



BETTER SERVICES FOR LONDONERS

Future commissioning priorities of the ALG's
Grant Scheme

March 2006

Better Services for Londoners – Future Commissioning Priorities of the ALG’s Grant Scheme

On behalf of London’s 33 Councils, the Association of London Government (ALG) distributes some £28 million to over 400 voluntary groups each year. From 2007-08 the way this money is distributed will change. Instead of groups bidding for funding, the ALG will commission voluntary organisations to deliver services. Prior to implementing this change the ALG wishes to agree and set out its commissioning priorities. The funding priorities must support the three funding themes of the ALG’s grant scheme:

1. Increase access to London’s opportunities;
2. Reduce social exclusion, poverty and disadvantage;
3. Promote equality and reduce discrimination.

The consultation paper seeks to gather the views of key stakeholders about the future commissioning priorities of the ALG’s grant scheme. Crisis is pleased to respond to this consultation.

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 that help homeless people rebuild their social and practical skills, join the world of work and reintegrate into 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, campaign and organise events to raise awareness about the causes and nature of homelessness, to find innovative and integrated solutions and share good practice.

Crisis Response

1.0 Crisis believes the future commissioning of the ALG grants scheme should prioritise funding towards London's single homeless population. The grants scheme should commission housing and non-housing initiatives for the single homeless population which deliver any of the following:

- **Cross-borough solutions, which do not fit into funding silos;**
- **Engagement, education and employment opportunities;**
- **Access to mainstream services.**

The Case for the Single Homeless

- 1.1 In 2005 22,700 households were accepted in London by their local authorities as being homeless and in priority need¹. These figures only tell part of the story. In addition to those who are recorded as homeless by local authorities there are others whose homelessness is unaccounted for. The vast majority are single people without dependent children living in hostels, bed and breakfast accommodation, squats and derelict buildings and sleeping on the floors of friends and family. Research suggests that there may be as many as 150,000 single homeless people in London of which only around 11,000 are recorded in statutory acceptance figures.
- 1.2 Homelessness can devastate an individual. Those affected are amongst the most vulnerable people in our society - homeless as a result of unemployment, relationship breakdown, mental ill health, substance abuse or any combination of these disadvantages. Homelessness only works to compound their vulnerability. Evidence shows that disadvantages cluster. So one disadvantage makes people more likely to suffer from others².
- 1.3 Despite this there is no statutory duty to help the vast majority of single homeless people. Legislation and procedure for dealing with homelessness was set out in the *Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977*, with operational legislation established in the *Housing Act 1996* and modified in the *Homelessness Act 2002*. This legislation places duties upon local authorities to assist households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and are deemed in priority need as defined by the act, provided they have not become homeless intentionally and have a connection to the local authority area. Those people who do not fall within these priority categories have no statutory right to housing. They are essentially single people, or couples without children.
- 1.4 Support for single homeless people is reliant upon Supporting People. Though welcome, this scheme suffers from serious administrative difficulties and delivers fragmented services. Furthermore, Supporting People is currently under threat of reduced budgets and the removal of ring fencing. Either of which would only serve to reduce support available for single homeless people.
- 1.5 Crisis believes that London's single homeless population is an extremely vulnerable group that is not adequately catered for. Crisis welcomes the ALGs current financial contribution towards the single homeless. Crisis urge the ALG to further their current support of single homeless people by explicitly prioritising services for single homeless people. We believe that the ALG is well placed to

¹ ODPM (2006) *"Quarterly statutory homelessness statistical release"*

² Social Exclusion Unit (2005) *"Transitions: Young adults with complex needs"*, pg 27

commission initiatives that provide both housing and non-housing related support, which can significantly improve the life chances of the single homeless population.

1.6 Crisis recommends the ALG prioritise funding of the grants scheme towards commissioning initiatives for London's single homeless population.

Initiatives for single homeless people that deliver cross-borough solutions, which do not fit into funding silos

1.7 Single homelessness is not restricted to any single borough. It is a pan-London problem. Homeless people are a geographically mobile group of people and by nature their support needs are fluctuating and complex. Homelessness strategies are, however, delivered on a borough-by-borough basis. This means that funding is rarely available for initiatives that offer cross-borough solutions.

