Progressing
Towards
Employment

at Crisis Skylight Edinburgh

An evaluation in 10 reflections and 5 recommendations
July 2014 – June 2017

July 2017
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 education, employment, housing, arts and wellbeing services address individual needs and help homeless people to transform their lives. Demonstrating tangible results and continual improvement is central to the Crisis Skylight model.

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

This evaluation report contains data findings and lessons emerging from the three-year Progressing Towards Employment project, delivered by the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. It is a celebration of what Crisis members have achieved, and offers a series of 10 reflections and five recommendations for the service to consider in the future.

“The Big Lottery funding of the Progressing Towards Employment project has enabled us to focus our employment offer on people who are homeless and who often also have multiple and complex needs, which prevents them from entering the job market through more traditional routes. Given the challenges faced in working with this group, it has encouraged us to trial and test different approaches. The methods we used at the end of the project were very different from those we employed in the initial stages. Through scoping the services used by the target group we have built, albeit slowly, strong partnerships with key agencies such as JobCentre Plus and the National Health Service. We look forward to developing sustainable joint working with these partners and to sharing, across the sector, the learning that we have gained through this project.”

Ann Landels, Director of Crisis Skylight Edinburgh

Reflections

Reflection 1. The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team carefully balances emotional and practical support.

The team at Crisis Skylight Edinburgh brings a combination of system knowledge and expertise; including an awareness of what members may, or may not, be entitled to, and sign-posting onto other agencies that can help further. The team provides emotional support and encouragement in the face of adversity, helping members remain positive while struggling to gain employment and supporting members to focus on the future, make plans and set realistic goals.

Reflection 2. There were difficulties identifying the Progressing Towards Employment target group.

The Progressing Towards Employment project sought to work with those who were unemployed, but not in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance or on the Work Programme. Arguably, these are some of the most hard-to-reach individuals as
they are disconnected from public systems (i.e. ‘off the grid’). Several difficulties are highlighted within the report.

Reflection 3. Solid partnership working is essential for the successful delivery of the service.

The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team recognises the importance of partnership working and takes time to foster relationships with key stakeholders across the public and voluntary sector to:

- ensure appropriate identification and timely referral of those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and;
- sign-post Crisis members onto other services that can best meet their needs.

Details of these partnerships are provided within this report.

Reflection 4. Crisis demonstrates an ongoing commitment to capacity building within the Edinburgh team and across the sector.

In terms of internal capacity building, this includes providing the structure to enable staff members across different teams to share ideas that will improve practice. In terms of external capacity building, this involves providing shadowing and training opportunities for those across the sector who may come into contact with those vulnerable populations at risk of (or currently experiencing) homelessness. The purpose is to increase awareness and ensure effective support is provided.

Reflection 5. There is continuous critical reflection by the Edinburgh team about what works and does not work, which is underpinned by ongoing and iterative adaptations.

The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team is regularly reviewing practice and looking for new and creative opportunities to better meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness. Various examples are provided within this report.

Reflection 6. The Edinburgh Crisis Skylight team is made up of system changers.

The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team not only builds individual capacity of its members, but seeks to address systemic barriers to housing and employment.
Reflection 7. Although below target, reasonable reach was achieved.

Despite the challenges with identifying the eligible target group, Crisis Skylight Edinburgh managed to achieve 97% of the Progressing Towards Employment reach target. Over three years, 1,183 members were supported, of whom 586 met the Progressing Towards Employment eligibility criteria out of the original projected target of 592. Of these, 575 were supported by the project.

Reflection 8. Emotional health and wellbeing of members improved whilst involved with Crisis.

The number of members reporting increased confidence, self-esteem or motivation has increased after working with Crisis (181 members reported improvements).

Reflection 9. Employability skills of members increased whilst involved with Crisis, although this fell short of expected targets.

There were 155 members that reported improvements in their time management or communication, 127 members reported a desire to progress into further training, education, volunteering or employment, and 128 members have progressed into structured job-seeking.

Reflection 10. A considerable number of qualifications were obtained.

There were 130 qualifications obtained by 94 members (some members gained more than qualification in the period). This included 74 in Basic Skills, 30 in Personal Development, 17 in Employability, and 9 in Vocational courses.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Develop a clearly defined target group, who are most likely to benefit from Crisis involvement.

As a national charity, Crisis has a clear vision of whom it aims to support: homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. For the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team, this would benefit from further refinement. For example, what segments of the population can Crisis best support given the nature of the service provision in Edinburgh?
Recommendation 2. Identify (or create) robust needs assessments to inform accurate size and location of Crisis target populations.

There is opportunity for future Crisis research to develop robust needs assessments to better inform service delivery estimates and evaluate the effectiveness of Crisis reach. For example, how many could benefit from Crisis provision in Edinburgh? How many could realistically be reached by Crisis? What is the current capacity of Crisis to support those who might benefit?

