

Together  
we will end  
homelessness

# Employment Pathways at Crisis Skylight Coventry & Warwickshire

Independent evaluation report prepared by the  
Dartington Service Design Lab

March 2015 – February 2018



DARTINGTON  
SERVICE  
DESIGN LAB



# Who is Crisis?

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. Crisis is dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life-changing services and campaigning for change.

Crisis offers education, employment, housing, arts and wellbeing services to address individual needs and help homeless people to transform their lives. Demonstrating tangible results and continual improvement is central to the Crisis model.

They are determined campaigners, working to prevent people from becoming homeless and advocating solutions informed by research and direct experience.



“The main thing I think Crisis did for me was change my way of thinking, because I was so negative. It was kind of set in my mind that I just always believed something negative was round the corner. Even if I was having a good day, I knew tomorrow, or the next day, or the next day, something bad was gonna happen. It was inevitable; bad things always happen. [After Crisis] I feel like a brand new person, and my outlook on life is completely changed, and that’s had a ripple effect on my family and my friends and my kids and my home life and me. I’m just a happy person these days and I ended up getting a job.”

Former Crisis member

# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	5
<b>Setting the scene</b>	7
<b>The method</b>	9
<b>Understanding the project</b>	10
<b>Demographics</b>	12
<b>Impact on members</b>	14
<b>Reflections</b>	16
<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	28
Appendix 1. List of partnership organisations	32
Appendix 2. Activities and roles funded by the Big Lottery Fund as part of the <i>Employment Pathways</i> project	33
Appendix 3. Data tables	34

# Executive summary

This evaluation report contains data findings and lessons emerging from the three-year *Employment Pathways* project, delivered by the Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire team and part-funded by the Big Lottery Fund. It offers a series of reflections and recommendations for the service to consider in the future.

## Reflections

**Reflection 1.** The *Employment Pathways* project has exceeded its targets by supporting more members into volunteering and employment than anticipated. The team has also supported more members than expected in gaining at least one new qualification.

**Reflection 2.** Members involved in the *Employment Pathways* project report very high satisfaction with the activities and courses run by the Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire team.

**Reflection 3.** Crisis has developed strong and trusting partnerships with local employers across Coventry and Warwickshire, which have been vital in supporting members' progress into employment.

**Reflection 4.** Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire staff are innovators who think creatively to address individual and system-level barriers facing Crisis members.

**Reflection 5.** Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire works continuously to develop relationships across a range of homelessness organisations in the local area, which helps to effectively reach some of the most vulnerable in society.

**Reflection 6.** There is evidence of good joint working within the Skylight to help ensure Crisis members are provided with the right support, at the right time.

**Reflection 7.** The 1:1 support provided by Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire is holistic and person-centred.

**Reflection 8.** Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire is working towards more effectively preventing members becoming dependent on the Crisis service.

**Reflection 9.** Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire has intervened when other services have failed to effectively meet members' multiple and complex

needs, or when services have been withdrawn (for a range of reasons).

**Reflection 10.** Members are valued and involved in the design of services provided by Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire.

#### Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** Develop and implement a more clearly defined exit strategy to reduce the risk of member dependency on the service.

**Recommendation 2.** Explore the feasibility of creating a specific role for 'employer engagement' to help create more direct pathways for members into employment.

**Recommendation 3.** Provide enhanced training for staff working with members who have learning difficulties and other cognitive impairments.

**Recommendation 4.** Effectively roll out reflective practice within Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire.

**Recommendation 5.** Gather insight about the range of recruitment strategies trialled by Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire.

# Setting the scene

Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire provides support to homeless people and those in vulnerable housing situations.

The Crisis team works with some of the most vulnerable members of society who are facing multiple challenges (e.g. struggles with mental health difficulties, low income, debt and with drug and alcohol addiction). Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire operates a hybrid model: working with members on-site in its offices, while also delivering a range of classes and support in the community (e.g. weekly drop-ins at partnership organisations and learning/educational classes within hostels). A list of partners can be found in Appendix 1.

The *Employment Pathways* project was delivered by Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire over a three-year period between March 2015 and February 2018. The project sought to support homeless people and those in vulnerable housing situations by helping members to improve their employability, social relationships and financial independence. As part of the *Employment Pathways* project, the Crisis team provided a combination of support that focused on learning activities (e.g. classes/workshops) and 1:1 Crisis coaching.<sup>1</sup>

The Crisis Coventry and Warwickshire team aimed to provide service users (members) with a holistic package of support to help them overcome barriers that prevent them from moving towards employment and accessing job-seeking services. The *Employment Pathways* project sits within a wider portfolio of support delivered by the Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire team that includes personal development, 1:1 coaching, education and training, and peer-mentoring, along with housing and benefit support/guidance.

The *Employment Pathways* project sought to empower Crisis members and improve their employability, social relationships and financial independence by:

- Increasing their confidence, self-esteem and motivation to pursue employment goals;
- Providing support and guidance while members complete accredited, industry-standard qualifications that will increase their likelihood of employment;
- Facilitating volunteering opportunities/placements and;

<sup>1</sup> A breakdown of funded activities can be found in Appendix 2.



