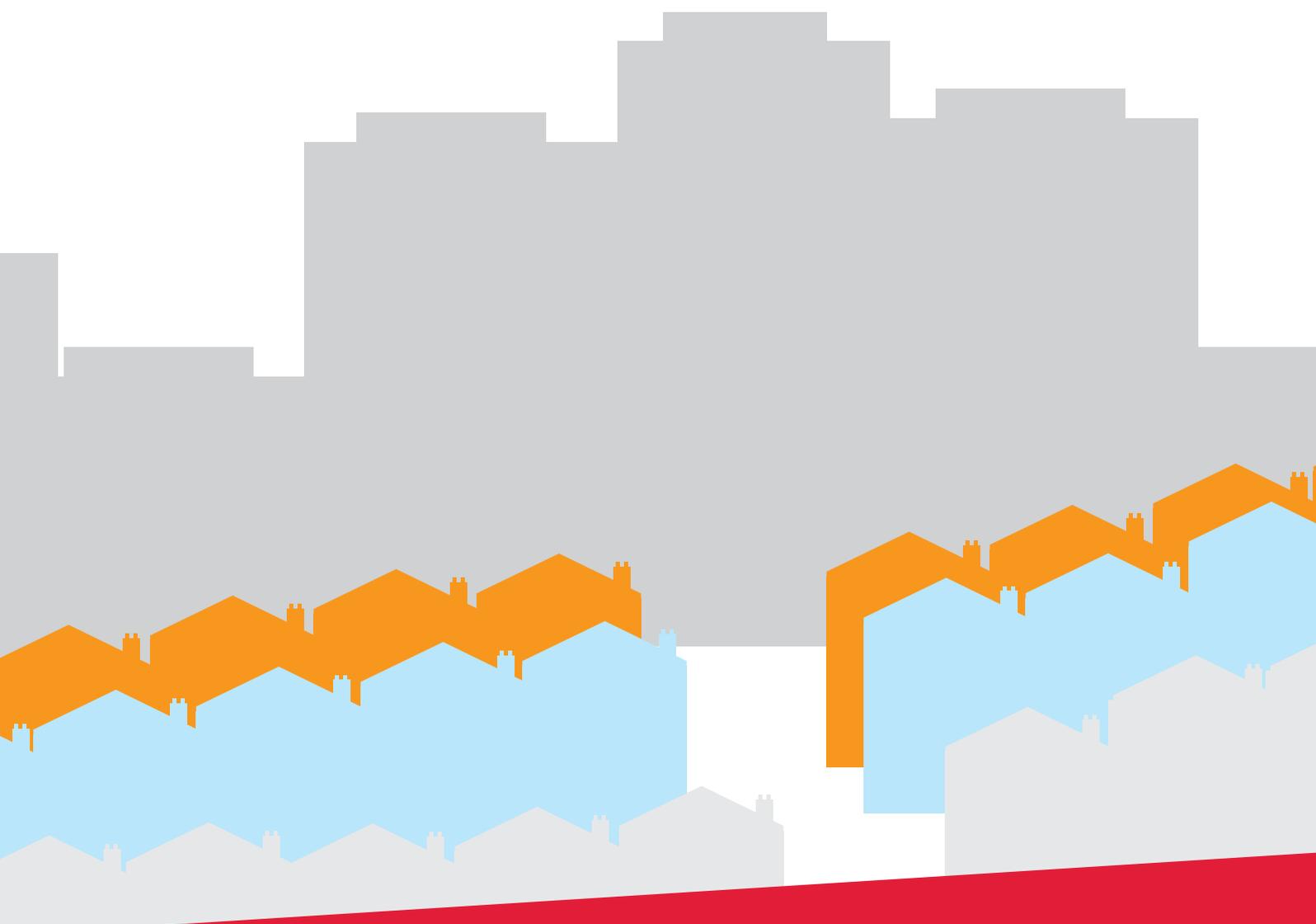


Crisis' Private Rented Sector Access Development Programme Final Evaluation Report

Julie Rugg, Centre for Housing Policy, University of York

June 2014



About Crisis

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

Our innovative education, employment, housing and well-being services address individual needs and help homeless people to transform their lives.

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

Crisis head office

66 Commercial Street

London E1 6LT

Tel: 0300 636 1967

Fax: 0300 636 2012

www.crisis.org.uk

© Crisis 2014

ISBN 978-1-899257-92-8

Crisis UK (trading as Crisis). Registered Charity Numbers:
E&W1082947, SC040094. Company Number: 4024938

Table of Contents

<i>Executive summary</i>	ii
1. Introduction	1
Introduction.....	1
Nature of access work	1
A challenging context	2
The early development of the PRS Access Development Programme	4
Evaluation questions.....	5
Evaluation method	5
Structure of the report	6
Conclusion	7
2. Programme principles	8
Introduction.....	8
Programme principles.....	8
Programme support.....	11
Conclusion	12
3. Management of the programme	13
Introduction.....	13
Case study schemes	13
Applying for the grant	15
Securing local authority support.....	16
Defining the client group.....	17
Target setting	18
Incentives.....	19
Monitoring.....	19
Scheme sustainment	20
Developing a staffing resource	21
Crisis support.....	21
Conclusion	23
4. Funding rounds and outcomes	24
Introduction.....	24
The funded schemes	24
Outcomes	26
Understanding success	27
Conclusion	28
5. Programme outcomes	29
Introduction.....	29
Meeting Programme objectives	29
Outcomes for Crisis	30
Lessons learned.....	31
Conclusion	34
APPENDIX: Funding rationales.....	35

Executive summary

Chapter one: Introduction

- Securing a tenancy in the private rented sector (PRS) remains the principal option open to single non-statutorily homeless households. Access schemes have evolved, principally in the voluntary sector, to support tenancy creation. There is a 'mixed economy' of schemes across the country, operating at various scales.
- The contexts for access work have become increasingly challenging: growth of the PRS has increased demand for property at all levels; there is particularly high competition for shared property; the LHA has not necessarily kept pace with market rents in all areas; and cuts to local authority budgets create a challenging environment for schemes seeking funding.
- The Private Rented Access Development Programme began in 2010 and was devised by Crisis, working with and funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government. The Programme has aimed to increase the number and geographic spread of access work and to encourage the creation of sustainable tenancies. The Programme has also aimed to create sustainable schemes, well-networked in their locality and better able to secure alternative funding when the Programme came to an end.
- This report presents findings from an evaluation of the Programme, using multiple quantitative and qualitative methods. The substantive questions of the evaluation are whether the Programme has met its objectives in expanding the availability of PRS access services in a sustainable fashion; and whether Crisis management of the Programme has been effective in securing its long-term objectives.

Chapter two: Programme principles

- The Programme contains a number of distinctive elements, which combine administration of the funding programme and the creation of a framework to support organisations that have received funding. Organisations were given assistance to apply for funding, and were required to secure a statement of support from their local authority.
- The Programme supported the creation of new access schemes, where evidence was presented of unmet need amongst defined single homeless groups: those falling in a prevention category, and were homeless but not in priority need; individuals working with housing options, for example, in hostels, and required move-on assistance; and chronic services users with a history of rough sleeping.
- Targets were negotiated for each scheme, covering the number of new tenancies created, and number sustained beyond an initial six-month period. A portion of the grant was payable relative to performance against the two targets. Performance was monitored via a management portal which allowed the inputting of new tenancy data in 'real time.' This administrative requirement was designed to be as least onerous as possible, and then precluded the need for formal reporting.
- The Programme operated through three rounds of funding (R1, R2 and R3). A second year of 'continuation' funding was made available to R1 and R2, but was a reduced amount compared with the first year's funding, to encourage organisations to begin seeking alternative funding sources.
- The Programme developed a wide range of support mechanisms for schemes including access to one of two dedicated Development Officers, service toolkits

available via the website, networking opportunities and PRS 'Champions', which operated to disseminate good practice.

Chapter three: Programme management

- Programme management was explored through qualitative work with thirteen case study schemes, chosen to reflect diversity in geographic location, experience in access work, type of organisation and client group.
- Schemes were positive about many elements of Programme management, including support for the grant application and reporting performance through use of the management portal.
- Schemes had markedly variable relationships with their local authority, and consequently found it more or less difficult to secure support. Crisis intervention could be helpful in forging better relationships, but Crisis staff themselves noted that on occasion it was difficult to offer effective mediation.
- Organisations were generally happy to work with difficult client groups, and indeed those groups were often their core constituency, and no incentive would have been needed to ensure that the work was targeted at those in the higher need categories. The three categories were to some degree porous. In practice, there was negotiation between Crisis and schemes on individual cases and their eligibility for help under the Programme, with the proviso that help would always be focussed on the single non-statutory homeless.
- Funding sustainment for schemes was problematic. Some schemes were successful in securing additional funding at the continuation stage and following the end of the Programme but these were

in the minority. Many schemes opted to cross-subsidise their access work or apply to other charities for funding.

- There was agreement across the schemes and Crisis staff that scheme success relied to a very large degree on the individual brought in to undertake access work. Achieving and sustaining tenancies depended on the creation of a close working relationship with landlords and sound judgement on the capacities and readiness of the tenant. These relationships depended to a large degree on trust.
- Crisis support was welcomed by schemes to a degree mediated by their experience in access work, as might be expected. Schemes favoured having access to a dedicated Development Officer, and often used the tools made available on the Crisis website. The networking events were considered useful, particularly for schemes with more limited experience.