Recommendation 3. Design and pilot creative engagement strategies to increase demand.

The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team continuously explores opportunities to find better, and more effective, referral pathways, for example exploring drop-in opportunities at GP centres and developing stronger links with health services. There is scope to further engage more diverse or hidden populations across Edinburgh who are experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness. This could involve the use of digital technologies, not only to increase awareness of the service, but to elicit feedback and insight from populations in need, that are less likely to engage with the service.

Recommendation 4. Ensure Crisis innovations are accompanied by rigorous empirical testing.

Success of Crisis innovations, and subsequent adaptations, should be underpinned by quality data, and timely qualitative feedback from staff and Crisis members. An upcoming Crisis initiative - *Hothouses for Innovation: Rapid Cycle Innovation and Testing* - would facilitate such an opportunity. If the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh were to become a ‘Hothouse’, it would create the space and time for staff to rapidly generate ideas, pilot and rigorously test whether they work.


There is opportunity, if additional funding can be secured, for the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team to share innovative approaches more widely across the sector via documentaries, webinars, animations, blogs, etc.
Setting the Scene

Progressing Towards Employment was supported by the Big Lottery Fund Scotland Investing in Communities programme. One of the investment areas was Life Transitions, which included the outcome of engaging people who were disengaged from the world of work, focusing on people who were economically inactive. Within this area, the key goals of Investing in Communities included moving people who were economically inactive towards job-seeking services and helping homeless people to access a fuller range of appropriate services.

The Progressing Towards Employment project was delivered by Crisis Skylight Edinburgh over a three-year period between 2014 and 2017. The project sought to support a high-risk group of single homeless people who were long-term unemployed and disengaged from other job seeking services. The Edinburgh team sought to engage 592 eligible service users (known as members), providing a holistic package to help them overcome barriers that prevent them from moving towards employment and accessing job-seeking services. The Progressing Towards Employment project sits within a wider portfolio of support delivered by the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team that includes personal development, one-to-one counselling, education and training, volunteering opportunities, along with housing and benefits support.

The Progressing Towards Employment project sought to empower Crisis members by:

- increasing confidence, self-esteem and motivation/desire to pursue employment goals;
- improving work-related skills, including time management and communication;
- providing support and guidance to help achieve accredited qualifications in order to increase likelihood of employment.

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 Progressing Towards Employment project. There are three main goals of the evaluation:

- Understanding the Progressing Towards Employment project: map the nature of support provided over the duration of the project.
- Impact on members: the extent to which outcomes specified were achieved.

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1 More specifically, those who are not claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) and not on the Work programme.
• Recommendations: highlight opportunities for learning and further development of the Crisis Skylight service in Edinburgh.
The method

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

Quantitative data

Quantitative data in this report come from the client data system currently used across Crisis. Data guidance and support were provided to the Dartington Service Design Lab by the Crisis team, but the data were analysed by the Lab. The Crisis financial year runs from July to June. Data are for the whole evaluation period which runs from 01/07/2014 to 30/06/2017. Activity data are counted by date and all such data only refer to activities that have been conducted within the last three years. Outcome data are more complicated and are included by the date at which the outcome was achieved. For example, a 10-week course could have finished in August 2015 (which would be the award date for any qualification gained) but some of those course sessions may have been held in June of the previous year.

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 data. This has helped to inform the reporting of the data in this report and the insights about the strategic use of data at Crisis in general. Second, a condensed series of individual conversations were arranged with members of the Crisis Skylight in Edinburgh. These semi-structured interviews were focused upon exploring reflections and any emergent recommendations relevant to the Big Lottery Fund-funded *Progressing Towards Employment* project. This included interviews with the Edinburgh Skylight Director, Learning Manager, Progression Manager, Work and Learning Coach and Administrator. Three members were also interviewed about their experiencing 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.
Understanding the *Progression Towards Employment* project

“I feel more together...I regard Crisis as a second family...”

Crisis Member

The *Progressing Towards Employment* project sits within a wider portfolio of support provided by Crisis Skylight Edinburgh. This section will briefly describe the Crisis Model of Change and then take a detailed look at the *Progressing Towards Employment* project, the nature of the support provided, challenges experienced in delivery and the teams’ responses to these challenges.

**Crisis Model of Change**

Crisis has a well-defined Model of Change across all 11 of its UK Skylight centres. See Figure 1 below for a visual representation of the Crisis Model of Change. It is centred around a holistic view of homelessness and does not concentrate on any single problem. Crisis works with individuals who are currently homeless, at risk of becoming homeless at the time they join, or have been homeless in the last two years. Financial insecurity in addition to homelessness is a major factor in a member’s first contact with Crisis (approximately 62% of Crisis members have no stable income at their first contact meeting).
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 educational 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 themes 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 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, as well as market-led qualifications such as food hygiene. Other group-based activities provide opportunity for participation in
more creative initiatives such as the award-winning ‘Songs That Shaped Our Lives’ project, and group outings exploring the surrounding woodland areas.