# The method

The report blends both quantitative data and qualitative insights to provide: a picture of the *Employment Pathways* project; the extent to which outcomes have been achieved and; recommendations for future consideration.

## Quantitative data

Quantitative data in this report come from the member data system currently used across Crisis. It covers reach, member engagement, and intermediate and long-term outcomes such as qualifications gained, increased confidence and moving into employment. The Crisis team provided the Dartington Service Design Lab with data guidance and support. The Lab analysed the data. Data are for the whole evaluation period which runs from 1 March 2015 to 31 January 2018.

## Qualitative insights

Qualitative insights have been gained over several months with staff and members. First, a series of site visits and conversations with staff took place across the Crisis Skylight teams relating to the collection, reporting and use of Crisis data (e.g. reach, engagement etc.). Second, a condensed series of individual conversations were arranged with staff and members of Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire. These semi-structured interviews were focused upon exploring reflections and any emergent recommendations relevant to the *Employment Pathways*

project, part-funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This included four staff interviews with the Progression Manager, a Progression Coach, the Work and Learning Coach and the Functional Skills Coordinator. Seven members were also interviewed about their experiences of working with Crisis. Ethical approval for interviews was obtained from the Centre for Social Policy and adhered to Crisis safeguarding policies. These conversations and interviews have informed much of the Lab's thinking and are woven into the report. Insights from staff and member reflections are highlighted throughout the text.

- Improving the quality of relationships and trust in others.<sup>2</sup>

The Dartington Service Design Lab (or the Lab) were commissioned by Crisis on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund to produce this evaluation of the *Employment Pathways* project. There are three main goals of the evaluation:

- Map the nature of support provided by the *Employment Pathways* project;
- Determine the project's impact on members, and the extent to which specified outcomes have been achieved, and;
- Highlight recommendations for learning and further development of the Crisis Skylight services in Coventry and Warwickshire.

The *Employment Pathways* project is funded through the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme.

The aims of the programme closely reflect the strategic goals of the Big Lottery Fund, which are to improve the lives of people in communities who are most in need in the UK. Reaching Communities is focussed on people who face multiple barriers to social integration in the sense that they are excluded from normal social interaction with neighbours and the wider community, lack social supports and may also need help to live independently and to access education, training and paid work.

In addition, the Reaching Communities programme seeks to support those people who have become 'hard to reach' because they are isolated from the community due to lack of self-confidence or unmet support needs. The *Employment Pathways* project was designed specifically to meet the programme's goals.

<sup>2</sup> **Please note:** 'quality of relationships' and 'trust in others' is collected via self-report member feedback forms. Members are asked to rate on a scale whether 'My relationships with other people have improved', or 'My trust in others has improved'. The questions do not provide specification as to whether this refers to changes in member trust with Crisis staff members, friends/family, or with other institutions/organisations outside of Crisis. Feedback forms would benefit from further refinement.