Chapter four: Funding rounds and outcomes

- The Programme funded 153 schemes in total, although at any one time the number of schemes in operation varied according to the operational year, and because over the course of the Programme some schemes were 'paused', a small number were merged. Not all schemes applied for continuation funding, and as a consequence the underspend of budget at R2 led to the creation of new schemes.
- The funded schemes represented a spread across the English regions, with a higher number in Greater London, reflecting both the larger PRS and housing affordability and supply issues in the capital.
- Overall, it is likely that the Programme will meet its target, but there was marked variation in scheme performance. Nearly

two-thirds of R1 and R2 schemes merited 76 per cent or more of their outcome payment.

- The number of funded schemes was too small to be able to draw any robust conclusions on a tendency to succeed or fail in meeting the tenancy or sustainment targets. However, it was evident that schemes in London, the East and the West Midlands were less likely to reach their targets; higher levels of performance were evident in the ‘prevention’ and rough sleeper category schemes; and half the schemes dealing with young people or ex-offenders were in the top quartile for performance.
- Overall, it appeared that meeting the tenancy creation target was more problematic than meeting the tenancy sustainment target.
- It was evident that success rested on the interaction of a range of variables played out at a very localised level. It is possible to recognise elements that might contribute to a scheme’s success or failure, without necessarily being able to replicate those conditions elsewhere.
- Despite all these difficulties, schemes are succeeding in finding ways forward. Access schemes are exploring work around the creation of shared tenancies, and developments are taking place in the creation of chargeable services for landlords.
- Overall, there is a concern that the long-term objectives with regard to scheme sustainability have been compromised. The Programme did create ‘dots on the map’, but only a minority of schemes had secured funding from their local authority to cover scheme services after the Programme’s cessation.
- Nevertheless, the Programme has substantially boosted experience and understanding of working with the PRS. Where scheme workers are redeployed within the same or other homelessness organisations, the knowledge and understanding is likely to be utilised.
- There are a number of messages arising from the Programme, for Crisis, for landlords, for local authorities, for voluntary sector agencies running access schemes or thinking about running access schemes and for the DCLG.

Programme outcomes

- Taken in its totality, the Programme has fulfilled expectations in establishing new schemes across all the English regions and extending access work to demand groups overlooked by existing service provision. There are more ‘dots on the map.’
- However, access work is becoming more difficult. Tenancy creation was proving to be more difficult than tenancy sustainment, and reflected the impact of a broad range of changes, including a tighter housing market, competition from local authorities for suitable affordable property, and an altogether less ‘benign’ context for access work. For example, local authorities were less likely to be co-operative.
- Key messages are to underline the cost-effectiveness of access work compared with more inflationary and distorting interventions such as incentive payment to landlords or the use of hostels. Access work can deliver on the prevention agenda, can assist with move-on and even – with the right level of support – deal with entrenched rough sleeping.
- Financial support disseminated through the voluntary sector ensures that funding reaches the ‘front line’ and directly alleviates the housing needs of single non-statutory homeless people.

1. Introduction

Introduction

For single homeless households that lack any priority for assistance in the statutory sector, the Private Rented Sector (PRS) is often the only viable housing option. The voluntary sector has in the past been resistant to use of the PRS, in particular since local authority P1E homelessness returns show that the ending of short-term tenancies constitutes one of the major reasons why households become homeless. However, the private rented sector is not innately problematic: households relying on housing benefit can find a long-term home in the sector.¹ Since the early 1990s, private sector ‘access’ schemes have been in operation to help tenants in acute housing need to secure PRS tenancies. Crisis has been at the forefront in developing protocols and initiatives to ensure that a PRS tenancy constitutes a sustainable option for single homeless tenants who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, but for whom the local authority has no statutory duty to house.

This report presents findings from an evaluation of the Private Rented Sector Access Development Programme, which began in 2010. The Programme aimed to expand the number of access schemes in operation, and to extend their reach to include client groups not served by existing services. The Programme was developed as a consequence of collaboration between the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Crisis, and with input from major stakeholders including Homeless Link, the Ministry of Justice, the National Landlords Association, the Greater London Authority, and the National Treatment Agency.

This introductory chapter briefly outlines the nature of access work before summarising some of the broader changes that have had a substantive impact on the delivery of services. Changes in the housing market, homelessness legislation, HMO planning regulations, Welfare Reform and cuts in local government spending have all constituted a key context for understanding the Programme’s development and outcomes, particularly with regard to the central issue of sustainability. The chapter then goes on to outline the principal questions for the Evaluation, and describe the Evaluation method.

Nature of access work

Policy initiatives around the use of the private rented sector (PRS) to accommodate households on low income have been in place since the early 1990s. An initial focus on accommodation registers and the provision of assistance with bonds or rent in advance had by the mid-1990s developed into a broader understanding of the needs of both the tenant and landlord, and indeed a desire to support the tenancy itself.² By the start of the Private Rented Sector Access Development Programme in 2010, access work had begun to focus on the need to ensure that tenants were fully prepared for independent living: an effective scheme will ensure that its clients have training in or prior understanding of budgeting, dealing with utilities, and tenant rights and responsibilities with regard to rent payment and anti-social behaviour. At the same time, schemes were also attracting landlords through the development of a suite of services to mitigate the risks that might otherwise be associated with letting to a tenant who has experience

1 J. Rugg and D. Rhodes (2008) *The Private Rented Sector: Its Contribution and Potential*, York: Centre for Housing Policy.

2 J. Rugg (1996) *Opening Doors: Helping People on Low Income Secure Private Rented Accommodation*, York: Centre for Housing Policy.

of homelessness and be in receipt of local housing allowance (LHA). Those services might include helplines for both landlord and tenant, inventory services pre- and post-tenancy, and in some instances rental guarantees for a specified time period.

There are common elements of good practice that carry across all types of voluntary sector access scheme, but considerable variety remains between schemes. This variety is an important element of scheme success, and reflects evolution from local circumstances. There are a number of ownership models: for example, schemes are operated by housing associations and by local arms of larger national organisations such as the YMCA or NACRO. A number of local and regional homelessness charities – often evolving from individual small-scale Christian homelessness initiatives such as soup kitchens – have also developed services within which access schemes may be nested. Consequently, access work can at times be little more than informal work with PRS landlords, or comprise a major undertaking of and in itself, covering an entire region. Schemes will also serve a range of needs, including clients who may only need financial assistance to access a tenancy, through to clients who may have recently served a custodial sentence or who may still be recovering from alcohol or drug addiction.

Schemes will also be operating in different housing markets, where private rented property is more or less readily available. The nature of the local market will in many cases dictate outcomes for schemes that may be in competition for property with other renters not reliant on local housing allowance, and with statutory agencies better able to offer financial incentives to private landlords.

It might be argued, therefore, that a ‘mixed economy’ of access schemes has developed across England. The innate flexibility of access

work means that it can evolve and adapt to local circumstances, and is particularly amenable to service innovation. The Programme has been able to draw on these strengths, and to target central government investment at organisations best placed to make advances in access service delivery.

A challenging context

Access work is becoming more challenging as a consequence of a broad tranche of changes to the housing market and to the statutory agencies that have traditionally supported households who are vulnerable in that market. Each of these changes carries impact depending on the localised interplay of variables. Furthermore, organisations supporting access work are themselves under pressure as revenue funding streams become uncertain. The following summary is not exhaustive, but indicates that schemes are often dealing with challenges coming from multiple directions.

Increasing demand for privately rented property

The headline report for the English Housing Survey 2012-13 indicated that the PRS had overtaken the social rented sector, and was housing 18 per cent of the population. Since 2008, the proportion of owner occupied households has declined at a faster rate than the proportion of social housing tenants, increasing the demand for market-level rented property. There has also been a marked increase in the number of households in the PRS receiving housing benefit, up to 25 per cent from 19 per cent in 2008-9. It might be argued that this development reflects an increased willingness of landlords to let to this group, but the figure also indicates growing demand for property at the bottom end of the market.³

3 Department for Communities and Local Government (2014) *English Housing Survey, Headline Report 2012-13*. London: DCLG.

Local authorities' use of PRS properties

Local authority interest in PRS properties has introduced an element of competition for property, in particular through the payment of incentives to landlords to enter into leasing schemes for temporary accommodation. Since 2008, the number of properties in private sector leasing schemes has declined from 47,740 to 26,080.⁴ However, local authority engagement with the PRS is likely to remain high as a consequence of the Localism Act, 2011. Under the Act, enacted from November 2012, local authorities may discharge their duty to house a household accepted as eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless through a private rented sector 'offer'. Some local authorities – particularly in London – continue to rely on incentive payments to secure PRS properties, distorting the market to the disadvantage of non-statutorily homeless households.