2. The progression branch

The progression branch provides selected members with one-to-one coaching, which can include guidance and support 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 of Crisis activity are somewhat fluid, with members moving between progression and learning activities depending on the nature of their needs. Sometimes a member may come into Crisis through a course and sometimes members attend courses after first working with a coach. Often members will be involved in both types of branch at any one time.

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2 For further information and to access a short video on the project following the link: https://www.crisis.org.uk/get-help/edinburgh/notice-board/and-the-winners-are/
Demographics: Who does the *Progressing Towards Employment* project support?

“There are all different types of homeless.”
Crisis member

The majority of Crisis members enrolled on the *Progressing Towards Employment* project are male (69%) and from Britain or Ireland (73%). A full quarter (25%) of members report having no qualifications, with a further 9% having no qualifications recognised in Scotland. Furthermore, 70% of members on the programme report being unemployed and financially insecure when joining (up from the average figure for all Crisis Skylights of 62%). The figure is likely even higher as 29% of the rest did not complete the relevant question at enrolment. This is not surprising given the targeting criteria for the programme. The members included are those with the highest level of need; no employment or stable income, and either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Table 1 provides the demographic breakdown of the 575 unique members included in the data dashboard summary that met the eligibility criteria for the *Progressing Towards Employment* over the duration of the project. This means that some members could have been served for the whole three years of the project or only the last couple of months.
Table 1. Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>69%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing/refused</td>
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<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citizenship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British or Irish</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU/EEA</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On work permit</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave to remain</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missing/refused</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Qualification</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(on entry to Crisis)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualifications</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Scottish equivalent</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Grade</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher level</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional qualification</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing/refused</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Significant health problem</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(self-reported)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some percentages may not add up to exactly 100% as some figures are rounded down.*

More specifically, over the last three years, Crisis Skylight Edinburgh has seen rapid change in its member profiles, with a significant increase in members from Eastern European backgrounds. Specifically, the proportion of members from EU/EEA supported by the Progressing Towards Employment project increased from 13% in 2014 to 19% in 2015 and increased further to 31% in 2016.

“I don’t know if the numbers [of the Eastern European population] have gone up or just that the restrictions on them mean their entitlements are going down so they are probably presenting more...A lot of people we meet from the Care Shelter, don’t meet the criteria for any public funding...who are rough sleeping. They have no money. They are destitute. Their only option actually is to make local connections”

Crisis staff member
Impact on members

This section presents data on member progress and outcomes collated from existing Crisis data systems for all Crisis members who met the *Progressing Towards Employment* eligibility criteria between 2014 and 2017. It contains findings on reach, changes in member confidence, self-esteem and motivation/desire to pursue employment goals; changes in work-related skills, such as time management and communication, along with qualifications obtained and member satisfaction.

An example below illustrates how to read the charts used on the summary page.

Figure 2. Example ‘how to read’ chart.

The full length of the bar is the possible value range, leaving room to exceed targets

The target for the 3-years of the 'Progressing Towards Employment' programme.

Current value. Red if undesirably low

Qualitative boundary. Dark grey is undesirable (e.g. two thirds of overall target)
Crisis activity and outcomes data
Data covers 'Progressing Towards Employment' members (01/07/2014 - 30/06/2017)

1. Reach
Eligible and enrolled

There have been 586 eligible members coming to Crisis in the 3 years. **575 of these have been served.**

Contact time
- Skills Coach: 10 hrs
- Progression Coach: 7 hrs
- Housing Coach: 4 hrs
- Work&Learning Coach: 3 hrs

Enrolled members spend more one-to-one time with skills and progression coaches than other coaches. Coaches will spend more time on other member based activities (e.g. phone calls).

2. Qualifications gained
Gained over this programme

Members have gained **130 qualifications** between them.

Of courses gained are **33% non-accredited**

Type of qualification

Most qualifications gained were in **Basic skills**.
This includes **ESOL courses**.

3. Outcomes of interest (work-related)
Improved confidence, self-esteem or motivation

**181 members** self-reported improvement.

Improved relationships or trust in others

**174 members** self-reported improvement.

Improved time management or communication

**155 members** self-reported improvement.

Expressed a desire to progress

**127 members** expressed a desire to progress to further education, training, volunteering or employment.

Progressed to structured job seeking

**128 members** progressed.

4. Member Satisfaction

| Service was useful | 77% |
| Staff helpful      | 77% |
| Recommend to friend| 76% |

Members report **high satisfaction** with Crisis services.
**Data completeness:** 33%

For data tables, see Appendix 1
Data Summary

“...since I’ve been with Crisis, I’ve now got four official SQA awards and I’ve also got an SQA award for emergency first aid...I felt good, I felt good”

Crisis member

Over the three years, 1,183 members were supported by Crisis Skylight Edinburgh, of whom 586 meet the Progressing Towards Employment eligibility criteria and 575 were supported by the project. For reasons highlighted by staff within the Progressing Towards Employment section, this falls below the original projected target of 592.