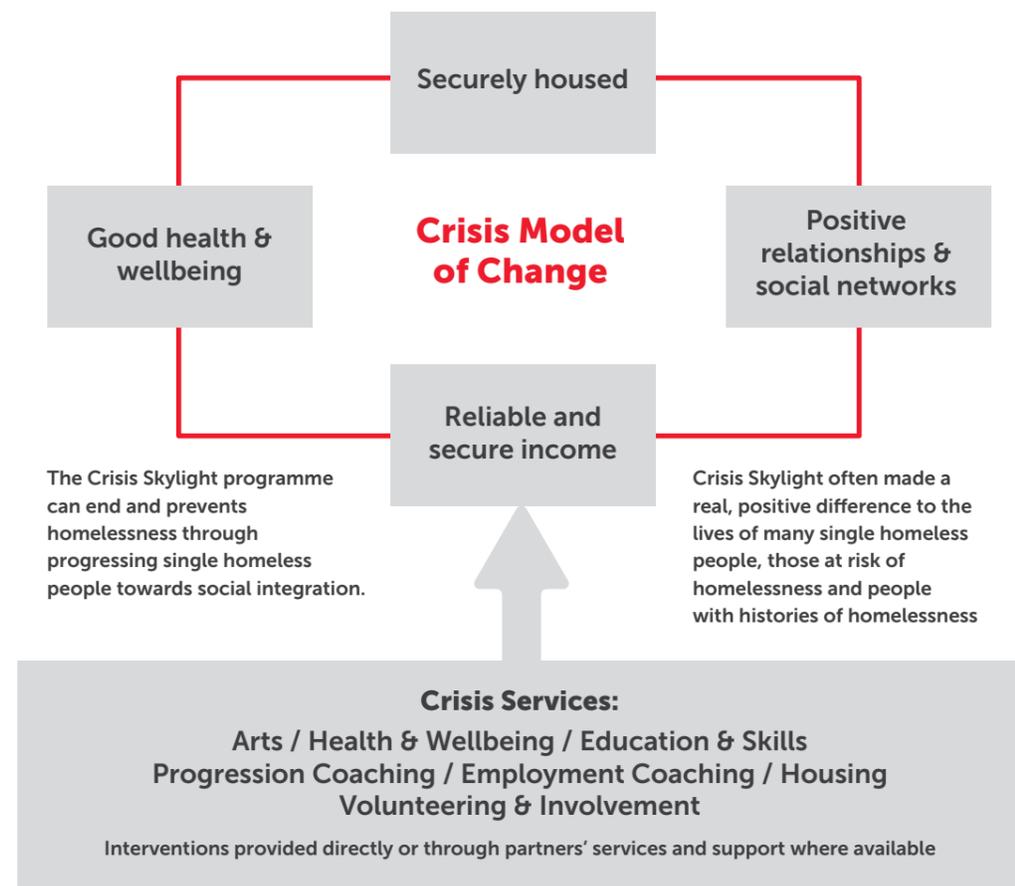
# Understanding the project

## Crisis Model of Change

Crisis has a well-defined Model of Change across all 11 of its UK Skylight centres. See Figure 1 for a visual representation of the Crisis Model of Change. It is centred around a holistic view of homelessness and

is not concentrated on any single problem. Crisis works with individuals who are currently homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, or have been homeless in the last two years.

**Figure 1. Crisis Model of Change**



The overarching outcomes of the Crisis Model of Change include: helping members to find secure housing; obtain a reliable and secure income (e.g. by obtaining education and vocational qualifications to increase likelihood of employment and/or providing guidance about legal entitlements); improving health and emotional wellbeing, and; helping members build positive relationships and their wider social networks.

Broadly speaking, Crisis activities are organised around two branches of work:

### 1. The learning branch

The learning branch provides a wide variety of tutor-led, group-based activities that are open to all Crisis members. This includes a range of accredited, and non-accredited courses from employability training to more creative art classes.

### 2. The progression branch

The progression branch provides some members with 1:1 support, which can include guidance and practical help in relation to housing, wellbeing and/or employment.

Individual coaching offers more intensive support. Coaches work to help members reach a point of stability where they are in a better place to concentrate on gaining qualifications or seeking employment.

The two branches provide complimentary, holistic support. Members receive progression and learning activities depending on the nature of their need. Sometimes a member may access Crisis via classes, others may first begin working with a coach. Often members will be involved in both learning and progression activities.

# Demographics

## Demographics: Who does Employment Pathways support?

"Everyone's different, their needs are different, their goals and strengths are all different."  
Crisis staff member

"Everybody we work with has got a different story, a different aspiration, so we just try and identify the best way for each individual."  
Crisis staff member



Table 1 provides the demographic breakdown of 1,396 unique members who participated in the *Employment Pathways* project between 1 March 2015 and 31 January 2018. Analysis of the dataset comprising these individuals is presented in the data summary below.

**Table 1. Demographics of the *Employment Pathways* project**

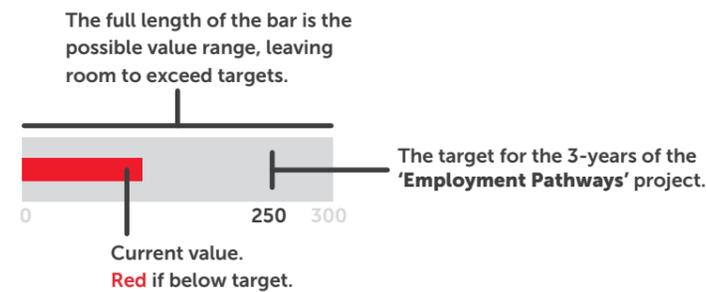
	%	N
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	74%	1,239
Female	23%	383
Missing/refused	4%	61
<b>Citizenship</b>		
British or Irish	67%	1,128
EU/EEA	7%	111
On work permit	1%	9
Leave to remain	5%	90
Refugee	8%	127
Missing/refused	13%	218
<b>Highest Qualification (on entry to Crisis)</b>		
No qualifications	23%	386
No British equivalent	8%	138
Below GCSE	19%	319
GCSE level A*-C	22%	364
A-level or equivalent	11%	183
Vocational	6%	106
Professional qualification	1%	14
Degree level	4%	67
Missing/refused	6%	106

The project has supported 1,683 members to the end of January 2018. The majority of Crisis members in the *Employment Pathways* project are male (74%) and from Britain or Ireland (67%). Of these, 386 members report having no qualifications. Furthermore, 92% of members reported being unemployed and financially insecure when joining Crisis.

# Impact on members

This section presents data on member progress and outcomes collated from existing Crisis data systems for all Crisis members on the *Employment Pathways* project between 1 March 2015 and 31 January 2018. It contains findings on reach, changes in member confidence, self-esteem, improved relationships, trust in others and motivation/desire to pursue employment goals; qualifications obtained and member satisfaction for those courses, and finally; outcomes on what members went on to do, covering volunteering, further education and employment. Figure 2 below illustrates how to read the charts used in the summary.

Figure 2. Example 'how to read' chart.