1.8 For example the Mayor's Rough Sleepers Strategy highlights concerns around the provision of appropriate support across London to enable sustainable tenancies³. Research conducted on behalf of the Mayor also acknowledges a shortage of move-on hostel accommodation⁴. This is further supported by the report 'No room to move', which indicates that 46% of London's hostel dwellers are ready move out but have nowhere to move to⁵. The Move-on Alternatives Plan suggests the figure is nearer two-thirds for north London⁶.

1.9 A further report identifies the following gaps, which are consistent across London boroughs⁷:

- Shortages of appropriate accommodation and support for people with complex/multiple needs – including people with a forensic history;
- Shortages of medium to high 'step down' support services for people with mental health problems in residential care;
- Shortages of 'clean' accommodation for people leaving residential or prison treatment/rehab;
- Shortage of self-contained accommodation with onsite support;
- A concern that hostels are unable to cater for specialist needs adequately and that specialist provision is required for those with mental health needs, substance misuse problems.
- General and large scale shortages of move-on accommodation

1.10 Despite this, an initiative such as the Crisis Urban Village, which offers permanent accommodation with on-going support for people with a history of homelessness and complex needs, has no appropriate pot of money for which it can apply.

1.11 A further example is of rent deposit schemes, which are supported in principle by both the ODPM⁸ and the ALG⁹. The ALG's report "Prevention Works" accurately reflects the key issues surrounding the rollout of rent deposit schemes, including the lack of a dedicated pot of money available to run

³ GLA (2001) "From streets to stability – The Mayor's Rough Sleepers Strategy"

⁴ Resource Information Service (2003) "Silting up? Survey of London hostels about move-on accommodation and support"

⁵ Homeless Link (2004) "No Room to Move"

⁶ Move-on Alternatives Project (2005) "Breaking down the Barriers"

⁷ Tribal (2005) "Analysis of business case for Urban Village" pg 23

⁸ ODPM (2003) "More than a Roof: A report into tackling homelessness"

⁹ ALG (2005) "Prevention Works"

this initiative across London. As a result local authorities and voluntary organisations such as Crisis deliver initiatives, which are widely accepted as effective, on a small-scale and ad-hoc basis. Crisis believes the ALG should commission a pan-London rent deposit scheme.

- 1.12 **Crisis recommends that through the grants scheme the ALG commission initiatives for single homeless people that deliver cross-borough solutions, which do not fit into funding silos.**

Initiatives that deliver engagement, education and employment opportunities

- 1.13 People who become homeless have generally received less education than non-homeless people of the same age¹⁰. Around three quarters of homeless people do not possess five good GCSEs¹¹ and half of all homeless people possess no qualifications at all.¹² Unemployment within the homeless population is staggeringly high¹³, despite the majority of homeless people wanting to work¹⁴.
- 1.14 There is strong international evidence that low-skilled adults are more likely to experience unemployment and are more likely to remain unemployed for a longer period of time. Employment found is likely to be low-paid and insecure. Low-skilled adults are less likely to access services and are likely to be the least healthy in society¹⁵. As such, low skills are recognized to be strongly linked to social exclusion and increased vulnerability.
- 1.15 Engagement, education and employment opportunities - if provided in the right way and in an appropriate environment - can increase self-esteem and confidence, build social skills, unlock previously acquired skills which have been eroded during homelessness, raise aspirations, and increase the likelihood of (re)entering and remaining in employment. It is therefore an essential part of the jigsaw if we are to break the cycle of homelessness and achieve social and economic inclusion.
- 1.16 Engagement, education and employment opportunities cannot offer a cast iron guarantee that an individual will escape homelessness permanently. The skills developed through these opportunities, however, do offer people more choice and leverage in their lives, can help people to access services and use them appropriately¹⁶ and can increase the likelihood of finding and retaining employment.