The members have achieved a good number of qualifications (130 between 94 members), although a proportion of these are non-accredited (33%). The number of members reporting increased confidence, self-esteem or motivation has increased after working with Crisis (181 members reported improvements). These changes were echoed within follow-up interviews with Crisis members:

Interviewer: “How has Crisis helped you?”
Crisis member: “Confidence, self-esteem, be positive, I don’t know how many jobs I’ve been for but ... positivity.”

Interviewer: “How do you think Crisis support you? What are the kinds of things you’ve achieved while working with them over the past year and a bit?”
Crisis member: “Oh plenty, there’s confidence and that, like I can manage more things, organise things and that”

Interviewer: “How has Crisis helped you?”
Crisis member: “For my self-esteem, my confidence. As I say, doing things, keep my mind occupied by doing classes.”

This is a strong precursor to achieving long-term goals. While 155 members reported improvements in their time management or communication and 89 members reported a desire to progress into further training, education, volunteering or employment, these fell short of the expected targets.

Members’ satisfaction with Crisis services is very good and members consistently report the service they received was useful (77%). Members reporting that the coaches and educational tutors as helpful was the same (77%). A good proportion of members who responded would recommend the service they received to a friend (76%). It is important to note that this data comes from Crisis feedback
forms and only 33% of members participating in the programme completed at least one over the course of their time with Crisis.

**Contribution not attribution**

It is important to contextualise the idea that Crisis activities do not happen in isolation. Coaches provide individual support to members and are instrumental in gaining their trust, sign-posting them to further activities and encouraging them to look for work. They spend a lot of time of liaising with other services in the area to provide the best possible access to the help a member needs. Course tutors do not provide individual support to members, but they do provide small and regular engagements for members. Over time, they build a positive relationship with the member. The regular attendance of classes, and the qualifications they lead to, help members to build their confidence, self-esteem and motivation in a safe and consistent environment. This goes some way to rebuilding their trust in other people.

Whilst it is the qualifications, training and skills that will likely help a member gain employment - and therefore financial stability - it is the gradual achievement of interpersonal and social skills (‘soft’ outcomes) that will help them to achieve and sustain the more tangible outcomes of stable housing, qualifications and employment (‘hard’ outcomes). This is core to the Crisis Model of Change.

**Data-informed decision making**

Crisis has a longstanding culture and practice of collecting and monitoring data to inform its decisions about practice. This happens across the organisation. Practitioners and tutors utilise the data about their caseload or classes to inform their practice. Service leaders use the data to understand if there are needs that are not being met by their teams. And Skylight Directors use the data to ensure the Skylight is on track.

Broadly speaking, everyone is looking at the same data, but at different levels. Given the model Crisis is working to, the Dartington Service Design Lab have suggested categorising the data into five broad areas:

- reach;
- interpersonal and work-related skills (‘soft’ outcomes);
- member engagement and satisfaction;
- qualifications; and
- stable housing and employment (‘hard’ outcomes).

These are first defined before data against each are presented.
1. Reach

Definition: The numbers of members who have been part of the Progressing Towards Employment project since July 2014 until present. Members must be unemployed, homeless (or at risk of homelessness), and not receiving Jobseeker’s Allowance or on the Work Programme scheme at the time of entry.

In this report: Data focus on the number of unique enrolments coming into Crisis under the above criteria. There is also an attempt to look at the level of one-to-one support provided to those members joining Crisis under these criteria. This is presented as the average number of hours attended with a coach.

Data quality: The Crisis data system was not originally set up to be flexible around intake criteria. As such, it was not possible to record the exact eligibility criteria (e.g. the Work Programme addition). Eligibility had to be coded as whether the member was unemployed at the point of joining and on a list kept off the system by the Edinburgh Skylight team (which recorded more exact eligibility).

2. Member engagement and satisfaction

Definition: Crisis currently asks for feedback about all its services to gauge how engaged members are with activities. Crisis then uses this feedback to identify areas for improvement. If members do not engage with Crisis in a meaningful way, then outcome movement is unlikely.

In this report: For this report, feedback is centred around participation in one-to-one coach work, as well as educational activities.

Data quality: Members are asked to rate delivery staff and the usefulness of the service routinely at the end of any engagement on feedback forms. These act as a check of whether members have found the course itself useful but also whether the Crisis staff were supportive of their learning needs. The data come from the same feedback forms as much of the ‘soft’ outcome data and suffer from the same problem of very low completion (approximately 33% in this group).