## Crisis activity and outcomes data summary Data covers 01/03/2015–31/01/2018

### 1. Reach

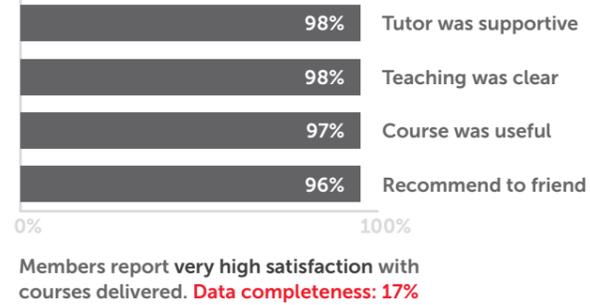
#### Unique learners



#### Work & Learning Coach

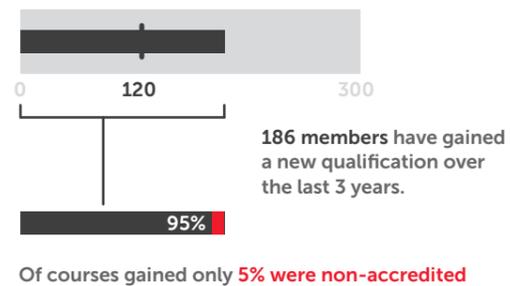


### 2. Member satisfaction



### 3. Focus on qualifications

#### Members gaining at least one qualification



### 4. Intermediate outcomes

#### Improved confidence or self-esteem



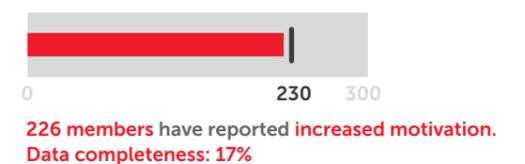
#### Improved relationships or trust



#### Self-reported skill development

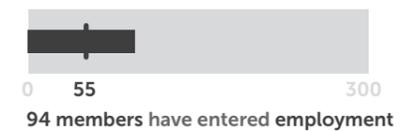


#### Increased motivation



### 5. Longer-term outcomes

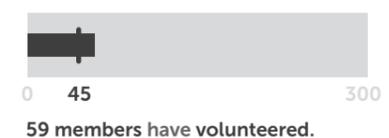
#### Employed or self-employed



#### In further education



#### Volunteering



For data tables, see Appendix 3

# Reflections

The following section provides a brief descriptive summary of the data findings, and shares the reflections arising from interviews with staff and Crisis members.

**Reflection 1.** The *Employment Pathways* project has exceeded its targets by supporting more members into volunteering and employment than anticipated. The team has also supported more members than anticipated in gaining at least one new qualification.

The data reported broadly indicate that the *Employment Pathways* project at Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire has met or exceeded its targets in relation to reaching members and supporting them in longer-term outcomes. Specifically, more members have been able to access a Work and Learning Coach and have gone on to find jobs or volunteering opportunities than anticipated. As of 31 January 2018, fewer members than anticipated have been supported into further education outside of Crisis courses. Further work is needed to understand why fewer members than expected went onto further education outside of Crisis (e.g. Were the targets for further education unrealistic? Are members' self-directed goals more focused on employment, rather than further education? What is the quality of relationship between Crisis and Further Education institutions?).

Where data is available, intermediate outcomes (motivation, confidence, trust and skill development) have improved. However, it is difficult to tell the extent to which these outcomes

have been achieved by all members due to poor data completeness (~20%). Intermediate outcomes data is collected via member completed feedback forms. These are used across Skylight services which may lead to form fatigue (members are asked to complete a large number of these forms). They are generally circulated at the end of a course and so members who miss the last session will not have completed one.

**"I'd been in trouble and my self-confidence was really low. I was unaware, but at the time it [Crisis] was sort of building me back up and getting back out in to, y'know, seeing different faces and society sort of thing, because before I hid in my house. I wouldn't go out and talk to anybody, I'd just been kind of crushed. I kept asking, I wanna do this, I wanna do that, and then they said, oh that's funny, we've got maths and this and that. So I ended up doing maths, English, IT, drama, photography, first aid, health and safety in the workplace. Basically anything they had to offer, I was like, yes I'll do it. So I did all that,**



**and then I was offered a volunteering position."**  
Crisis member

**"I believe I wouldn't have survived my situation [without Crisis] and just plodded along through, but I think I would have continuously lived suffering, and just suffering through my circumstances. I would've just continued to be depressed and miserable and anxious and not wanna join in with the world, if it weren't for them [Crisis]."**  
Crisis member

**Reflection 2.** Members involved in the *Employment Pathways* project report very high satisfaction with the activities and courses run by the Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire team.

**"I used to sit there, and say I'm an idiot, I'm an idiot! And they [Crisis] were like, you're not an idiot, you just need some patience. But all the while I didn't realise it was building up my confidence, without me even realising. The whole thing had a massive impact."**  
Crisis member

Members report very high satisfaction with courses run by Crisis (97%). Members find their tutors clear and supportive (97% and 98%, respectively) and would recommend their course to a friend (94%).

**Reflection 3.** Crisis has developed strong and trusting partnerships with local employers across Coventry and Warwickshire, which have been vital in supporting members progress into employment.