Changes to HMO planning requirements

From 2010, changes to planning regulations introduced the option for local authorities to control the creation of houses in multiple occupation. The regulations allow local authorities to define areas in which a planning application will be required in order for a property to be let as a HMO. Ostensibly, this regulation was intended to control the expansion of high-density student neighbourhoods around places of higher education. In actuality, there are anecdotal reports of some local authority planning officers imposing 'quotas' on HMO establishment despite an increased need for shared accommodation following changes to the LHA. As with other changes listed here, the impact is likely to be highly localised, but will cause substantial difficulties in areas where demand for property is already high because of large student populations.

Local Housing Allowance: changes to the SAR

The Local Housing Allowance has always included a presumption that under-25s would only be eligible for the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR), which paid the equivalent of a room in a shared house. From January, 2012, the SAR was extended to include single people under the age of 35. The change would not apply where an individual had been living in a hostel for three months, or was an ex-offender likely to be of risk to other sharers. Changes to the SAR have substantially increased demand for shared accommodation, and again enhanced competition for property in this instance to the disadvantage of younger sharers (aged 18-25), which is one of the groups least favoured by landlords.⁵

Local Housing Allowance: changes to payments

Other changes to the LHA have meant that the payment is now less likely to meet the full cost of renting a property, whether shared or tenanted singly. These changes include:

- From April, 2011 a shift in the calculation of rents within BRMAs so the rates are set at the 30th rather than the 50th percentile, setting the rents at the average of the very lowest end of the PRS; and
- From April, 2012, LHA freezing rates for one year prior to the introduction, in 2013, of annual uprating according to the Consumer Price Index. LHA rates are no longer tied to local rent increases, creating an increased risk of shortfall in high-pressure housing markets.

These changes mean that tenants reliant on LHA are less likely to be able to 'shop' in the PRS and find accommodation that is safe, secure, of reasonable quality and suitable

⁴ H. Pawson and S. Wilcox (2013) *UK Housing Review*, Coventry: CIH, Table 91a.

⁵ Centre for Housing Policy (2011) *Unfair Shares: A Report on the Impact of Extending the Shared Accommodation Rate of Housing Benefit*, York: Centre for Housing Policy.

to their needs. Where choices are limited, tenants are more likely to take properties that are innately unsustainable.⁶

Overall reductions in local authority spending

Under the Coalition government, reductions in local authority spending and other spending changes have created further difficulties for access schemes and reduced the availability of services that might otherwise have been available to help support PRS access tenancies.

Changes included:

- A presumption that the majority of households, irrespective of income, will make some contribution to local Council Tax. Substantial reductions in Council Tax Benefit create budgeting problems for households already struggling to meet a shortfall between their rent payments and the LHA.
- A removal of the ring-fence from Supporting People budgets in 2009 has followed and been followed by progressive cuts to that budget at the local level.⁷ This budget has been a principal source of finance for the delivery of services by the voluntary sector to vulnerable groups, and in particular marginal groups falling outside the remit of statutory agencies. There are concerns that this budget is itself now vulnerable to being absorbed into other local authority budget headings in an attempt to secure savings through service reorganisation.
- Other local authority services including housing advice and money advice services have also been subject to reductions in expenditure. Similarly, environmental health offices, which already tend to give low priority to policing standards in the

PRS, will be even more unlikely to monitor effectively the growing rental sector.

The early development of the PRS Access Development Programme

Since the 1990s, Crisis has had a strong focus on meeting the housing needs of single homeless people through the use of access schemes. The Crisis 'Smartmove' franchise encouraged the establishment of model access schemes, and took over the work of the National Rent Deposit Forum which had supported various PRS access initiatives across the country. Crisis developed a national advisory service that included the creation and maintenance of a database of all known PRS schemes. The database and other information of value to organisations wishing to develop access work were made available on the Crisis website.

In 2008, the Government launched 'No-one Left Out', which was a new strategy to tackle rough sleeping. The strategy included a commitment to expand the provision of PRS access schemes, and to that end created two advisor posts within Crisis specifically to improve local authority PRS access services for single homeless people. A case was made by Crisis to DCLG that pump-priming money should be made available where the need and potential for a new scheme could be demonstrated. In total, Crisis was responsible for securing around ten small grants to establish new schemes. A review of the schemes took place in March 2010 when it was agreed that more needed to be done within the homelessness prevention agenda to expand the services available to single homeless people.

The objective was to build a more substantive framework that would encourage the creation of new and sustainable access schemes for single homeless people for whom the local

⁶ J. Rugg (2008) *A Route to Homelessness? A Study of Why Private Sector Tenants Become Homeless*, London: Shelter.
⁷ House of Commons (2012) 'The Supporting People Programme', *Research Paper 12/40*

authority did not owe a statutory homelessness duty. A funding programme was devised by Crisis and DCLG working collaboratively. The funding would not be held centrally or be distributed by local authorities, but be made available directly to local organisations through a grant application process administered by Crisis. This method ensured that the money would be spent in a way that was immediately responsive to local need and focussed on single homelessness. Funding would be used to develop front-line services with dedicated staff developing the skills and experience needed to secure and support private sector tenancies. The funding from DCLG would be time-limited, and so the Programme also aimed to build local capacity that had the potential to carry services on beyond the initial funding period. Similar long-term benefits would be unlikely to accrue for other options, for example, capital funding to underwrite deposit guarantees or pay other access costs. In addition, funding would not be made available to local authorities directly, since there was a risk of it being absorbed to meet the needs of statutorily homeless households.

Once in operation, the Programme was supported by an advisory group that included representatives from DCLG, the Ministry of Justice, Homeless Link, the National Landlords Association, the Greater London Authority, and the National Treatment Agency. Members of the group served on the panels that made the final decision on schemes receiving funding and on the principles guiding each funding round.

Funding was available to cover a year of operation, and was available in three rounds. R1 covered schemes starting in the financial year 2011-12, R2 schemes started in 2012-13 and R3 funding covered 2013-14. For R1 and R2 schemes, a reduced amount of funding was made available for a second year of operation. This 'continuation' funding depended on progress against meeting first year funding

targets. R3 schemes were funded for one year only, with no continuation. Detailed discussion of each funding round is given in the Appendix.

Evaluation questions

The Evaluation has aimed to cover two substantive questions:

- Has the Programme met its objective of expanding the availability of PRS access services in a sustainable fashion?
- Has Crisis management of the Programme been effective in securing its long-term objectives?

These two issues – the outcomes of the Programme and the effectiveness of Programme management by Crisis – encompass a whole series of more detailed subsidiary questions addressing the principles underpinning the Programme's operation. The core focus of the Programme has been to promote sustainability, in terms of the types of tenancy being created, and – perhaps uniquely – in the way in which support for the development of access work has been framed. However, an unanticipated question that has arisen during the course of the Evaluation is how far the Programme's objectives have been undermined by the increasingly challenging local contexts within which access schemes operate. Furthermore, in this difficult environment what longer-term impacts has the Programme been able to deliver?

Evaluation method

Evaluation of the Programme began in the final quarter of 2012, and comprised the collation of material from a number of sources. This report will not provide detailed commentary on each method and its findings, but rather integrate findings in a more thematic approach. Note that key messages from an internal interim report on the

evaluation were published in the Programme Year Two report.⁸

Administrative data

Administrative data scrutinised as part of the evaluation included all the quarterly and annual reports and data from the monitoring portal. Information on schemes was entered into an SPSS database to facilitate analysis of scheme types, client groups, regions and outcomes. Information was also garnered from feedback forms circulated at Crisis Programme events.

Scheme surveys

The results from a number of online surveys have been included in the Evaluation, particularly as they relate to levels of satisfaction with Crisis management of the Programme, and with funding strategies. It should be noted that response numbers to surveys could be markedly variable. For example, a Crisis survey of R1 schemes, conducted in April 2012, had 31 responses from 49 schemes. Another survey of schemes applying for Round 2 funding included returns from 83 respondents. A further on-line survey of all schemes was completed independently as part of the evaluation in February 2014 resulted in 43 responses. Small response numbers precludes detailed qualitative analysis of these surveys, but they were all purposively designed to include the opportunity for a number of ‘free text’ comments, and this information will be integrated at appropriate points in the report.

Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods included face-to-face interviews with eleven organisations. The organisations were chosen to represent variety in terms of geography, scale of operation, target client group and funding year. All geographic regions of England were included. Five of the organisations had single Crisis schemes, and the remaining six had multiple schemes funded under the programme. In total, the eleven organisations had received funding to support 25 schemes,

seven of which had received funding in R1, and the remaining schemes in R2. Some of the organisations had received further funding in R3 but the timing of the interview precluded any detailed discussion of that Round. Thirteen of the schemes were working with under-35s as a specialism, eleven had no specialism and one dealt specifically with ex-offenders. Where organisations had multiple schemes, this tended to reflect work over different geographic locations rather than variation in client groups or services in the same location. Findings from the interviews have informed chapter four, which considers Programme management by Crisis, and parts of chapter five considering outcomes and legacy.

In addition, four face-to-face interviews took place with Crisis staff who were directly involved in Programme management. The information collected from these interviews has informed all parts of this report.

Interviews were also arranged with external organisations that were represented on the Programme advisory group. Much of this information has been included in the final section of the report.