3. Interpersonal and work-related skills (‘soft’ outcomes)

Definition: These are outcomes that are key to the sustainment of more tangible or ‘hard’ outcomes (such as employment and stable housing) and a part of the Crisis model. They are indicators that a member is progressing in the right direction and should act as early warnings when things are not on track. These include:

- Increased motivation
- Improved confidence and self-esteem
• Improved relationships with others
• Increased trust in others

In this report: Measurement of motivation, confidence, relationships and trust is something the Dartington Service Design Lab intends to support Crisis to bolster in due course, yet available data are reported.

Data quality: Feedback forms present challenges in terms of assessing interpersonal and social skills/’soft’ outcomes in the most useful way. Data about confidence and self-esteem, motivation, trust and improved relationships all come from the feedback forms. These are collected at the end of a course and are self-completed by members. The forms are several pages long and data completion low. Approximately 33% of members served by the Progressing Towards Employment project and reaching the end of a course submit a completed feedback form. This is significantly lower than what is seen in other groups of members (~50%) and probably reflects the severity of need in the Progressing Towards Employment member group. There are multiple challenges. The forms are voluntary and are likely only completed by the most engaged members. Much of the time they are being used in a group setting, so tutors cannot spend time with each member completing them. They are also asked multiple times across Crisis activities leading to ’form fatigue’. Revisions to the feedback forms and data collection process form part of the recommendations. This severely hampers the ability of the evaluation to accurately assess whether members in this group have progressed.

Finally, the Outcomes Star is mainly used on a one-to-one basis and completed through a conversation between the member and their coach (and some tutors). It is used before work with Crisis begins in earnest and at regular intervals afterwards. The Outcomes Star is a time-intensive measure and designed for use in a coaching setting. Dependent on the nature of member need, Crisis staff do not always complete the entire Outcomes Star at each time-point with members. While the Outcomes Star appears to be a valuable practice tool, it has only been implemented in the later part of this evaluation period and the data is very incomplete. It is not presented here.

4. Qualifications

Definition: This is simply the number of qualifications gained across the eligible group.

In this report: Qualifications gained are a part of the journey towards stable employment. We consider the total count, including a breakdown of the proportion of which are formally accredited. This allows for more than one qualification to be gained per member (as is often the case) and is a deviation from reporting elsewhere.

Data quality: Qualification data come from a single source of qualifications gained records. For qualifications, the data quality is good. Qualifications are categorised into wide groupings, but the detail is also kept. This makes it easy to
understand what sort of courses are being run and what level the qualification gained is at (e.g. whether the course is official accredited or very short).

5. Stable housing and employment (‘hard’ outcomes)

**Definition:** The stated ‘hard’ goals of Crisis, including:

- Further education
- Sustained employment and volunteering
- Housing stability

These are the tangible outcomes that are easy to measure but hard to achieve. Ultimately, housing and employment sustainment are the outcomes Crisis want to influence.

**In this report:** The focus of this evaluation is employment-related activity, but details of ‘hard’ outcomes in the eligible group are also shown in the tables.

**Data quality:** These ‘hard’ outcomes are well-recorded and flagged within the system.
Practice reflections

The following section contains insights and reflections following interviews with staff and Crisis members that focus on the delivery of the service, and challenges experienced over the past several years.

Reflection 1. The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team carefully balances emotional and practical support.

“...their confidence is at the floor when they come [to Crisis]. It’s about...making them see they have value”

Crisis staff member

“I didn’t know what way to turn, at the time, okay maybe I was naïve, I didnae ken the services that were available ...”

Crisis member

The team at Crisis Skylight Edinburgh brings a combination of system knowledge and practice expertise; including an awareness of what members may, or may not, be entitled to, and sign-posting onto other agencies that can help further. The team provides emotional support and encouragement in the face of adversity, helping members remain positive while struggling to gain employment and supporting members to focus on the future, make plans and set realistic goals. Importantly, the focus of the work was upon empowering members to achieve, not creating a dependency.

“They’re coaches rather than support workers. So, it’s not doing all these practical things but sometimes it is, sometimes it’s a way to get people to buy into the service. But there’s always the longer term picture of, ‘OK, when things are stabilised we’ll look at long term goals, we’ll work on these things together’. So, it’s really person centred”

Crisis staff member
Reflection 2. There were difficulties identifying the *Progressing Towards Employment* target group.

The *Progressing Towards Employment* project sought to work with those who were unemployed, but not in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance or on the Work Programme. Arguably, these are some of the most hard-to-reach individuals as they are disconnected from public systems (i.e. ‘off the grid’).

The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team did not reach the eligibility target. Of the 592 original target, 575 (97%) were actively worked with. Staff highlighted various reasons for the difficulties identifying the target group. First, existing Crisis data systems did not collect the information required that would identify members who were eligible for the *Progressing Towards Employment* project. Second, there were significant changes to the benefit system during set up and delivery of the project (i.e. roll out of Universal Credit in Edinburgh). Third, the size of population in Edinburgh who met the *Progressing Towards Employment* project eligibility criteria was unknown (i.e. the specified reach targets did not relate to existing data on the potential size of this target group).