**“We’ve built really good links with employers because we’ve sent them a good calibre of candidate [from Crisis].”**

Crisis staff member

**“It’s got to the point where the relationship is so strong, they [the employer] phone us before they advertise to say, do you have any suitable candidates for this role?”**

Crisis staff member

**“No [there was no application form]. We [Crisis member and staff member] just went there. She [the employer] interviewed me. She gave me a trial period, and I passed it.”**

Crisis member

In addition to helping members with formal elements of the job application process – CVs, applications and interviews – Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire has formed strong relationships with local employers that open up more informal channels into employment. Informal channels to employment may be less available to some members supported by Crisis, which means they would be less likely to hear about vacancies through their personal network or receive the endorsement of a friend or former employer. Crisis helps perform this function.

The partnerships are founded on the trust the Skylight earns from employers by sending job-ready candidates to fill vacancies and supporting the member to sustain the position (e.g. Corporate partners include employers such as XL Auto Repair Centre, Premier Inn and Morrison’s – for a fuller list of partners see Appendix 1). Crisis’ coaching model means that: (i) Crisis members are provided with support to help build

their confidence and employability skills and; (ii) The Skylight will only refer members who want to engage. This differs from (the current punitive) statutory arrangements, which may lead to some candidates from Job Centres applying and accepting employment they do not want, and/or are unable to sustain.

**“Not that I’m trying to get an easy win for our members, but a lot of our members are at a disadvantage to other people that haven’t experienced homelessness, because maybe their CV isn’t as good as others, maybe their experience at interview isn’t as good others. I think, if we can get somebody an easy job, they deserve a break, cos once they’ve got that job, they’ve then got a better CV and they’ve got experience to tell at interview and they can give examples, so it’s that leg up.”**

Crisis staff member

**“They [the employers] were really impressed with the calibre of our members and they said that previously they’d worked with the Job Centre and the Job Centre’d just send anybody. Obviously being sent from the Job Centre you know if you don’t go, your benefits will be sanctioned, so people go. But they go without the intention of wanting to work, whereas with us, if we send somebody there, generally the way that we work, they will attend.”**

Crisis staff member

**Reflection 4.** Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire staff are innovators who think creatively to address individual- and system-level barriers facing Crisis members.

**“It’s lots of researching what’s going on in town and trying to keep up with everything that’s happening as well, cos everything changes, really quickly, for example I’ve got one lad that’s really interested in bikes, like cycles, and there’s a cycle project that I went up with him to, ‘cos I hadn’t seen it either. So, we went together and he’s got really into that.”**

Crisis staff member

The staff of Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire are empowered to think of creative solutions to challenges the organisation faces in achieving its stated mission: to end homelessness. At the individual level, the progression team listens to members’ strengths and difficulties experienced, before using their expertise and local knowledge to tailor support on a case-by-case basis, devising strategies for each new member they work with and support.

At a strategic level, Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire identifies areas for service improvement to better support those that might benefit from the Crisis service. For example, the team have worked to implement an innovative approach to better engage and meet the needs of rough sleepers. The Skylight has established drop-in sessions via STEPS. This is a multi-agency partnership<sup>3</sup> that provides a consistent point of contact for people who are rough sleeping. It has achieved some significant successes, specifically by helping

members who are rough sleeping to access health services (e.g. registering with a GP) and secure proof of identity (e.g. birth certificates). The generation of creative solutions through innovative partnership working is a theme that runs through Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire: linking members to training, volunteering and employment opportunities that fit their needs and aspirations, and working with other organisations to deliver new models of engagement and support.

**“Crisis, we’re an outreach service, but naturally, even though we’re outreach we go and deliver in services where people reside, so maybe hospitals and day centres. How we’re set up naturally won’t attract to rough sleepers - the most disengaged from society. It’s quite tricky to engage those people because they might not come into a hostel to do a class, they might not come into a day centre. So, liaising with the Coventry Recovery Community and the police, we’ve set up a multi-agency partnership called STEPS. I think we need to be really visible to the rough sleeping community, because it’s harder to end that.”**

Crisis staff member

**Reflection 5.** Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire works continuously to develop relationships across a range of homelessness organisations in the local area, which helps to effectively reach some of the most vulnerable in society.

<sup>3</sup> Example partners include the Salvation Army and the local police force.



**“I think it can be an effective way of engaging members, especially ‘cos we have to do it consistently so our faces get known and we make links with the key workers there. So we go [to the hostel], we sit in the downstairs area for a while, and people approach us and we approach them.”**

Crisis staff member

The maintenance of a regular presence at hostels and other homelessness organisations (see Appendix 1) across the Coventry and Warwickshire area helps the Skylight to;

- make initial contact with a large number of people who meet its eligibility criteria;
- stay in contact with those who become members as well as those who do not.

Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire builds effective relationships with homelessness services across the area. Skylight staff frequently visit various homelessness services which has several benefits; it helps build the profile of Crisis amongst the population of homeless people in Coventry and Warwickshire; staff at the Skylight get to know specific individuals within partner organisations and can contact them directly, rather than relying on referrals from partners, and; by maintaining regular face-to-face contact with partners, staff at Crisis and other homelessness services can share progress and setbacks and avoid duplication of work.