Structure of the report

The remainder of the report has been structured into four chapters. Chapter two outlines the early development of the Programme, and details the principles of its operation. Chapter three includes information on the types of schemes funded, and performance in meeting targets on tenancies created and sustained. Chapter four looks in detail at Crisis’ management of the Programme and reflects on how far the Programme has fulfilled its core principles. A final section reviews outcomes for the Programme, and considers how far performance has been compromised by the economic and policy changes. Assessment will be made of the longer-term legacy of the Programme, deriving lessons for key

audiences including Crisis itself, charitable organisations, local authorities, landlords and the DCLG.

Conclusion

Evaluation of the Crisis Private Rented Sector Development Programme has taken place during a period in which substantial changes have taken place to the funding environment for third sector schemes, particularly those with a remit for assisting single homeless people. The Programme has contained a distinctive emphasis on sustainability, both in terms of creating tenancies likely to last for the long term, and schemes able to devise strategies to secure funding once Programme support has come to an end.

A multi-method approach has been taken to evaluation of the Programme, including qualitative and quantitative elements. The Evaluation has been able to answer its two substantive questions. The Programme has been successful in meeting its objective of expanding the availability of PRS access services in a sustainable fashion, although the *degree* of success has been compromised by a challenging funding context. Crisis management of the Programme has been effective in securing its long-term objectives. There have been many beneficial long-term consequences arising from the Programme, not least in the creation of a critical mass of evidence demonstrating that, with the right degree of preparation and support, the PRS can deliver a sustainable home even where clients have complex needs.

2. Programme principles

Introduction

The Programme's design contains a number of distinctive constituent elements, and this chapter details these and reviews their rationale. The Programme carried objectives beyond simply the administration of a funding opportunity, and aimed to address gaps both in terms of service delivery to client groups that were often marginalised and difficult-to-place in PRS properties; and in geographic terms to develop services in locations where no services previously existed. In addition, the funding mechanism required organisations to seek strong local network connections and alternative funding sources. The Programme also comprised a broad range of support services. These were developed and delivered by Crisis partly in response to expressed need by schemes funded under the Programme, and partly as a consequence of emerging evidence of difficulties and best practice. The Programme has evolved over its three years of operation, as a process of constant review of its operational processes.

Programme principles

The Programme funding model was predicated on a number of interlocking principles. The Programme did not aim just to distribute funds, but to offer assistance to organisations in applying for funding, in meeting targets, and in securing further financial support once Programme funding ended.

Support for applicants

The funding was made available to support existing third sector organisations to run PRS access work delivered via specific 'schemes'. A number of organisations developed more than one Programme scheme, for example, focussing on different client groups or operating in different areas.

From the outset, Crisis offered support to organisations through the process of applying for funding. Crisis staff felt that large funding programmes often overlooked agencies that were developing innovative services and solutions but had limited experience in grant application. As a consequence, under the Programme, organisations could submit a single-page summary of their prospective scheme, and discuss their plans with Crisis before working out a full proposal. This approach also meant that Crisis could concentrate on supporting promising proposals and exclude applications where it was immediately apparent that the organisation was unlikely to fit Programme remit.

Local authority statement of support

Funding would only be made available to third sector organisations. Local authorities could not apply directly for funding, but in some instances alerted local charities to the funding opportunity. A statement of support from the local authority was required as part of the application. This measure was taken in order to ensure that the organisation applying for funding was not replicating services that were already available. Securing support from the local authority at this stage in the process was also a way of ensuring that each organisation was from the outset engaged with their local authority, with the hope that further funding would be secured following the end of the Programme.

Defined client groups

The Programme was aimed at homelessness prevention and alleviation for single homeless people whose access to services was deemed to be particularly problematic. Applicants for funding had to provide evidence of the private rented housing needs of the client group they were hoping to assist, and initially three distinct groups were characterised:

- Homeless but not in priority need through the homeless application route (defined as ‘flow’ or at risk of homelessness);
- Working with housing options and likely to be eligible as homeless but not in priority need (defined as ‘returner’ or repeat service user); and
- Working with a nominated local service provider and likely to be eligible as homeless but not in priority need (defined as ‘core’ or chronic service user).⁹

These groups translated, roughly, to low, medium and high support needs and in later rounds were categorised as ‘prevention’, ‘move on’ and ‘rough sleeper’. Schemes were obliged to define a local client group and to demonstrate that they had actively considered gaps in provision to avoid duplication or funding being used to support existing services. In addition, organisations would have to work with their local authority and other partners in order to secure any additional services and support that schemes might need to ensure success. This requirement carried the benefit of demonstrating that the scheme was well-networked and judged to be strategically important in meeting local need, and so more likely to secure on-going financial support once the Programme funding came to an end.

Funding and target setting

Programme funding would cover the costs of one full-time member of staff for a year’s operation of the scheme. A grant of up to £40,000 was made available. Organisations located in London and the South East could apply for up to £50,000 in recognition of higher operational costs. Organisations were asked to specify both the number of tenancies they aimed to create and their sustainment target, or tenancies lasting beyond an initial six-month period. In

responding to the bids, Crisis worked to the understanding – based on its own experience of operating schemes under the SmartMove franchise – that a single full-time staff member could secure approximately 40 tenancies per year.

Negotiation took place with each organisation around its proposed targets. The targets were lower in certain circumstances: for example, where it was deemed that the client group was particularly challenging; where the organisation had not worked with that particular client group before; where the organisation was moving into a geographic area it had not covered before; or where the local housing market was particularly tight. Once agreed, the tenancy number and sustainment target were written into the funding contract.

Incentivisation

For all schemes a total of £10,000 from the grant would be withheld until the year-end, and its payment contingent on the scheme meeting its targets of tenancy creation and sustainment: £5,000 was assigned to each target. This element of payment by results was to ensure that schemes delivered to target and focussed as much on sustaining tenancies as creating them. The final £5,000 payments were based on achievement against targets and would be reduced proportionally.

Monitoring

Monitoring of scheme performance took place through the creation of a Crisis management portal, accessible to all schemes via the internet. Schemes were required to input details of all the tenancies created under the Programme. The information required was kept to a minimum so as not to create an administrative burden for front-line staff, but was sufficiently detailed to prevent double-counting.

⁹ Crisis, ‘Proposal to develop community based services that engage the private rented sector to prevent and tackle homelessness’, October 2010.

Information required included:

- the name of the client;
- the national insurance number of the client;
- a contact telephone number for the client; and
- the date the tenancy started.

The management portal logged automatically the point at which the tenancy reached a six-month and then a twelve-month period. Updating information on the management portal meant that there was no requirement for each scheme to create quarterly or annual reports, since the portal held performance information in ‘real time’, continually updated as tenancies were created.

Schemes were also required to log where tenancies had come to an end before the initial six-month period. The reasons given could be ‘positive’, ‘negative’ or ‘neutral’. Positive reasons were ones that indicated that the client had become more settled, and included rekindling their family relationships; moving in with a partner; moving to take up work, training or education; and funding their own move out of the accommodation. Negative outcomes included tenancy abandonment, eviction for rent arrears or because of anti-social behaviour, and imprisonment. Moves that were regarded as being neutral included moving into a social housing tenancy. This outcome was not regarded as being positive, since the intention of the Programme was to enable the client to make a long-term home in their privately rented property. A strong principle of the Programme was that the PRS tenancy was not to be regarded by either schemes or clients as a ‘stepping stone’ to social housing.

Crisis randomly selected 10 per cent of each scheme’s clients to contact, to check that the client matched the criteria under the funding,

and that they had been assisted as expected by the scheme. These contacts were made without the knowledge of the scheme, and using a standard proforma. Questions for the clients included:

- circumstances leading to the client contacting the scheme;
- how the tenant found out about the scheme;
- type of property secured;
- how the property was found; how the client met the landlord; the type of assistance provided by the scheme;
- the process of moving in, and scheme assistance;
- current views on the property and level of scheme contact;
- property condition and any pressing concerns, and whether the scheme had been contacted with those concerns;
- views on working with the agency and any additional help they could provide/could have provided; and
- permission to contact the scheme/scheme worker.

Information from the interviews was entered on an excel spreadsheet and any issues arising were to be pursued with the scheme, if permission was given by the client and if deemed necessary. This method also enabled Crisis to collect evidence of good practice from the client’s perspective.

Scheme sustainment

Embedded within the Programme was the understanding that organisations should not rely on central government funding, and that even as the grant was given then steps should be in place to seek alternative local

funding sources. To this end, a second year of 'continuation' funding was made available to each scheme. Each scheme's continuation grant was reduced by £10,000 compared to its first year's funding, but there was an increase to the targets for tenancy creation. The increase reflected the fact that schemes would now be well bedded in, in terms of staffing and local landlord links. It was hoped that the organisations would seek alternative funding – principally from the local authority – for the shortfall, after having had a year to demonstrate the value of their service. At R3, funding was only available for a single year. There was a requirement for schemes that applied to secure match funding and offer some evidence of funding continuation after the Programme had come to an end.

Additional principles

In addition, the Programme carried objectives that related to the ongoing success of access work more generally. These were to:

- build the capacity and skills of the voluntary sector; and
- improve understanding at a local and national level of policy issues affecting PRS access and sustainability for those on low incomes and/or receipt of benefits.¹⁰

It should be noted that Programme achievement of this final objective is not included in this current evaluation. However, Crisis staff reported that outcomes and learning from the Programme and work of individual schemes has been a vital input to a range of Crisis' policy, research and campaigning around the PRS, local housing allowance and related issues.