Reflection 3. Solid partnership working is essential for the successful delivery of the service.

> “we’ve [Crisis] diversified a lot and we’ve been a lot more focused on the partnership work that we do and we have a much wider reach of partners.”

Crisis staff member

The team recognises the importance of partnership working and takes time to foster relationships with key stakeholders across the public and voluntary sector to ensure:

- appropriate identification and timely referral of those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and;
- sign-post Crisis members onto other services that can best meet their needs.

An exemplar of Crisis Skylight Edinburgh’s approach is the partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that developed over several years. The team worked alongside DWP staff to help increase the number referrals to Crisis, and more specifically increase the number of eligible referrals to the *Progressing Towards Employment* project.
“As we established a presence [in the initial JobCentre Plus], referrals started coming to us... then the reputation of the service started to pick up... a lot of our referrals now come from DWP”

Crisis staff member

“...through DWP they have to go there because the benefits are paid there. So, it’s more appropriate referrals and a wider range of referrals. So, that’s one big piece of partnership work that’s been a real success.”

Crisis staff member

Reflection 4. Crisis demonstrates an ongoing commitment to capacity building within the Edinburgh team and across the sector.

Internal capacity building: The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team creates opportunities for learning and cross-pollination of ideas across the teams. Most recently this has included the introduction of a ‘buddying’ initiative. Colleagues from different Crisis teams come together to discuss support and opportunities for collaboration.

“...every member of the learning team and the progression team have a co-worker. They meet with each other on a monthly basis and they’ve got a terms of reference where they talk about ideas for service delivery. It gives staff ownership of changing practice.

[It] just gives a different perspective on things. If a person’s facing social isolation, they might say ‘didn’t you the cooking class is more about coming together rather than learning high level cooking skills’. So just to get a bit more fluidity and transfer [of ideas] across the team. That seems to be having an effect. It started in about January or February [2017]. That’s a recent innovation. But I think there is definitely more opportunities for developing that further...”

Crisis staff member

External capacity building: This ethos extends to sharing best practice and building capacity amongst other key stakeholders across the sector who come into contact with those at risk of becoming homeless. A recent innovation by Crisis aimed at improving the quality of support for those experiencing homelessness, has involved providing shadowing opportunities and training for staff working with vulnerable or at-risk populations.
“Another thing we [Crisis] do with DWP is arranging job shadowing so that their advisors [at the Jobcentre] can shadow our staff and find out more about Crisis. We’re also delivering homelessness awareness training to each of the Jobcentres. It’s hard to identify when someone is homeless. The hidden homelessness is a big issue ... and reluctance of people wanting to actually say that they’re homeless. So we’re going to deliver training... and we’ll probably do that again when there is an influx of new advisors...it’ll be ongoing.”

Crisis staff member

Reflection 5. There is continuous critical reflection by the team about what works and does not work, which is underpinned by ongoing and iterative adaptations.

“It [Crisis] is always adapting to change... We don’t have statutory funding generally, so there is so much flexibility to be able to withdraw services [if they’re not working] or put something else in where we see there is a need for it”

Crisis staff member

The team are regularly reviewing practice and looking for new and creative opportunities to better meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness. This has involved the set-up of regular Crisis drop-in sessions at several Jobcentre Plus offices; the Launchpad initiative delivered in various locations Edinburgh; exploration of potential collaboration with health services, particularly in the set-up of drop-in centres within GP practices. In other cases, critical reflection of practice may involve the withdrawal of services where it is not working (i.e. innovation by subtraction). One staff member reflecting on the evolving nature of the service highlighted:

“when I started the outreach was really just bed and breakfast...so we don’t do that at all now because what we found was it was really hit or miss, trying to engage people in B&Bs was really difficult and hostels where there’s a lot of services already.”

Crisis staff member

3 Edinburgh High Riggs JobCentre; Leith JobCentre Plus; Wester Hailes ESJ/Social Security Office

4 The Launchpad was a 6-8 week programme for those experiencing homelessness or were vulnerably housed, currently unemployed and not on the Work Programme. The initiative offered personalised coaching and volunteering opportunities to increase employability. It was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and delivered across various locations in Edinburgh.
Reflection 6. The Edinburgh Crisis Skylight team is made up of system changers.

The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team not only builds individual capacity of its members, but seeks to address systemic barriers to housing and employment. The Progressing Towards Employment project was set up and delivered amongst significant reforms to public systems. This included the ongoing implementation of benefits sanctions introduced nationwide in 2012, as well as the roll out of Universal Credit across Edinburgh in 2015. Changes to public systems and benefit reforms have a profound impact on those vulnerable individuals supported by Crisis. The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team is responsive to this evolving policy landscape and sensitive to the intended – and unintended - implications for members. At an individual level, Crisis has helped members challenge the legality of benefits or housing decisions. At a policy level, Crisis collaborates in partnerships such as SHAPE: Strategic Homeless Action Partnership in Edinburgh to develop evidence for change.