**“The last thing you want is to be duplicating the work, stepping on people’s toes, or going in different directions totally, so you have to have that**

**communication otherwise you just don’t know what you’re doing. And you’re confusing the client, the member, you just confuse them.”**

Crisis staff member

**“So now I can just ring up and say, oi what are you doing? What’s happened here? I saw you on Monday, you told me this, this hasn’t happened. Please help me out. Rather than calling a stranger and not really knowing them, we’ve now got that rapport with a lot of services.”**

Crisis staff member

**Reflection 6.** There is evidence of good joint working within the Skylight to help ensure Crisis members are provided with the right support, at the right time.

**“Most communication is done quite informally, as they’re speaking to each other, just collaring each other and speaking to each other, but everything’s recorded on the database. So, we know we can always check the database for anything.”**

Crisis staff member

There is good practice of joint working within Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire which is facilitated by;

- an open and friendly office ethos as well as the compact layout of the building;
- the small size of the team, creating some overlap between staff members’ roles and responsibilities.

**“They [Crisis] were down at the Salvation Army near enough every Thursday, so if ever they were there, they would just ask how I was getting on, if I needed anything. Or if I had anything - like when I got my job, I was able to say, ‘Oh y’know, I’ve got some news!’ So, I was able to share information that way.”**

Crisis member

In particular connection with the *Employment Pathways* project, a member's transition from working with a Progression Coach to the Work and Learning Coach is managed by a period of joint working in which both coaches come together with the member to discuss next steps.

**"I tend to get the Work and Learning Coach involved and maybe do joint meetings, and in that way I pick stuff up as well, so I kind of steal his skills. But a lot of it's been, yeah, joint working or passing to [the Work and Learning Coach]. And that tends to be what people want. They want a streamlined service. They don't want to be kind of lingering with me if they don't need to be."**  
Crisis Progression Coach

**"We do [cross-]over roles a lot, but we do know our roles as well, so it's not like we're all doing everything. It's a nice kind of flexibility."**  
Crisis staff member

**"...that's the ethos of everyone that's come into the team, that, yeah this is your role and on the whole, you'll always do that, but actually you need to do a bit of that, pick up that, so it is a real whole-team approach. So, because everyone knows that there's always been quite transparency and that no-one's scared to ask for help and no-one's scared to joint work and no-one's precious here, everyone's glad to**

**support. Like I think you get in some areas like: 'Oh that's my member,' 'No, I'm doing that.' Whereas here it's like: 'Right, who's helping me?'"**  
Crisis staff member

**"We all step outside of our roles a little bit if needs be."**  
Crisis staff member

However, joint working could be improved further by the roll-out of reflective practice within Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire (see Recommendation 4). Reflective practice is currently being trialled, and was identified as an area that could be further developed within the Skylight.

**Reflection 7.** The 1:1 support provided by Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire is holistic and person-centred.

**"The people at Crisis listen, they hear your concerns and, of course, unless you listen you don't know how to help. They listen, and so they can help. Their help is very good, as I've seen it. It's tailored to the members, it's very open-ended."**  
Crisis member

**"The difference with Crisis is that they don't just try for one thing. It's like everything in one. They don't just say, OK you are homeless we'll look for a house for you and then that's it. No. They go into other issues."**  
Crisis member

**"I think Crisis is really adaptable and can sort of adapt themselves to work with the members. And the other thing that I love is that the members kind of do take the lead on what Crisis does, so you make suggestions, Crisis will try and make it happen, within reason, which I think is amazing too because that makes the members feel really valued, and gives them confidence and all the other things that come along with it."**  
Crisis member

In line with the Crisis Model of Change, staff at the Skylight treat each member as an individual. Crisis staff spend time with members carefully listening and developing a better understanding of members' unique circumstances, strengths and challenges. On the basis of these conversations, coaches devise personal progression plans with the member, offering support in all aspects of the member's life to help them to achieve their self-identified goals. Crisis members often emphasised the holistic and person-centred nature of support within the Skylight model as distinguishing the service from others they had experienced.

**"In terms of like our approach, I think our approach is consistent, but it's consistently different if that makes sense. So, it's like we wrap around you rather than you conforming to what we want."**  
Crisis staff member

**"So far, I've usually met here with my Progression Coach. I think they just sort of knew**

**that I wasn't confident to meet out in public. 'Cos recently I've very visibly built up confidence and become less socially anxious. On my most recent appointment she's offered to - offered, not said - we can meet in a coffee shop if you like?"**  
Crisis member

**Reflection 8.** Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire is working towards more effectively preventing members becoming dependent on the Crisis service.

**"We have got a lot of members that are still with us that probably don't fit our criteria, but that's partly because we need to learn how to move members knowing how to do that, and also, just because you just wanna leave the door open: you don't want them to ever think, 'oh well we've closed our service to you just like everyone else has,' so that's not what it's about, so we have to be pretty flexible here, but also know where the boundaries are as well."**  
Crisis volunteer

Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire is exploring ways to continue providing flexible and member-centred support whilst not creating a dependency on the service. With regard to the *Employment Pathways* project, dependency is often not a particular challenge as the members who no longer require support from the project are those who find employment. Getting a job is a 'hard' outcome that in most cases leads to members becoming more independent of Crisis.