¹⁰ Warnes A et al (2003) *'Homelessness Factfile'* Crisis

¹¹ Crisis (2004) *"17 Solutions"*

¹² 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 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

¹³ 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'*

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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>

¹⁶ Lownsborough, Thomas and Gillinson (2004) *Survival Skills; Using life skills to tackle social exclusion*. Demos and Crisis

- 1.17 However, as the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report on adult learning recently concluded, *"More than two million of the 2.4 million people taking up courses [across the UK] 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"*¹⁷. The PAC went on to say *"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"*¹⁸.
- 1.18 There is significant need for greater provision of engagement, education and employment opportunities across London. The Learning and Skills Council is currently not meeting that need.
- 1.19 **Crisis recommends the ALG grants scheme commission initiatives that deliver engagement, education and employment opportunities for London's single homeless population.**

Initiatives that improve access to mainstream services for homeless people

- 1.20 Single homeless people often have a range of complex needs. For example, between 30% and 50% of single homeless people suffer from mental health problems¹⁹, 81% have experienced problems with alcohol or drugs²⁰, 95% are unemployed²¹ and homeless people are 13 times more likely to have experienced violence than the general public²².
- 1.21 At any one point in time a homeless person can be involved with, amongst others, housing services, the police, Jobcentre Plus, substance misuse services, health services and voluntary services. Dozens of agencies, each working independently of the other and rarely delivering a positive net result. Though acutely vulnerable, homeless people tend to receive a fragmented response from a range of services, or no response at all, simply because complex needs make them difficult to deal with.
- 1.22 Research has shown that there is a no parity of access to mainstream services for homeless people. Accessing appropriate services depends on who you are and where you live²³. Bureaucracy, inflexible services and lack of co-ordination help prevent homeless people accessing services²⁴. There is no duty for mainstream providers to seek out homeless people instead only supporting those who present. Consequently homeless people slip through the net and the barriers they face

¹⁷ Public Accounts Committee (2005) *Skills for Life: Improving adult literacy and numeracy*. House of Commons.

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ Warnes, A et al (2003) *"Homelessness Factfile"* Crisis

²⁰ Fountain, J & Howes, S (2002) *"Home and Dry?: Homelessness and substance use"* Crisis

²¹ Singh, P (2005) *"No Home, No Job: Moving on from transitional spaces"*, OSW.

²² Newburn, T & Rock, P (2005) *"Living in Fear: Violence and Victimisation in the Lives of Single Homeless People"*, Crisis

²³ CESI (2006) *"A literature review on access to mainstream public services for homeless people"* Crisis

²⁴ National Audit Office (2005) *"More than a Roof: Progress in tackling homelessness"*, Audit Commission (2003) *"Homelessness: Responding to the new agenda"*

remain hidden²⁵. When they do present, public services are faced with the challenge of providing the right information in the right ways and through staff equipped with the right skills²⁶.

- 1.23 Crisis recently published the report *'From the margins to the mainstream: A new model for public services'*. The report outlines the need for specialist support to help homeless people access mainstream services and ensure mainstream services deliver for homeless people. The report calls specifically for a Service Navigator to manage the delivery of a multi-agency response for the most vulnerable individuals.
- 1.24 As the ALG report *'Prevention Works'* states *"Successful prevention schemes are multi-disciplinary because homelessness is caused by a multitude of factors which cannot be addressed by local authority homeless persons units alone."*²⁷ Crisis believes the ALG is well placed to commission the Service Navigator model as a pilot project in a specific area and on a pan-London basis. In addition the ALG is well placed to commission pilot projects that improve training for professionals and provides holistic assessments of an individuals needs.
- 1.25 **Crisis recommends the ALG grants scheme commission initiatives that improve access to mainstream services for London's single homeless population.**

²⁵ Crane, M. and Warnes, A. (2001) 'The responsibility to care for single homeless people' in *Health and Social Care in the Community* 9: 6, pp.436-444; Park, G. (2002) *Someone and Anyone: Assessment in voluntary sector services for homeless people in London*, Homeless Link and King's Fund; Rankin, J. and S. Regan (2004) *Meeting Complex Need: The Future of Social Care*, Turning Point and IPPR

²⁶ SEU (2005) *"Improving Services Improving Lives: Evidence and Key Themes"*

²⁷ ALG (2005) *"Prevention Works"*



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