“I’ve got an extremely strong team. They are always thinking of ways to improve...and a need to innovate seems to be inherent in everything they do...”
Crisis staff member

The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team consistently explores and employs creative engagement strategies to better identify and support vulnerable populations disconnected from public systems. Indeed, the difficulties experienced by the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team to identify the Progressing Towards Employment target group were accompanied/characterised by a robust response of creative engagement strategies. Examples of these innovative approaches are provided in the subsections below.

Reflection 7. Although below target, reasonable reach was achieved.

Despite the challenges with identifying the eligible target group, Crisis Skylight Edinburgh managed to achieve 97% of the Progressing Towards Employment reach target. Over three years, 1,183 members were supported, of whom 586 met the Progressing Towards Employment eligibility criteria out of the original projected target of 592. Of those, 575 were supported by the project.
Reflection 8. Emotional health and wellbeing of members improved whilst involved with Crisis.

The number of members reporting increased confidence, self-esteem or motivation has increased after working with Crisis (181 members reported improvements).

Reflection 9. Employability skills of members increased whilst involved with Crisis, although this fell short of expected targets.

There were 155 members that reported improvements in their time management or communication, 127 members reported a desire to progress into further training, education, volunteering or employment, and 128 members have progressed into structured job-seeking.

Reflection 10. A considerable number of qualifications were obtained.

There were 130 qualifications obtained by 94 members (some members gained more than qualification in the period). This included 74 in Basic Skills, 30 in Personal Development, 17 in Employability, and 9 in Vocational courses.
Conclusion and recommendations

The Progressing Towards Employment project has provided the opportunity for the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh to further develop effective partnerships, set up robust referral pathways and gain a solid reputation for service delivery. This section provides five recommendations for the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team to consider for the future.

Recommendation 1. Develop a logical and clearly defined target group, who are most likely to benefit from Crisis involvement.

As a national charity, Crisis has a clear vision for who it aims to support: homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. For the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team, this would benefit from further refinement. For example, what segments of the population can Crisis best support given the nature of the service provision in Edinburgh? Can and should the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team do more work to engage rough sleepers? Indeed, is Crisis Skylight Edinburgh the most appropriate service for rough sleepers? Is the provision offered by the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team suitable for those actively struggling with addiction, or is more appropriate support provided elsewhere? Service design exercises, such as developing Personas\(^5\) with a clear focus on need and want profiles, would have significant benefits.

Recommendation 2. Identify (or create) robust needs assessments to inform accurate size and location of Crisis target populations.

The Progressing Towards Employment reach targets were not based on estimates of existing need. Crisis Skylight Edinburgh subsequently experienced significant challenges identifying the Progressing Towards Employment target group who met the specified eligibility criteria.\(^6\) There is opportunity for future Crisis research to develop robust needs assessments to better inform service delivery estimates and evaluate the effectiveness of Crisis reach. For example,

\(^5\) Personas are fictional archetypes developed after extensive experience of working in the sector and supporting beneficiaries.

\(^6\) Currently unemployed, not in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance and not receiving support from the Work Programme.
how many could benefit from Crisis provision in Edinburgh? How many could realistically be reached by Crisis? What is the current capacity of Crisis to support those who might benefit? An aspiration for the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team might be to obtain the data required for the following yearly estimate: ‘The Crisis Skylight team achieved XX% coverage of the eligible population across Edinburgh.’ This would involve mapping the system dynamics underpinning homelessness in Edinburgh, identifying existing useful data sources and exploring data sharing opportunities with new and/or current partner agencies.

Recommendation 3. Design and pilot creative engagement strategies to increase demand.

The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team continuously explores opportunities to find better, and more effective referral pathways (e.g. exploring drop-in opportunities at GP centres and developing stronger links with health services). There is scope to further engage more diverse or hidden populations across Edinburgh who are experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness. This could involve the use of digital technologies, not only to increase awareness of the service, but to elicit feedback and insight from populations in need, that are less likely to engage with the service. The Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team could also explore the set-up of an expert advisory panel with knowledge and experience of engaging hard-to-reach, vulnerable populations.

Recommendation 4. Ensure Crisis innovations are accompanied by rigorous empirical testing.

Success of Crisis innovations, and subsequent adaptations should be underpinned by quality data, and timely qualitative feedback from staff and Crisis members. There is opportunity to re-design Crisis’ existing data systems to ensure the different types of data ‘work harder’ to inform practice. Specifically, there is scope to measure less and focus on higher quality instruments that are consistently implemented to allow comparability. An upcoming Crisis initiative - Hothouses for Innovation: Rapid Cycle Innovation and Testing - would facilitate such an opportunity. If the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh were to become a Hothouse, it would create the space and time for staff to rapidly generate ideas, pilot and rigorously test whether they work.