**“A lot of people do kind of naturally find their outlets and actually go. Some people don’t. We’re a very friendly, open service so you can see why people would not want to go. It needs to be done properly, and that’s something we’re working towards.”**

Crisis staff member

Nevertheless, staff identified that for some members ‘moving on’ may be an issue. The Skylight is exploring how to effectively address such cases, and how to develop a clear exit strategy (see Recommendation 1).

**Reflection 9.** Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire has intervened when other services have failed to effectively meet multiple and complex needs, or when services have been withdrawn (for a range of reasons).

**“They never turned me away at all and most of the places had said, we can’t help you, or didn’t even bother trying, so I think for me that was massive.”**

Former Crisis member

The independent and flexible nature of the Skylight means it can support individuals facing complex difficulties who have been poorly served by ‘siloed’ statutory services that focus on single issues: mental and physical health, housing or substance misuse.<sup>4</sup> Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire provides direct support to alleviate urgent housing crises. In addition, the staff support members with multiple and complex needs by using their experience of and existing contacts within statutory services to help members navigate fragmented services that each focus on specific needs.

<sup>4</sup> The problem of siloed services supporting those with complex needs has been explored elsewhere, see (Little, M; Sandu, R and Truesdale, 2015) and (Bramley et al., 2015)

**“There’s one specific member that’s so challenging and everyone else has washed their hands, everyone else has refused, so we step in.”**

Crisis staff member

**Reflection 10.** Members are valued and involved in the design of services provided by Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire.

**“From the member forums, we make sure we’ve got a good feedback loop, so that whatever comes out of there, we publish on some of our boards in the member forum room, so like, ‘You said... We did...’, and that we action what needs to be [done]. If we can’t action something, we feed back in the next member forum as to why it hasn’t or why it’s delayed or why we can’t do something.”**

Crisis staff member

**“They [Crisis] treated you like you were on the level. It weren’t like it was authority. Whenever I’d talk, they’d take the time to listen to what I had to say, and I felt like my opinion was valued. Whereas where I’ve been into the other services where it’s kind of structured or box-ticking or whatever, they’re like: you do this and it’s dictated to you. I felt like I was just treated like a human being.”**

Crisis member



**“I think Crisis is unique because they don’t give up on anybody. Y’know we have so many people that come through these doors that have been failed by so many different services: mental health, housing, whatever it may be.”**

Crisis staff member



**“I was going to member forums and coming up with ideas that way, but I know I’ve always been able to freely talk to any of the team and say, well I think, and I think that, and it gets taken on board and one way or another, something will happen. So, I can talk to anyone about it really.”**

Former Crisis member

from the member forum, there is a clear strategy for communicating to members why it was not possible.

There may be opportunities for creating feedback mechanisms to include a larger range of Crisis members who may not attend activities such as the member forums.

Members and staff identified a range of channels through which members can feed back about the service and suggest improvements, including: feedback forms; the member forums that are facilitated by Crisis staff and attended by interested members; Crisis members sitting on interview panels for the recruitment of Crisis candidates, and; informal conversations with staff during coaching sessions or classes. Members reported that their involvement in designing the Skylight’s services is meaningful: ideas and suggestions are considered by staff and acted on where possible. For example, when members suggested running a talent show, the idea was incorporated into the summer Member Celebration event and scripted, hosted and performed by members. If Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire is unable to fulfil a suggestion or request, especially those arising

**“It’s explained to you, you understand the reasons, it’s like this, that’s why that, and you’re not left in the dark.”**

Former Crisis member

# Conclusions

## Conclusions and recommendations

In short, there have been 1,683 Crisis members who have participated in at least one Crisis learning activity, with 212 Crisis members seen by a Work and Learning Coach (exceeding the target of 150). Employment and volunteering targets were exceeded. The number of Crisis members who gained at least one qualification over the last three years also exceeded targets. Intermediate outcomes of improved confidence, improved relationships, self-reported skills development and motivation however, all fall short of the specified targets with one month to go until the end of the project. This may be due to issues around data completeness for these intermediate outcomes, many of which are collected via feedback forms. For Crisis members who completed the feedback forms, satisfaction was exceptionally high (i.e. 98% reported the tutor was supportive, 98% reported teaching was clear, 97% reported course was useful and, 96% would recommend to a friend).

This section provides a series of recommendations the Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire could consider in the future.

**Recommendation 1.** Develop and implement a more clearly defined exit

strategy to reduce the risk of member dependency on the service.

The intensity of support offered by Crisis, coupled with the lack of a clearly defined exit strategy, increases the risk that members will become dependent on the Crisis service. As set out in the Crisis Model of Change, it is in the member's interest to move away from Crisis, to become independent and to engage with society more widely. Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire would benefit from a clearly defined exit strategy that is based on good quality evidence of what works<sup>5</sup> that also incorporates the practical experience and expertise gained in the other Skylights.

**Recommendation 2.** Explore the feasibility of creating a specific role for 'employer engagement' to help create more direct pathways for members into employment.

Relationships with local employers have been identified as a key factor in the success of the *Employment Pathways* project in Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire, helping move members into work. It was suggested that Crisis could consider further investment of time and resources into establishing and



maintaining strong links with local employers - perhaps through the creation of a staff role dedicated to employer engagement. At the moment responsibility for employer engagement is distributed across multiple roles. Could the 'employer engagement' role build up new relationships with employers across a diverse range of fields (e.g. construction, factory, hospitality, retail, customer service etc.)? How might the employer engagement role arrange and facilitate trial periods with employers across Coventry and Warwickshire?