Programme support

In addition to administering and monitoring the funding element of the Programme, Crisis also developed an extended portfolio of support services. These services were developed as a way to empower newer schemes by striking a balance between not being prescriptive about how the service was to be delivered, but to offer opportunities for schemes to learn from each other.

Development Officers

Each project was assigned to one of two Development Officers. The remit of the Development Officers was to monitor performance and also to act in an advisory role. Each scheme received an 'inception' visit from the relevant Officer soon after funding was granted. Additional visits also were made where monitoring information indicated that schemes might be experiencing some difficulty, and tailored advice and support was given. In addition, the visits provided the chance for Development Officers to 'cross-fertilize' between schemes and share solutions for common difficulties.

Development Officers also operated in a reactive way, responding to queries by telephone or email and arranging 'troubleshooting' meetings with the scheme and with local stakeholders where it was deemed to be appropriate.

Networking opportunities and training days

From its inception, the Programme has delivered regular Programme workshops and training days. In addition to delivering guidance on good practice, the workshops were intended to facilitate effective networking between schemes.

¹⁰ Crisis, 'Proposal to develop community based services that engage the private rented sector to prevent and tackle homelessness', October 2010.

Service toolkits

A number of service toolkits have been developed and are available via the Crisis website.¹¹ Not all these toolkits have been created directly with funding from the Programme, but all have drawn from experience garnered from Programme-funded schemes. The creation of the toolkits has been responsive to both changing policy contexts and emerging best practice. The toolkits included: responding to housing benefit cuts (2010); a guide to creating a local lettings agency guide (2011); working with ex-offenders (2012); and working with the PRS to tackle youth homelessness (2012). In addition, a number of factsheets have been published on issues such as the use of guarantors, monitoring outcomes and success and risk factors in PRS schemes.

In the summer of 2012, and as a means of creating a resource that schemes could use to demonstrate effectiveness, Crisis commissioned a ‘Making it count’ toolkit. The spreadsheet had attached guidance notes, and on the inclusion of readily available data, automatically totalling the costs of ‘non-intervention’ where a scheme was not in operation. The spreadsheet could also be used to demonstrate value for money against a range of indicators and to collate evidence of effective working practices.

PRS Champions

In April, 2013, to further encourage peer learning between schemes, Crisis created the idea of PRS ‘Champions’. The Champion schemes were selected from the highest-performing schemes, and their work ran for a year from the date of their announcement. Champions already had a track record of sharing practice and collaborating, and were each given a grant of £5,000 to cover their costs in advising and encouraging other schemes. The initial four Champions covered areas of common concern

amongst schemes: recruiting landlords, training tenants to find landlords; outcomes monitoring and partnership working.¹²

By the end of September, a further nine Champions were identified and disseminated practice on:

- engaging young people with the PRS;
- setting up a local letting agency;
- working in a rural high-demand area;
- utilising local resources and funding;
- working in partnership to assist migrants in the PRS;
- leasing properties in the PRS;
- peer mentoring and volunteering; and
- creating sustainable tenancies.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the principles underpinning the Programme, and the rationales for its constituent elements. Crisis has developed a funding process which contains within itself incentives for organisations to secure strong working relationships with local partner agencies. Measures to encourage effective operation under the scheme were set in place through the creation of targets for tenancy sustainment and creation, but with a light-touch monitoring framework that carried no onerous administrative burden. Extended support services have been made available to schemes via dedicated Development Officers, regional workshops, on-line toolkits and peer education. The following chapter outlines the progress of the Programme through its three funding rounds.

¹¹ www.crisis.org.uk/pages/crisis-private-renting.html

¹² Crisis PRS Access Development Programme Year Three: 2012-13 Quarterly Report Quarter Four (January to March 2013).

3. Management of the programme

Introduction

This chapter considers the management of the Programme in detail, considering the practical application of the principles underlying Programme development. The chapter reflects findings from face-to-face interviews with eleven organisations receiving funding from the Programme, and with internal Crisis staff directly responsible for management. The chapter will discuss support for applications; securing the statement of support from local authorities; client groups; funding and target setting; incentives; monitoring and tenancy sustainment. In addition, the chapter will also address issues around capacity building in the third sector around access work, and the overall support given to schemes by Crisis. However, before considering these issues, it is useful to use the case study schemes to outline variation across scheme development and the way in which organisations responded to the funding opportunity. Not surprisingly, views on the Programme were very much coloured by schemes' level of experience with access work.

Case study schemes

Crisis staff ensured that a mix of types of organisation received funding under the Programme. Organisations new to access work were encouraged to apply, but 'veteran' schemes also received funding so that they could further develop their services and contribute to peer learning in the workshop events. Staff felt that these schemes could sometimes become complaisant, and might also benefit from working with newer organisations that could bring fresh approaches. Four of the 'case study' organisations were well-established organisations: each had delivered access work for close to twenty years. Seven case study organisations had only recently started to engage with the PRS. Each grouping will be discussed in turn.

Access 'veterans'

There was substantial variation across the access veterans. Within each, separate schemes were in operation that had been adapted to the local authority area or client groups the organisation served.

The case studies included:

- A large-scale not-for-profit community interest company that originally operated as a housing aid charity running supported housing projects. The organisation is now a housing association, but also secured funding to set up one of the first Crisis Smart Move franchises. Access work is still delivered under this model but the organisation has also developed a number of other more specialised products including two shared accommodation schemes. The funding expanded their service delivery out of their 'home' local authority and into two neighbouring local authorities. The organisation has also, separately, extended its operation into student lets and runs a social enterprise letting agency for this market. A distinctive aspect of its service delivery is that it offers landlords a rent guarantee in return for rent set at the local housing allowance level. All its Crisis-funded work is aimed at under-35s.
- A charitable agency that began as an access scheme in the early 1990s. This organisation has also developed access work in neighbouring local authorities and a local social lettings agency that just manages to be self-funding. The organisation responds to invitations to tender to supply floating support from a wide range of statutory funders, and has worked with refugees, people with mental health problems and people on probation. The organisation has very strong links with local landlords and is well-networked

into local homelessness service delivery. The Crisis-funded schemes extended its access services into another local authority area in the same county.

- A large advice agency that began to develop access work in the early 1990s and that also secured a SmartMove franchise. The organisation runs a small number of different access schemes to cater for landlords with different demands – for example, they will offer a let only service or a full management package. The organisation operates schemes in their original local community and across the wider county. Crisis funding contributed to the development of a social lettings model, expanding the scheme geographically, and to the development of services for a higher-needs client group.
- A London-based organisation focussing on youth homelessness, and one of the earliest access schemes. The organisation operates housing advice services, floating support, supported hostels and lodgings. The service relies on clients making initial contact with landlords, and the organisation then helps to set up the tenancy and gives ongoing support.

As will be seen, these organisations' views on Crisis's delivery of the Development Programme and associated support for access work was very much shaped by their extended experience of access work. Long experience also contributed to an organisation's ability to form partnerships with local stakeholders and effect successful integration in the local housing market.

Organisations new to access work

The remaining organisations were more mixed, and not all had access work as a central activity. Three of the schemes were based in large, open-access day centres:

- One scheme had evolved from a local Christian charity, and operated to tackle

economic exclusion and vulnerability in the local neighbourhood. Many clients had complex, multiple needs. The scheme had a long tradition of working with volunteers, and was largely reliant on charitable donations. The day centre had previously helped clients to secure PRS accommodation in a largely ad hoc way, but the Crisis grant – the largest grant it had received – helped to focus its work in this area. The day centre received grants at R1 and at R2.

- Another day centre had also developed from a church-based group, and was dealing more specifically with rough sleepers and people with addiction problems. This scheme had looked to Crisis funding as a means of concentrating attention on housing its 'revolving door' clients with complex needs.
- A third day centre had evolved as a service from a regular meeting of people with addiction problems, who had set up a mutual support forum. This organisation was growing rapidly, and had recently developed supported accommodation and was tendering for larger-scale floating support contract. The Crisis funds were focussed on moving clients into better-quality and more sustainable PRS accommodation.

Other schemes had a stronger base in the development of supported housing:

- A regional organisation offering supported hostels and other support and advice services across a large number of local authorities in a high-pressure housing market. This organisation developed from a Cyrenians group, and so had a long history of delivering services to homeless people. However, its access work had tended to be less formalised, and it aimed to develop this aspect of its service by using the Crisis funding, which supported the development of four schemes at R2.

- Another organisation offering supported housing and open access day centres across a wider area, but which became a housing association in the 1980s. The organisation contracts for the delivery of floating support services, and focuses on high-risk clients such as drug-users and ex-offenders. Funding was received at R1.
- A small local charity affiliated to a larger national organisation, and which has developed a range of support services in London specifically for higher-needs groups, including drug and alcohol recovery programmes. The organisation has a strong ethos of working with volunteers to alleviate local need. The Crisis-funded work expanded the organisation's services to low-support need clients in their home and in the neighbouring borough.
- A large national faith-based charity that operates a range of services specifically for ex-offenders, including supported housing. The organisation has only recently begun working with the PRS, as part of a process of intensive resettlement work with high-volume offenders.