There is opportunity, if additional funding can be secured, for the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh team to share their innovative approaches more widely across the sector via documentaries, webinars, animations, blogs etc. This will help raise
awareness and share best practice across the sector more widely – reaching those who would not ordinarily be reached if more traditional media were used.
Appendix 1. Data tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Eligible</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progressing Towards Employment</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Crisis</td>
<td>608</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact time with coaches (average hours face-to-face)</th>
<th>Working &amp; Learning Coach</th>
<th>Housing Coach</th>
<th>Progression Coach</th>
<th>Skills Coach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progressing Towards Employment</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Crisis</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications gained</th>
<th>All courses</th>
<th>Accredited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic skills</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employability</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member satisfaction</th>
<th>Yes (a little or a lot)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommend service to friend</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service was useful</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach or tutor was helpful</td>
<td>77%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Soft’ outcomes</th>
<th>Self-rated improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to progress into further education, training, volunteering or employment</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved time management or communication</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved confidence, self-esteem or motivation</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved relationships or trust in others</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressed to structured job-seeking</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**'Hard' outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secured housing</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>achieved pre-set goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>28%</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*At the start of their volunteering placements, members agree together with their coach (or tutor), an intended goal for the volunteering work being undertaken. For example, the member may want to use volunteering to gain specific work experience or improve their time management. This figure is the proportion of members who volunteered and also met their intended goal.*
Appendix 2. Data learning and improvements

As an organisation, Crisis is never standing still and its services develop as its members’ needs change. As part of the Dartington Service Design Lab’s wider evaluation work with Crisis, a series of recommendations have been made about how to bolster an already strong data and monitoring system. These recommendations are currently being considered by Crisis. By enhancing the monitoring of activity and outcomes, it will be possible to more effectively monitor the change in member journeys over time, and make inferences about what combination of activities is related to the greatest changes in outcomes. As such Crisis will be in a better position to identify areas of its service that need development earlier. Areas being considered by Crisis include the following: focus on bolstering of reach, ‘soft’ outcomes, engagement and satisfaction, and ‘hard’ outcomes.

Measuring reach

It is important for Crisis to be able to understand the contribution each of its services makes to the member’s journey. Attributing outcome change to a specific activity is difficult for many of the less tangible outcomes. It is still important to track which services within the Crisis Skylight offer seem to be contributing the most to outcome movement. Knowing the detail of how many contact hours a member has had across Crisis services will be a useful indicator. Rigorous attendance registers are already collected, so there is potential to add an indication of time per session to these registers.

‘Soft’ outcomes

Given that ‘soft’ outcomes are central to the Crisis Model of Change, bolstering their measurement could provide new insight. The Dartington Service Design Lab and Crisis are exploring opportunities to bolster measurement of other ‘soft’ outcomes and change in member journeys over time, including the use of suitable standardised measures. It is proposed that such measurement tools be used when a member first starts working with Crisis and at appropriate intervals afterwards (e.g. every six months). This could be instead of asking questions at the end of every course or coaching period via feedback forms. This could: (a)
provide more meaningful data on outcome change for all members in contact with Crisis; and (b) balance the data burden of using longer measures with a reduction in their frequency of application. Some shortened version of the current feedback forms should be maintained to collect member satisfaction at the end of a course or service period. This would be a considerable change from the current format of data collection. Crisis is currently considering these suggestions as part of a wider data system reform initiative.

**Member engagement and satisfaction**

Whether a contact is meaningful or not depends on whether a member engages meaningfully with Crisis learning activities. Apart from course feedback forms, there is no routine indication of whether a member showed up, but did not participate.

A simple indicator attached to the attendance register would help practitioners spot when members may be experiencing difficulties. It would also allow those monitoring the services to pick up when there seems to be a more systemic issue with engagement.

**‘Hard’ outcomes**

There is no pressing need to change the way ‘hard’ outcomes are measured. The way these outcomes are monitored on a routine basis could be simplified by prioritising their display better within Crisis’ current reporting structure and potentially on an interactive data dashboard.

**Providing data to practitioners**

The current data system reform Crisis is going through provides an opportunity to alter the way Crisis practitioners use and interact with data. Currently, the data system functions as a monitoring system at a Skylight level. The consequence of this is that inputted data are difficult for practitioners to access and view in an organised manner. Providing good quality data, in a timely manner back to practitioners could make a real difference to practice. This could follow a similar format to the data summary used here, but at an individual member level to allow practitioners to track progress in the data. Making the data more useful to those responsible for entering may also improve data quality and completeness. The new client database is currently being scoped and this is one of the features that is being considered by Crisis.