number of pilot schemes are now attempting to address this by ensuring access to affordable accommodation for those homeless people who are engaging in learning and skills activities.

### **Funding barriers**

Homelessness agencies use a range of sources to fund their learning and skills work with homeless people including Supporting People funding, Homelessness grants, Learning and Skills Council funding, Job Centre Plus funding, European Social Fund funding, Invest to Save funding and charitable funding. Most of this funding is either being cut at present or is linked to pilot initiatives rather than part of mainstream programmes, leaving providers to assemble a patchwork of funding. One homelessness agency reported having 15

different funders, and said that the staff time required to respond to the different reporting requirements of each funder takes up more than a third of its total learning and skills budget.

Despite the apparent priority given by Government to the engagement of disadvantaged learners, the reality reported by both funders and homelessness agencies is that funding for this purpose is being reduced in favour of other skills priorities, such as investment in accredited learning at level 2 (equivalent to five GCSE passes at A-C). The 'work first' approach of most Jobcentre Plus programmes and singular focus on work outcomes was reported to be counterproductive to the development of a wide range of benefits with homeless people. Several homelessness agencies reported that they will no longer be seeking funding from Jobcentre Plus or Learning and Skills Councils as most of their homeless clients are unable to meet the increasingly inappropriate outcome targets. The requirement to meet these targets was reported to be creating perverse incentives for providers to hold onto learners rather than refer them to more appropriate learning opportunities, and to compete with, rather than collaborate with, other providers.

Despite the wide range of benefits that can be delivered from investment in learning and skills work with homeless people, funders continue to focus on the outcomes relevant to their own

particular areas of policy and not those that deliver cross-cutting benefits. Several funders suggested that more funding would be available if outcome measures were in place to evidence these wider outcomes. However until this is addressed, it is clear that the true value of learning and skills for homeless people will go unrecognised and services will struggle to be regarded as value for money.

## **Key findings**

- The voluntary sector can play a pivotal role in engaging with and delivering first rung learning for homeless people, however stable funding and partnerships to support this role are largely not in place.
- Government departments and agencies inevitably focus investment in those areas most likely to produce outcomes against their own individual targets and, as mainstream budgets are cut, investment in services delivering against cross cutting agendas is being reduced as a result.
- Until suitable measures of wider outcomes and distance travelled are further developed and more widely recognised, providers of learning and skills work with homeless people will struggle to demonstrate value for money in ways accepted and recognised by funders.
- Current contracting arrangements hamper rather than support joint working and create perverse incentives for learning providers.

# Conclusions and recommendations

Homeless people are one of the most disadvantaged groups in society, with a wide range of multiple needs. Investment in learning and skills work with homeless people clearly delivers a wide range of benefits for homeless people and for Government strategies and programmes. This investment would not only bring about improvements in the quality of life and welfare of individuals, but also policy and economic benefits for government and wider society.

The case of 'Andrew' below illustrates both the impact on his life as an individual and how this can deliver significant savings for the public purse. The average annual cost of learning and skills work for homeless people at the centre that Andrew attends is £206 per learner. This investment is negligible compared to the costs associated with Andrew's homelessness, and demonstrates a clear 'invest to save' case for the funding of learning and skills work with homeless people.

## Case Study – Andrew

Andrew has been drinking for 20 years and has a long history of drunk and disorderly charges, with many nights in custody. He has been through alcohol detox seven times. Before engaging in learning and skills work, Andrew spent much of his day drinking on the streets. He was evicted from his hostel for drinking and ended up living on the streets for seven or eight months.

During his time on the streets Andrew started coming to learning and skills sessions at a local drop-in for homeless people. It was the music workshops that drew him in, as he really enjoys music. He has kept coming because it has helped to keep his mind active and because "staff here treat you like people and make you feel welcome".

Andrew hasn't been arrested for nearly a year and has been sober for over five months. "This is down to coming here and keeping my mind busy". He has taken a number of courses and is using his new skills to help to run an art class for people with learning disabilities as a volunteer. "I love working with people with learning disabilities – it's good to see them achieve something".

Andrew has learnt to cook and gained a qualification in food hygiene. He enjoys learning and says that this makes him feel better about himself. He also hopes that learning to cook will help him once he gets a place of his own. In the future Andrew plans to go to mainstream college and is starting to take part in activities away from the drop in centre to help with progression towards this.