**Recommendation 3.** Provide enhanced training for staff working with members who have learning difficulties and other cognitive impairments.

Crisis might explore the feasibility of providing staff training for those interested in better supporting members with learning difficulties and other cognitive impairments. Reasonable and proportionate

training around supporting those with learning difficulties could enhance the inclusiveness of the Skylight service. If staff were to develop a richer understanding of the drivers underlying particular behaviours, it might more accurately inform progression plans and appropriate support. For example, how can staff better help those with learning difficulties to appropriately navigate the complex benefit system? If employment is the goal, how can Crisis staff members appropriately support members with learning difficulties to identify and secure roles that will suit capacities/capabilities?

**Recommendation 4.** Effectively roll out reflective practice within Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire.

Reflective practice was identified as an area that could be further developed within Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire. The roll-out of reflective practice could translate into better outcomes for members by leading to improved staff practice and strategies

<sup>5</sup> For example, see Burns, Yeeles, Langford, Montes, Burgess & Anderson (2015). A randomized controlled trial of time-limited individual placement and support: IPS-LITE trial.

for working with members with complex needs. Reflective practice is currently being trialled in Coventry. It could be further enhanced by connections with other Skylights that have already embedded reflective practice into their work. For example, are there any shadowing opportunities in Skylights that have successfully embedded the approach? Are there opportunities for those skilled and experienced in reflective practice to co-facilitate reflective practice sessions within Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire for a trial period?

**Recommendation 5.** Gather insight about the range of recruitment strategies trialled by Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire.

While the *Employment Pathways* project has exceeded anticipated reach (as demonstrated by the number of members who have seen a Work and Learning Coach), staff have identified specific groups facing homelessness that they feel Crisis could more effectively engage (e.g. rough sleepers). Indeed, Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire has trialled a number of innovations around the outreach delivery model designed to reach different groups of individuals more effectively. Examples include a drop-in service for rough sleepers and attending residents' meetings for those in supported/temporary accommodation. Further exploration of the challenges and successes of these various engagement strategies has the potential to benefit other Skylights. It can help inform the viability of different engagement strategies for different populations across the UK.

In order to achieve this, the Skylight should bolster its existing data systems to enable evaluation of different recruitment strategies. Enhancement of the Crisis data system could help the Skylight explore the following questions:

- How many people decide to become a member after their initial contact with Crisis?
- Does the proportion of individuals who decide to become a member vary depending on where their initial contact with Crisis occurs?
- Do members who are recruited through certain routes tend to engage differently with the Crisis service?



“Being in the role, you tend to kind of learn as you go, but yeah I think just understanding the different idiosyncrasies of people and uniqueness of certain LDs [learning difficulties] and stuff like that. We work with quite a few autistic people so it'd be good if we had some training – trying to understand where they're coming from a bit better.”

Crisis staff member

## Appendix 1. List of partnership organisations (not exhaustive)

### Partnership organisations include:

- Salvation Army
- Fry
- Midland Heart
- Emmaus
- Langley House Trust
- Homegroup
- Cyrenians
- Refugee & Migrant Centre
- Anchor Centre
- Jesus Centre
- Change Grow Live
- St Basils
- Valley House
- Key 2
- Probation
- Coventry Independent Advice Service
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Princes Trust
- Kairos
- Springboard
- Open Hands

### Corporate partners include:

- Premier Inn
- Morrisons

### General partners:

- Jobcentre Plus
- Coventry City Council
- Coventry Law Centre

## Appendix 2. Activities and roles funded by the Big Lottery Fund as part of the *Employment Pathways* project

The grant contributes towards: 10.5 hours of the Skylight Manager's post, 1 full time Arts Co-ordinator, 17.5 hours of a Progression Coach, 17.5 hours of a Work and Learning Coach and 17.5 hours of a Volunteer Co-ordinator (in year two of the grant). The grant also contributes toward some of the associated project costs: client incentives, sessional tutors, and a contribution towards project overheads. It will also fully fund an evaluation at the end of the project.

Note: there is also a further 17.5 hours of the Smart Skills Tutor, 17.5 hours of the Functional Skills Co-ordinator and 7 hours of an Administrator included within the project budget, but these are not funded by the Big Lottery grant.

## Appendix 3. Data tables

### Reach

	Actual	Target
Unique learners	1,683	
Saw a Work & Learning Coach	212	150

### Contact time with coach (average hours face-to-face)

#### Housing Coach

2.5 hrs

### Short-term outcomes

	Actual	Target
Improved confidence or self-esteem	220	250
Improved relationships or trust in others	223	235
Skill development	225	260
Increased motivation	226	230

### Long-term outcomes

Outcome	N	Target
Employed	94	55
In further education	33	60
Volunteering	59	40

### Member satisfaction (courses)

Outcome	%
Would recommend to a friend	96%
Course was useful	97%
Teaching was clear	98%
Tutor was supportive	98%

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**Together  
we will end  
homelessness**