Hothouses for Innovation Challenge Workshop

Edinburgh Crisis Skylight, 19th of October, 2017
The Dartington Service Design Lab

Workshop Briefing
INTRODUCTION
How can we improve the lives of those who are homeless or living in vulnerable and insecure housing?

The Hothouses for Innovation initiative is a partnership between Crisis and the Dartington Service Design Lab (or ‘The Lab’). Crisis is a national charity for homeless people. It helps people directly out of homelessness, and campaigns for the changes needed to solve it altogether. Crisis’ ultimate aim is to eradicate homelessness. The Lab are an independent charity that re-imagine the way services and public systems are designed and delivered in order to improve the lives of children, families and communities. The Lab have been commissioned by Crisis to undertake the Hothouse for Innovation initiative: a service design project aimed at improving outcomes for those who might benefit from Crisis support.

The initiative will bring together – in facilitated design workshops – those who deliver the service and Crisis members who use the service. Together, Crisis staff and members will:

1. Identify and agree priority challenges
   October 2017

2. Design and trial innovations to tackle the priority challenges
   March 2018

3. Rigorously test and adapt innovations
   Ongoing 2018 - 2019

THE CHALLENGE WORKSHOP
Crisis staff and members came together with key local partners over the course of a full-day workshop. The goals of the workshop were to (a) produce systems maps to help adopt a system-wide approach to understanding the factors driving homelessness in Edinburgh; (b) use insights from the systems maps to identify a long-list of challenges that Crisis could potentially address as part of the Hothouse for Innovation initiative, and; (c) reframe those challenges as questions before voting for a shortlist of priority challenges.

The session did not explore solutions or innovations. It is essential, before moving on to consider any solutions or ideas, to explore and obtain some consensus about the biggest challenges faced by Crisis members and staff. This sequencing helps ensure innovations and ideas are developed in response to the agreed priority challenge.

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS
There were c.18 Crisis staff, c.4 Crisis members, and c.15 partner organisations (see appendix for partners). The session was facilitated by the Dartington Service Design Lab: Tim Hobbs, Lab Director; Kate Tobin, Service Design Specialist; Ben Hartridge, Researcher; Maria Portugal, Communications and Design Specialist and; Rosie Allen, Researcher.

SYSTEMS MAP: HOMELESSNESS
The system map below consolidates the influences that emerged during facilitated sessions with Crisis staff and partners. For a brief insight into how the system map was developed on the day, please click the following video clip. It showcases one of the partners from the workshop talking about the relationship between mental ill health, zero-hours contracts and job insecurity.

Note: If you wish to view the video, please open the briefing with Adobe PDF (Flash plugin).
The below reflects the challenge priorities that emerged from the all-day Challenge Workshop and subsequent briefings with the Skylight Director and Edinburgh Innovation Coordinators.

1. How can Crisis work in partnership with other organisations to better support members with multiple and complex needs – including those with mental health support needs?

Rationale:
This challenge emerged from a concern that 'siloed working' has a detrimental impact on members with multiple needs. Staff members were concerned that there was no single hub or point of contact for those with multiple needs. Instead, members and others in vulnerable housing situations are left having to navigate their own way around a complex system.

The teams raised a number of related concerns that hinder effective partnership working when attempting to support those with multiple needs including:

- the limited resources (and skills) of partners to effectively identify and support members at risk of homelessness. Some partners had expressed difficulties in being able to recognise when someone is at risk of homelessness and their uncertainty about what to do next.

- some agents in the system were providing inaccurate/ misleading advice about entitlements, which is likely in part due to the complexity of the system, recent benefit reforms and limited housing stock.

- struggling to efficiently and succinctly explain what Crisis does for members. The service is personalised and tailored to meet the needs of the members. As a consequence, the type and intensity of support that is offered varies from member to member. This makes it difficult for staff members to effectively explain to partners what Crisis does for members.

- different types of support within Crisis could work together more effectively to better meet the needs of members. There are numerous types of activities and support offered by Crisis. Some of the teams are not aware of the specifics of this support or how it might fit in with their own practice.

- limited resources coupled with target-driven commissioning increases unhelpful competition and a reluctance to work together.

There was a particular concern raised in relation to members experiencing poor mental health.
It was felt there was a significant lack of mental health provision available within the community which is unable to meet the size of the demand.

While a considerable number of members were experiencing poor mental health, staff felt that they did not have the training or expertise to support members appropriately. However, staff debated whether Crisis should bolster their mental health provision by better equipping staff to support members with poor mental health.

Staff felt that offering ‘mental health support’ would mean Crisis would be unable to manage the increase in demand for the service. It was generally agreed that Crisis cannot / should not provide mental health services for those who meet clinical thresholds of depression, anxiety etc. This is best left to existing services (although, concerns remained about the limited reach of existing provision). Staff discussed whether they could be trained to support members who fall below the clinical threshold but need more than a ‘listening service’.

Please note: Edinburgh Crisis Skylight are currently exploring opportunities / about to pilot ‘a light touch’ mental health provision.

2. How can Crisis better support homeless people from outside the UK?

Rationale:
Staff felt that in recent years there has been an increase in the number of people from outside the UK who require Crisis’ support. It was argued that those from outside the UK were an exceptionally high-risk group for destitution. They have no or limited recourse to public funds. Staff did not feel fully equipped to effectively manage the distinct challenges experienced by members from outside the UK. The language barrier is another related difficulty staff members experience in providing support to this group of (potential) members who often have little or no spoken English.