The organisations that were newer to access work had for the most part come from a background of working with high-needs clients in day centres and supported hostels, and there had been a tendency to view social housing as the desired destination for their clients. In all these cases there was a realisation of the need to formalise and develop procedures for working with the PRS, which was – in some cases – why Programme funding was sought. This group had a more limited experience of access work which – as with the first grouping – had a strong impact on its assessment of the Programme.

Applying for the grant

Organisations generally thought that payments were set at a realistic level, although the figure was considered a little low for London and the south east even given the option to apply for an increased grant of £50,000. Here, schemes thought that it was challenging to secure good quality staff at that pay level, particularly given the time-limited nature of the budget.

Overall, organisations favoured the Programme approach of giving a grant figure and being asked to construe a service to meet that figure, rather than to decide the framework of a service and then arrive at a cost. This kind of approach was vulnerable to cuts:

They [ie other funders] will look at something and say 'oh surely you can find ways to save money.' There is none of that with an organisation like Crisis who specialises in this field. The relief of not having to play those games! Definitely other funders could learn from that.

There was consensus on the clarity of the funding application process. Respondents who had completed the application form themselves commented on how easy the process had been. One respondent had never made an application for funding prior to the Crisis Programme, but had no difficulty. Despite going on to make many more applications since, she said it remained the easiest application she had ever had to make. Respondents liked the fact that the application came with a great deal of guidance – *'slightly more than the other trusts and foundations.'* Guidance on service delivery was available: *'they had a lot of toolkits you could look at and various models you could look at.'* It was possible to telephone with queries, and these were always answered promptly. The whole process was couched in phrases and concepts that organisations found easy to understand:

It's a straightforward application process, it wasn't too difficult. Some local authority tendered stuff is just a nightmare – they don't use the same language! Crisis was straightforward, easy to do.

Some organisations took up the option of sending in a draft application, and found that option useful as a means of getting into the Crisis 'mindset' and being clearer about the focus of the application. The definition of 'move-on', 'prevention' and 'rough sleeper' was also regarded as helpful in concentrating attention on the nature of the client group.

There was disagreement on whether the time-scale for applications was adequate. Where organisations were making multiple applications that required supporting statements from a range of local authorities, then there could be difficulties with meeting the deadline. Other organisations commented that the deadlines were actually quite generous.

There were a couple of specific comments on differences in application processes between the funding rounds. One organisation thought that the on-line application at R3 had been particularly difficult to negotiate. Crisis staff themselves commented that the application had lacked functionality, and in retrospect should have been tested more thoroughly before being used. Another small organisation was unhappy about the requirement to secure matched funding at R3: *'That was more or less kicking us small organisations off.'* For this organisation, not enough time was given to secure the matched funding, which – in their view – would take 6-9 months to turn around.

The Quarterly Report for July-September 2011 reported from a web survey of applicants for R2 funding, and found that the

majority of schemes had submitted an A4 summary, and a quarter had submitted a draft application for comments. Considerable use had been made of an example completed application on the Crisis website, and other application guidance including frequently asked questions pages. Over nine tenths of respondents found the pre-submission assistance helpful.¹³ Funding feedback from R3 included the following comment:

Good turn around time from Crisis at end of bid window. Always find Crisis PRS staff helpful and approachable with any queries. Have found Crisis to be a very supportive funder - offering more than just finances but guidance and expert support too. This makes a very big difference and makes it much more attractive to work with Crisis.¹⁴

Securing local authority support

Crisis staff appreciated that securing a local authority statement of support might prove to be problematic, but it was still a necessary test of local engagement. The Quarterly Report for July-September 2011 reported from a web survey of applicants for R2 funding. Of the 39 respondents answering the specific question on providing information for the application, 25 considered that the supporting statement was difficult to provide.¹⁵ Overall, the case study organisations tended not to report problems in this area. It was commented that few local authorities could object to funding coming to the area to alleviate a local need and in a couple of cases it was the local authority itself that initiated the application process.

There were some difficulties with the technicalities of presenting that support, which were eased at R2 when it was no longer necessary for the organisation to have a signed statement. At R1, a couple

¹³ Crisis PRS Access Development Programme, July-September 2011.

¹⁴ Crisis PRS Access Development Programme Year Three: 2012-13 Quarterly Report October to December 2012.

¹⁵ Crisis PRS Access Development Programme, July-September 2011.

of organisations mentioned the difficulties attached with getting a signed piece of paper from a local authority that might not necessarily regard the application with any degree of priority.

In other areas, there were acute difficulties with engaging the local authority. One organisation commented that this was the stage where it felt Crisis intervention would have been most welcome, and which would also have carried the benefit of demonstrating to Crisis how problematic joint working was in that local authority area. However, Crisis staff members noted that they regarded meetings between themselves, schemes and local authorities as being remarkably variable, and even within the local authority there could be different levels of support for a scheme. So, for example, the housing benefit team might be supportive but other departments less so.

Defining the client group

One intention of the Crisis Development programme was to ensure that funding was aimed at client groups that were not well served by existing services. Although organisations had defined their work as being with a particular client group in principle, in practice they considered that distinctions were often hard to make. For one manager with responsibility for managing a team of access workers working principally in the 'prevention' category, there was no such thing as a low-support client: *'You can't just say 'low, medium, high' and low means they only need a light touch, because people come as individual as they are.'* This point was echoed by a scheme worker dealing with a higher need category group, who said that individual clients often had good and bad weeks, and it was not always possible to make a judgement about what levels of support would be needed at any one time.

For some organisations already working with a very difficult client base, the Crisis funding had shifted their focus to work with

the 'easier' prevention category cases. Indeed, in a couple of cases, this was the only way in which the organisations could make a case that a 'new' service was being proposed. However, there was a sense in some organisations saw working with a lower needs group was a distraction from their core remit. Both day centres found that their funding did not necessarily sit easily with their desire to deal with their service users with more complex needs. This kind of comment describes a tension that becomes evident in an expectation that third sector agencies can easily expand their services: sometimes those charities are committed by their own constitution to deal only with a specified client group in a particular area.

One organisation had dealt with a lower-need group at R1, but then shifted its focus to higher-need clients at R2. The organisation said that having less problematic clients meant that it could focus on the process of delivering what was for them a very new service. This had been a 'trial' run to ease themselves and local landlords into working with a more taxing group. Similarly, the other day centre found that the funding brought with it a higher volume of referrals from the local authority, which meant that they had less time to deal with their own more entrenched and problematic rough sleeper clients. Indeed, once the Crisis funding came to an end, this day centre entirely realigned its access work, to focus on intensive tenant support.

Crisis staff recognised that *'clients are people and their lives don't always fit into little neat categories'*. In principle, schemes needed to deal with the client group in need as defined by their application, but in practice there was room for negotiation. For example, a scheme might want to help a lower-need individual at risk of falling into a higher need category. The only aspect that was non-negotiable was that the client had to be in non-priority need.

Target setting

The majority of the organisations seeking funding under the Programme had a culture of working that tended to be case-work driven, with monitoring and performance indicators attached to client contact hours. For one scheme, a target-oriented approach was much more realistic:

Crisis are saying, 'look at the outcomes', whereas local authorities always want you to say how many contact hours is there going to be. Why does that matter? So it's better if it takes me two hours to do something than if it took me ten minutes? So it's better if you want contact hours, so I'll spend longer doing a task that could take me half the time. If I'm more efficient, that actually goes against me, because they put the weirdest measurements into their monitoring.

One organisation with multiple schemes said that their workers had found the culture shift very difficult at first, but now enjoyed being able to evidence positive outcomes. One scheme worker said that it made her work much more straightforward: *'You can do it the way you want to do it and you know where you've got to end.'* Another small organisation also liked the target approach, since it lent structure to the access work, helping them to focus on particular goals.

Sustainment

Crisis staff members were particularly proud of the sustainment element of performance monitoring. There was interesting commentary from the schemes on this principle. Schemes did not question the centrality of sustainability to the success of access work, and indeed generally saw this as a core element of their service: *'we want people to look on this as a permanent form of accommodation not just some stepping stone to get them to another level.'* There was, therefore, no issue with the inclusion of a sustainment target, which was in no case set at 100 per cent of tenancies.

The difficulty that schemes had was in the lack of appreciation that sustainability brought an increased workload that was not acknowledged in the continuation funding which included a higher tenancy creation target. One scheme worker commented that

The more people you house, the more sustainment you need to do. The more successful you are, the more you are undermining your ability to continue being successful because of the build-up of tenancy sustainment work.

In this instance, it was noted that a particular worker had a 'caseload' of 50 tenancies which all required some level of support even though the clients were ostensibly low-need: *'by creating the tenancy you create a support need.'* The support was not necessarily directed at the client, but at sustaining an ongoing relationship with the landlord which was central to the success of the scheme. In principle this support need had a finite point, but in practice ensuring sound ongoing relationships with landlords meant that tenancies remained 'on the books'. This meant that although performance in the continuation year benefited substantially from the foundation built by the previous year's networking activity, it also carried workload in terms of activity to support existing tenancies. Some attention paid to staffing workload might therefore be required in order fully to understand performance against targets in continuation years.