### Illustrative costs and potential savings:

|   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| • Average costs of alcohol treatment  | £175 x 7 = £1,225 <sup>32</sup> |
| • Costs of police custody   | £363 per night <sup>33</sup>    |
| • Costs of an anti-social behaviour incident  | £204 <sup>34</sup>              |
| • Costs of each tenancy failure   | £2,000                          |
| • Costs of support whilst homeless  | £7,722 <sup>20</sup>            |
| • Welfare benefits (housing benefit and JSA) whilst living in hostel                                      | £7,758 per year                 |
| • Tax and NI paid if in work at minimum wage  | £1,341 <sup>20</sup>            |
| • Lost economic output whilst economically inactive   | £230 per week                   |
| • Annual benefit to society of voluntary input of 7 hours work per week<br>(based on minimum wage levels) | £1,838                          |

Andrew's case illustrates the importance of a wide range of engagement activities that can help to draw even the most disadvantaged people into learning and skills development and which can provide stepping stones to more formalised learning opportunities and work. As in Andrew's case, these activities can help to build up the individual's self-esteem and social skills to the extent that they feel able to participate in 'mainstream' learning opportunities.

Despite the clear and wide-ranging benefits that can be delivered through investment in learning and skills work with people like Andrew, perversely it is this group of particularly 'hard to reach' homeless people that is least likely to be targeted by mainstream funders and learning providers. Government should now put in place arrangements to ensure that homeless people are targeted as a

specific group for learning and skills development. It should ensure that the necessary partnerships and funding arrangements are put in place at the national, regional and local level to bring together all relevant agencies in a co-ordinated approach that delivers the benefits outlined in this research.

Our proposals for maximising the benefits for homeless people and Government, and for addressing the weaknesses in current funding and service delivery arrangements identified during the research are as follows.

**Proposal One** – The Government should develop a new national strategy focused on reducing the social exclusion of homeless people which has learning and skills at its heart. The strategy should contain ambitious targets to increase the engagement of

homeless people in learning and skills or work, which are shared across all relevant government departments and supported through identified funding streams. The strategy should explicitly address how the delivery of learning and skills will be funded from current and new funding sources including: Learning and Skills Councils, Jobcentre Plus, Supporting People and Homelessness programmes.

**Proposal Two** – Other national strategies – for instance the national strategies for Supporting People, Drugs and Alcohol, Skills and Welfare to Work – should contain specific links to the new national strategy for homeless people and set out how the needs of homeless people will be met through their respective plans and programmes.

**Proposal Three** – New partnerships should be established at the national, regional and local level to deliver the national strategy and focus on the low skills and worklessness of homeless people. Local partnerships should be led by local, city-wide or regional government and be supported by a new Local Partnership Fund from central government, access to which requires involvement from all key stakeholders including Learning and Skills Councils, Jobcentre Plus, homelessness agencies, health and social care agencies, further education colleges and learning providers, housing providers and the business sector.



**Proposal Four** – The Government should resource the development of outcome measures for incorporation into funding contracts which avoid perverse incentives and enable providers to evidence the wide ranging positive benefits of learning and skills.

**Proposal Five** – Homelessness agencies should be supported to develop a much stronger and properly resourced role for engaging and supporting homeless people in learning and skills activities, which includes appropriate training for staff to meet the development needs of homeless people. This should include ensuring appropriate training for staff and ensuring that the outputs from the Homelessness Sector pilot are resourced and implemented across the sector.

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## TRIBAL

### **About Tribal**

Tribal is one of the largest consultancy companies operating in the public, voluntary and private sectors with expertise across housing and regeneration; homelessness; health and social care and education. Our clients include a number of government departments (including the Cabinet Office, DfES, DCLG, DoH, and Home Office) as well as independent and voluntary sector organisations. Jane Luby is a Director of Consulting in Tribal's social care team, specialising in consultancy services to commissioners and providers of services to vulnerable and socially excluded people. Julie Welch is a Business Development Manager in Tribal's Education team specialising in strategies for delivering Skills for Life and engagement of hard to reach learners.

## CRISIS

### **About Crisis**

Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people. We have a vision of social integration and work year-round to help vulnerable and marginalised people get through the crisis of homelessness, fulfill their potential and transform their lives. We develop innovative services which enable homeless people to progress through education and creativity and we campaign for a more inclusive society. 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 and organise events to raise awareness about the causes and nature of homelessness, to find innovative and integrated solutions and share good practice.

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