3. How can Crisis support homeless people to gain a voice and influence local and national policy that affects them?

Rationale:
Participants felt that within a Scottish context there was greater scope for those with ‘expertise by experience’ to influence and shape local and national policy. In particular, there is scope for homeless people to have a greater impact on housing policies and to a lesser extent on welfare policies (or at least to challenge unfair sanctions).

All Councils in Scotland have a legal responsibility to provide help and find accommodation if someone has become homeless. Importantly, some at the workshop felt that Edinburgh Council – at times – had not met their statutory responsibilities in providing help and assistance to those who meet the relevant criteria. There was also a concern about the quality and accuracy of advice provided to those in vulnerable housing situations or those subject to sanctions.

Some of the members present flagged this challenge as especially important to them.

4. How can Crisis increase and maintain member engagement?

Rationale:
Several classes delivered by Crisis within partnership organisations do not have high numbers of attendees. Member attendance at conferences and other similar events has also been lower than hoped or anticipated. Participants proposed some potential reasons for this including: the scattered nature of classes held within partnership organisations across Edinburgh and insufficient communication between the progression and learning teams to identify opportunities, although the Skylight has recently implemented a buddy system to address this. Barriers to member engagement could benefit from further attention to build deeper understanding if this is selected as a priority challenge.

The Crisis building and telephones were also raised as potential barriers to member engagement. The buzzer entry system, for instance, might be off-putting to potential members; the telephone line is implicitly branded as a helpline, but there isn’t staff capacity to provide this service; the Skylight does not have the capacity for drop-in appointments.

5. How can Crisis develop innovative partnerships to explore and identify alternative models for accessible, affordable and quality housing?

Rationale:
A lack of affordable, quality housing was identified as one of the most significant barriers facing Crisis members and others in vulnerable housing situations. A related risk was the length of time members (and others facing homelessness) were spending in unsuitable, temporary accommodation. An example of an existing Crisis initiative in this area is the Life in Limbo campaign.

NEXT STEPS
In November 2017, the priority challenges will be presented to the Crisis Evaluation and Insight Board made up of senior representatives from across Crisis. The Board will discuss and agree one challenge for the Crisis Skylight Edinburgh to take forward.

In February 2018, the Lab will facilitate an intensive ‘Design Sprint’ with Crisis Skylight Edinburgh that will bring members, staff and partners back together to co-design two or three prototype solutions to the priority challenge.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED?
All staff, members and volunteers across Crisis will be invited to contribute ideas and innovations in response to prioritised challenges which will be announced in November 2017.
APPENDICES

INFLUENCE MAP 1. FACTORS THAT NEGATIVELY INFLUENCE THE PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS

Barriers that work against the prevention of homelessness

- Universal credit
- Complex benefit system
- Sanctions
- In-work poverty
- Real wages frozen
- Hidden homelessness
- Increase mortgage rates
- Lack of budgeting and self-care skills
- Mental health difficulties
- Number/Output-driven services
- Distust of services / past failures
- Uninformed, and/or incorrect advice from services
- Public system cuts
- Limited reach and capacity of mental health services
- Job insecurity
- Zero hour contracts
- Lack of affordable, quality housing
- ‘One-size fits all’ approach
- Lack of awareness of rights and entitlements
- Stigma
INFLUENCE MAP 2. ROUGH SLEEPING

Rough sleeping

- Risk to personal safety
- Increased risk of exploitation
- Poor physical health
- Alcohol and drug addiction
- Poverty
- Mental health difficulties
- Employment
- Migrating towards prospects in capital
- Begging / finances / benefits
- Reduction of available housing
- Lack of awareness about rights and entitlements
- No central hub that meets complex needs / disconnected or siloed working
- Disengagement from services
- Lack of suitable, affordable accommodation
- Institution

INFLUENCE MAP 3. FACTORS THAT NEGATIVELY IMPACT EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Barriers to effective partnership working

- Complimenting each other's expertise
- Lack of understanding as to what partners services provide
- Poor reputation of service
- Poor communication
- Power imbalance
- Increased competition for resources / finances
- Lack of willingness to work in partnership
- Duplications
- Shared objectives / values
- Lack of information sharing
INFLUENCE MAP 4. FACTORS IMPACTING UPON THE PROBLEM OF HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS

The team felt the 'hidden homeless' are perhaps less isolated than rough sleepers, and others who are more visible to services. The hidden homeless perhaps have more social capital to rely on - and so do not necessarily come to the attention of services.
TIMETABLE

Challenge Workshop Agenda
Edinburgh

MORNING SESSION: 10am – 12.30pm
Participants: Partners (c.8), and Crisis staff representatives (c.5)

SETTING THE SCENE
Influence Maps
Teams: Hidden homelessness; Rough Sleeping; Prevention;
Partnership working; Mental health
System Map Consolidation

All staff and partners

LUNCH: 12.30PM – 1PM

AFTERNOON SESSION: 1PM - 4PM
Participants: Members and all staff

1pm – 3pm: Staff only (all)
Brief welcome for all staff
Gathering insight from staff
Develop longlist of challenges (teams)
Prioritise challenges and reframe as questions (teams)

3pm – 4pm: Members arrive
Dragon's Den-style presentation to members of priority challenges and why they were selected

STAFF AND MEMBER VOTES
Brief closing and next steps

PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATIONS AT THE WORKSHOP

Edinburgh Housing Advice Partnership
Edinburgh and Midlothian Offender Recovery Service
Four Square
Women's Aid
Edinburgh College
Fresh Start
Cyrenians
Department for Work and Pensions
Edinburgh City Council
Streetwork