Negotiation on targets

Crisis staff reported that negotiation on target setting was 'massively time consuming' since each scheme had a different level of experience with different client groups. Where schemes offered lower targets that was not considered to be particularly challenging, then they were encouraged to increase the number. In a very small number of cases, and as a consequence of exceptional local difficulties, the target number was reduced once the scheme became operational. Where

this happened, Crisis took the opportunity to learn from the problem.

Most organisations considered that the targets that had been set for their scheme had been reasonable, and they had welcomed the opportunity to negotiate. Established access organisations were aware of the targets they were likely to achieve, but even so could be surprised at difficulties they faced in unfamiliar markets when they expanded their geographic reach. Less experienced reported that they felt under pressure to 'bid up', particularly as they compared their likely performance against other schemes:

Crisis have in mind what they consider too low. If you work in an area where there's huge pressure to get people in, where there's real lack of affordable accommodation, it might be very hard to argue that your target is steep when all other schemes that Crisis is funding are 30+.

Other respondents said that the targets had not been as sensitive to market conditions as they would have liked.

The increase to the target in the continuation year was not always necessarily regarded as being problematic or challenging. For organisations that were new to access work, the first funding year had long periods in which there was no ostensible contribution to the target, but where relationships were being forged with local landlords. It was accepted that in the second year, schemes could build on those foundations.

Incentives

The issue of the incentive payment was an acute concern for schemes, given that so many aspects of access work were difficult to control. Organisations could be pragmatic about this element of the funding: *'Everything's payment by results! With the*

current economic climate, everyone's issuing payment by results.' Another commented that the move was welcome: *'It makes us a bit more commercial, commercially-minded.'* However, for many schemes, and particularly for the smaller charitable organisations, payment by results introduced an unwelcome element of risk. One organisation, with more than one scheme receiving funding, said that they had not met their targets and had been compelled to meet the shortfall in their staffing budget through fundraising.

Monitoring

On the whole, respondents were very positive about monitoring taking place through the management portal. Indeed, one respondent was extremely enthusiastic in terms of the ease of use, the fact that the system was reliable and never crashed, and that it was easy to produce monitoring reports. None of the respondents thought the portal difficult to use, and some were pleased that no training was required and most staff members could use it with little guidance. Crisis staff members were also happy that they could also access the portal and review progress, because scheme workers did not then waste time in keeping Crisis up to date: *'they are happy they don't have to write a quarterly report and we are happy we don't have to read them!'*

One consistent difficulty with the portal was the issue of double-counting individuals who had had more than one tenancy set up under the scheme. It was not possible to input a national insurance number more than once. Many schemes mentioned circumstances in which they had found this necessary, for example, when a landlord unexpectedly withdrew their property from a scheme. The fact that Crisis Development Officers reported the need repeatedly to inform schemes about how to deal with the issue indicates that this element of the portal worked less well.

Crisis itself found the management portal less than ideal at first when it came to reporting,

and further development of the software was commissioned. These issues related largely to portal functionality rather than its key principles, which were generally accepted to have been pragmatic in their focus on asking for the least information necessary.

There was a degree of frustration expressed by Crisis staff that, despite general satisfaction with the portal, some schemes did not necessarily prioritise keeping data entries up to date. Some schemes needed to be reminded to enter information, and towards the end of the funding period there could be sudden increases as schemes dealt with their backlog of information. The issue was felt to be particularly problematic towards the end of a funding period and despite there being a contractual obligation to log performance.

Scheme sustainment

One of the Programme principles most strongly tied to scheme sustainment was the reduction in continuation funding for schemes applying for grant in a second year of operation. A reduction in the continuation funding was introduced on the understanding that schemes would apply for additional funding from the local authority or other local stakeholders. Not every organisation was confident in that eventuality:

I understand the principle of kind of ‘de-toxing’ yourself from dependency, but it’s going to be really, really challenging. We haven’t solved the problem of how we are going to fund this next year.

In the majority of cases, organisations that were interviewed were intending to meet the shortfall through their own internal resources, and through additional work to attract charitable donations. One scheme raised the money from Comic Relief. For some

schemes, there was no possibility that local statutory agencies would make any level of contribution, despite the schemes having presented evidence of met targets.

The case study schemes’ experience reflected difficulties evident across the Programme in securing additional financial support, either for continuation funding or to fund schemes at the end of the Programme grant. Early in 2013, Crisis reported on the funding that had been secured by R1 schemes to support their Crisis-funded services from April of that year. Nineteen of the schemes had secured funding to take their scheme forward, and for eight of those the funding source was the local authority. A further eight schemes had secured funding from another charity and three were shifting their scheme to a self-funding model. Eight schemes were waiting the outcome of a funding decision, and no reply had been returned by five. For nine schemes the service had been terminated through to lack of financial support.¹⁶ Crisis staff reported some disappointment that many schemes had had to cross-subsidise service continuation, but this did at least give evidence that a case had been made internally for carrying on with access work.

Research around continuation decisions for R2 schemes was published in the Quarterly Report for Jan-March 2014. Three of the schemes had ceased operation before their funding formally came to a close, seven schemes did not reapply for Crisis funding, and a further three schemes had their application rejected. Of the remaining 71 schemes seeking and securing continuation funding from the Programme, 31 had managed to obtain funding from other sources to supplement the grant. The majority of these – 19 – had secured funding from their local authority, and twelve had applied successfully to other charities. A

further eleven schemes were planning to raise income from introducing a charging model for their services. Overall, therefore, it would seem that local authorities were providing support and ongoing funding in around a quarter of cases.

Developing a staffing resource

For Crisis staff, getting the right individual in post was the key to scheme success. Indeed, it was thought that even where an organisation was well able to manage the work then the scheme would fail if the right staff member was not recruited. Few of the organisations had been able to appoint staff with direct experience in access work, but it was generally felt that the people who were appointed had relished the pace of access work and the challenge of its particular configuration of activity. It was clear that personality played a substantial role in the success of particular schemes. Landlords needed to trust and even like the individual scheme worker and where personal relationships did not develop then it was unlikely that the scheme would prosper.

Overall, there was a general agreement that the Crisis funding had been essential in creating the opportunity for a worker to concentrate on developing access skills. One of the organisations commented: *'When you are a day centre you tend to do a bit of jack of all trades and master of none. So this has helped us get staff to focus in one direction and be specialists in that.'* Although this objective had been achieved for some organisations, it was felt that this was despite the short nature of the funding contract. Where funding was only certain for one year, it was difficult to secure good quality staff, and towards the end of that first year and without a definite commitment to continued funding, it was inevitable that workers would begin to look elsewhere for new employment.

Crisis support

Crisis staff members were very conscious of the need to tailor their engagement with organisations receiving funding, and there could be difficulty in deciding how to deal with schemes that did not come forward for information or advice. Crisis recognised that, at times, the decision to apply for funding may have been made by a finance manager and there may have been no real buy-in to access work from more front-line staff. Development Officers in particular were aware that difficulties should not be left unresolved for too long, but 'micro-management' would be unwelcome. Judgement calls had to be made.

Toolkits and guidance

Crisis staff reported that they modified their approach to guidance for each scheme instead of being prescriptive. Schemes evidently felt at liberty to take as much or as little guidance as they needed. Almost all the schemes commented that they had, at some juncture, used a Crisis toolkit for one aspect of service delivery or another, and it was agreed the quality of this work was very good. Indeed, one of the new schemes said they had found various forms of guidance really very impressive:

We have funders that give guidance but not to the great detail as Crisis, no way. That by far was... I've been doing it for twelve years, and that was the best. Even the Lottery's not that good.

Overall, it was agreed that this support was particularly useful for new schemes that were fresh to access work. One of the schemes commented that the amount of guidance that was available on the internet had at first appeared excessive. However, they changed their mind once the access work got underway, and began to value the toolkits:

There was a little bit of cynicism from our point of view, you know, all these rules and red tape. And really this process and working with other local authorities in the

last few years has taken us from actually being a small organisation that was doing things along really slim budget and having to cut corners along the way to rather than viewing some of this stuff as negative, seeing it as actually really positive. A mental change in understanding why Crisis would promote certain things. I think that the luxury of being funded helps you afford to do those things. So, we definitely used them (ie the toolkits).

One more experienced scheme manager also commented:

From what I've seen, from the day courses and things that I've attended, think the support's really good. And I love the toolkits they've got on the website, they're really good you know....At the end of the day if I was somebody who worked for an organisation never done this scheme before, then all the information and assistance are there on the website.

For many of the older organisations, their use of Crisis frameworks had taken place some years prior to their funding under the Programme, and there was a general feeling that they were sufficiently experienced to be able to devise their own protocols.

Proactivity and reactivity

Without any doubt, the aspect of Crisis support that was valued most across all schemes was contact with individual officers. Scheme workers often commented that they liked having their own named Development Officer within Crisis, who knew about their particular scheme. At the same time as valuing their independence, schemes also wanted access to informed and reliable advice when issues came up that they themselves found difficult to resolve. All the respondents appreciated their Development Officer's swift and knowledgeable response to queries, and in particular the fact that they knew a reply would come within 24 hours. One very experienced scheme worker commented:

I never use the website, I only ever email them when I've got a query that I don't know about it. Their knowledge was always so phenomenal.

