

Crisis in Brent – Place-based Evaluation

Update to Brent Homelessness Forum

Leila Baker, Mary Carter
Campbell Tickell
8 December 2023

About the evaluation

The evaluation was commissioned by Crisis to understand how stakeholders perceive changes brought about by the 'place-based' approach in Brent.

Crisis Skylight Brent received funding from the Berkeley Foundation since 2019 to continue building and developing work towards ending homelessness in Brent, in partnership with Brent Council.

The findings will be used to inform and influence:

- How the partnership between Crisis, the Berkeley Foundation and Brent Council might be further developed.
- The development of Crisis' future place-based work in other areas.
- The development of a Built for Zero programme within Brent.

Our work

In active fieldwork phase. So far we have:

- Carried out initial stakeholder interviews.
- Currently continuing with main fieldwork interviews.
- Held Lived Experience focus group.
- Attended Rough Sleeping Working Group and held session with attendees.
- Attended Brent Homelessness Forum.
- Distributed a survey to the full Homelessness Forum membership list.

In November we have been analysing data and drafting the report.



Overview: what the findings mean for work in Brent

A culture of collaboration is thriving in Brent and has brought considerable achievement at a time of extraordinary pressures on services.

- The culture of collaboration is now well embedded - the concept has been proved – and should be used as the basis for exploring further potential around sharing data, co-location, joint posts and other ways to share resources.
- Developing the Homelessness Forum approach to communicating its work (minutes etc) in order to reach wider networks, such as organisations that can't get to or justify the time involved in attending meetings but would benefit from understanding what the Forum can bring to their work.

- The importance of resourcing leadership across the sector to be able to maintain and develop place-based partnerships and a culture of collaboration through, for example, widening engagement and keeping on top of societal, economic and policy change as they are affecting homelessness in the borough.

Questions to consider:

- Does the Forum have a role to play in advocating for ways to accelerate the provision of homes?
- How can the Forum formally record and report impact of policy e.g. Home Office? And pass that up?
- How to ensure that it reaches wider networks?

Overview: strategic learning

- Shared understanding about the wider societal, economic and policy pressures influencing work in Brent.
- Place-based partnerships/ a culture of collaboration recognise that no one sector or body holds solutions.
- Culture of collaboration driven by aligned values, mission and demand, scale and complexity of the housing crisis. Support needs must be addressed alongside housing, and everyone has a role to play.
- Culture characterised by mutual respect and shared goals, bolstered by preparedness of Brent Council (members and officers) to engage openly; and status of a recognised national charity.
- Brent Homelessness Forum is a central vehicle to bring people together. Provides a space for information sharing; to develop relationships; to workshop new initiatives. Has become the 'go to' place for connections and finding the 'right' people to engage with.

Overview: systems change

No shortage of examples of systems change impacted by the culture of collaboration, e.g. The Homelessness Forum; Single Homeless Prevention Service; The Turning Point; Brent Homeless Health Plan; Rough Sleeping action plan and working group; joint partnership working at street level; complex needs panel; winter shelter provision; swift response to challenge of HO.

Some features:

- Willingness to do things differently, especially e.g. The Turning Point, where existing systems/structures weren't the right environment for single homeless people.

- Been able to bring the non-commissioned agencies into the forum alongside commissioned and that they sit together constructively.
- A 'can do' approach acting on real time issues and responding collectively.

Looking ahead:

- Suggestions include engaging more faith-based organisations and seeking to rebuild links with LB Brent adult social care.

Overview: individual change

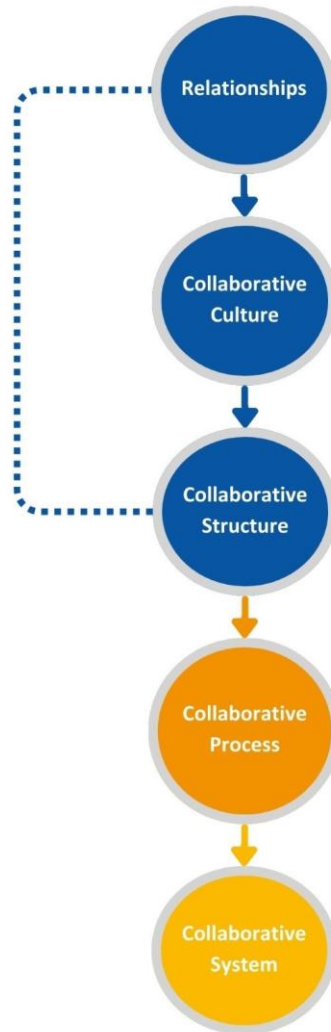
A culture of collaboration was said to have led to the following benefits or change for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

- People get started on their journey to resolving their homelessness issues more quickly due to cooperation between voluntary and public bodies to speed up assessments and decisions.
- Through tackling barriers to support (and providing deeper insight into what these are and how to tackle them), individuals get better access to what they need.
- Stronger links with health agencies, for example, have improved GP registration for homeless people in general and, through a public health lens on vaccinations, for people being moved out of contingency hotels.
- The chances of people being lost in transitions between support agencies are reduced. E.g. around hospital discharge; connections maintained after the 2022/23 winter shelter provision; and transitions from Home Office migrant housing.
- Removing the barriers to resolving housing issues where the person's circumstances are complex cases for whom it is hard to find an accommodation provider. A culture of collaboration and, in practice, the ability to pick up the phone or to come together with different agencies helps spot and mitigate these occurrences.

Applying our findings to Built For Zero

- At crucial point where concept is being translated into practice.
- Benefits from high-level engagement/leadership.
- Builds on and in cooperation with, the ecosystem of relationships with and within public and voluntary sectors.
- A lot of hope and expectation for what sharing data will achieve – broadly welcomed challenge to limitations of official data (especially around understanding of patterns of homelessness – sofa surfing, women, people outside but not bedded down).
- There is still some distrust of statutory services; may be barrier to sharing data.
- The severe shortage of suitable, affordable accommodation and funding constraints.

Describing a culture of collaboration



Creating the conditions for change



Principles for strategic and systems change

- Place-based partnership working is the foundation for the culture of collaboration in general and Built for Zero in particular, to be able to work.
- The approach to place-based partnership working needs to be strengths-based.
- Invest in learning so that place-based partnership working can develop iteratively.
- Partnership working takes time and that needs resourcing. Even successful partnerships and collaboration need ongoing management and nurturing to be sustained and flourish.
- Don't expect all organisations to need or be able to give the same level of commitment. Find ways for hyper local groups or agencies to keep engaged.
- Recognise and value small changes. These may be the foundations for building working relationships that can lead to bigger change.
- The active involvement and commitment of the local authority is critical. This ensures a two-way relationship.
- Local authorities and other public agencies need to be willing to let go of some of their power in order to make place-based partnerships work effectively.
- Voluntary sector organisations need to be willing and supported to look beyond their individual services and to understand local authority constraints and ways of working.

CAMPBELL
TICKELL

Telephone +44(0) 208 883 0677
Recruitment +44(0) 203 434 0990

info@campbelltickell.com
www.campbelltickell.com
 @CampbellTickel1

Thank you

For further information please contact

Liz.Zacharias@campbelltickell.com