This kind of opinion was common amongst the respondents, who often mentioned individual Crisis officers by name and praised their ability to suggest possible resolutions or signpost to other schemes that had dealt with similar problems.

There was less enthusiasm for the scheduled Development Officer visits to organisations. In a couple of cases, the purpose of the visits was misunderstood as being a formal monitoring visit.

Teaching and facilitating

More general comment about the nature of Development Officer visits centred on the idea that schemes would have better welcomed the opportunity to present their scheme to Crisis as it stood in its local context, rather than in the way that had been prescribed by the application process. Schemes wanted to be able to show Crisis how they had resolved particular issues or arrived at aspects of service delivery, and to engage in a greater degree of dialogue in preference to feeling that they were being checked on, and told what to do.

Again, a related issue arose from commentary on the networking opportunities. Schemes valued the opportunity to learn from their peers, and indeed would have welcomed more meetings, and meetings in more places. One scheme summed up the general tone of commentary aptly, by saying that they wanted Crisis to be a facilitator to ensure that the right organisations spoke with each other. This theme was echoed by another cross-regional organisation that commented that it would be useful if Crisis might organise more sub-regional events, to try and build up local networking and offer a greater level of strategic overview of access work operating across a wider area.

Commentary elicited from schemes attending network events was generally positive. For example, feedback forms were available from the regional events held in April/May 2012. Of the 141 forms returned, 135 indicated that the event attended was 'useful' or 'very good.' Respondents particularly valued the fact that the events encouraged networking: '*A good opportunity for good practice directing and sharing of good practice between service providers*'; exploring different options for delivering services: '*many new ideas our team will take back and use*' and facilitating scheme development: '*excellent content will help shape delivery of our service*'. One new scheme commented '*Seeing as we are just starting out, it all seemed a bit daunting, but I've got a lot of pointers and will definitely implement them when the need arises.*'¹⁷

Further commentary on Crisis support for schemes under the Programme was available through the web survey completed in February 2014. There were 35 full responses to the survey. Respondents were asked about whether they used specific Crisis services often, occasionally, not often or that particular service had not been used at all. The resource most frequently used was the Crisis website: over half the respondents indicated that they used the website 'often'. The PRS toolkit was also often used by a large minority of respondents, as was the emailed newsletter, the Making it Count toolkit and email policy updates and newsletters. However, the service that was deemed to be the single most useful service was staff availability by email or telephone for one-to-one advice. The website again was noted as being the most useful thing by a large minority of respondents, as were the PRS toolkit and the Making it Count toolkit.

Conclusion

Case study organisations were positive about Crisis management of the Programme, and indeed had particular praise for the application process and the simplicity of the monitoring system. Targets were generally seen to be appropriate. The focus on tenancy sustainment was not seen to be problematic – indeed, schemes generally worked to this principle. However, the funding mechanism did not accommodate the cumulative cost to schemes of ongoing tenancy sustainment as the number of landlords they engaged increased. Schemes welcomed the support services offered by Crisis, and most valued the fact that a dedicated support officer had detailed knowledge of their scheme's operation. It is to be expected that some dissatisfaction would follow any funding regime with an integrated 'payments by result' element, particularly where organisations were operating in a high-risk area of service delivery with many unpredictable elements.

4. Funding rounds and outcomes

Introduction

At the start of Programme late in 2010, there was no immediate guarantee that further funding would be made available after the initial grants were distributed to schemes from February 2011. However, evidence of successful outcomes led to a further two years of funding for additional scheme development, with grants distributed in February/March 2012.

This chapter begins by briefly outlining the selection process and then reviews the funding rationale for each of the Rounds. The chapter then summarises schemes characteristics. A final section summarises performance outcomes. At each round the Programme has been very close to reaching its targets for tenancy creation and scheme sustainment. This chapter reviews performance in more detail, and considers whether it might be possible to distinguish those types of schemes more likely to succeed in reaching their targets, and those most likely to find this work problematic.

The funded schemes

The following analysis of schemes funded under the Programme takes information from a range of sources, but is based on assessment of *all* schemes that were ever given funding, which totalled 153. Over the course of the Programme there was some

change in status for some of the schemes but – it should be stressed – this was a very small number. Schemes running into operational difficulty were, on occasion, ‘paused’, and in one or two cases individual schemes were absorbed by other local organisations. These developments mean that the number of schemes in operation at any one time could vary, and this is reflected in the tables.

There were three principal types of organisation receiving funding under the Programme. Some organisations received funding for more than one scheme. Table 3.1 indicates the number of funded schemes enumerated by organisation type, and ordered by funding round.

Nearly two thirds of schemes were operated by organisations that fell into the category of stand-alone charitable projects. These charities generally aimed to help vulnerable individuals in a range of circumstances. The organisations were in some instances delivering services in a particular, tightly defined location, or had expended out to provide services in some instances regionally. Some of these schemes had substantial experience in access work, such as the Bond Board in Rochdale; other organisations were charities offering more generic support. Around a fifth of schemes were being operated by what might be described as ‘multi-arm’ national charitable organisations including YMCAs, NACRO and

Table 4.1: Funded scheme by organisation type

Organisation type	R1	R2	R3	Total	Percentage
Stand-alone charity	29	51	16	96	63
Multi-arm national charity	9	18	4	31	21
Housing Association	10	11	3	24	16
TOTAL	49	80	23	152*	100

*This total excludes SmartMove West Kent YMCA, which was later absorbed by Porchlight, West Kent

Shelter local offices. A sixth of the schemes were part of the range of services offered by an individual housing association.

One intention of the funding regime was to develop services across the English regions. Table 3.2 demonstrates that coverage was broad, although there tended to be under-representation in the North East. It is not

certain whether this outcome reflected a lower level of applications from that region. After all, it should be noted that only one local authority in the North region – Carlisle – featured in the top 50 non-London areas highlighted by the Crisis needs analysis in 2011.

Table 3.3 defines the schemes according to funding round and client group and specialism.

Table 4.2: Funded scheme by funding round and region

	R1	R2	R3	Total
Yorkshire and Humberside	6	6	3	15
East Midlands	4	6	0	10
North East	3	1	3	7
South West	5	6	4	15
South East	5	17	5	27
London	13	16	5	34
West Midlands	4	8	1	13
North West	7	13	1	21
East	2	7	1	10
	49	80	23	152*

*This total excludes SmartMove West Kent YMCA, which was later absorbed by Porchlight, West Kent

Table 4.3: Funded scheme by funding round, client group and specialism

	R1	R2	R3	Total	Percentage
Client group					
Prevention	17	43	12	72	47
Move-on	29	33	10	72	47
Rough sleeper	3	4	1	8	6
TOTAL	49	80	23	152*	100
Specialism					
Young people	8	22	11	41	
Ex-offenders	8	9	10	27	
	Total			68	

*This total excludes SmartMove West Kent YMCA, which was absorbed by Porchlight, West Kent

It is notable that few applications were received from organisations aiming to deal with clients in the rough sleeper category. Over the course of the Programme, the number of schemes dealing with the ‘prevention’ and ‘move-on’ categories was equal.

Outcomes

Complete outcomes data for each of the schemes, for both tenancy and sustainment targets, and for each Round is not uniformly available. The Quarterly Report for October-December 2013 indicates that 7,332 tenancies had thus far been created under the Programme by 153 schemes. The combined tenancy target for all the schemes funded by the Programme was 8,256. Even before the final tenancies supported under the Programme have been logged, some 88 per cent of the target has been achieved. The Report also indicated that 90 per cent of the tenancies under the Programme had reached their sustainment target. It is likely that the overall targets will be very close to being met by the end of the Programme.¹⁸

It is possible to review outcomes in more detail, at a scheme level. The analysis rests on snapshot data on schemes available from the final report on R1 schemes, and from the final quarterly report for 2012. In total, the evaluation will include 129 schemes from R1 and R2. Scheme outcomes will be framed by the degree to which they were given full outcome monitoring funding. As indicated in chapter two, up to £5,000 was dependent on performance against the tenancy target, and a further £5,000 was dependent on reaching the sustainment target. Where a scheme received the full £10,000 outcome payment, then both targets had been achieved.

The following evaluation is based on percentages of the full payment made, split into quartiles. Taking all schemes together

and using the percentage of the outcome payment as a success measure, Table 3.4 indicates that nearly two-thirds of schemes merited 76 per cent or more of their outcome payment.

Table 4.4 Percentage of outcome payment made to R1 and R2 schemes

	Number	Percent of schemes
76-100 per cent	80	62
51-75 per cent	16	12
26-50 per cent	15	12
0-25 per cent	18	14
Total	129	100

It is possible to distinguish all the R1 and R2 schemes where full payment was made, and consider whether they had particular characteristics. In total, 28 schemes – around a fifth – received the full outcome payment. The number of schemes in the Programme is too small for there to be any detailed statistical analysis of these figures but the following was evidently the case:

- there was no substantive difference in terms of type of organisation running the scheme that contributed to a higher success rate;
- schemes in the East and West Midlands regions were less likely than those in other areas to have gained 100 per cent of their outcomes funding; schemes located in London were also substantially less likely: a fifth of all schemes were operating in London but only a tenth of all the ‘100 per cent’ schemes were in the capital;

- Schemes focusing on ‘prevention’ category clients were much more likely to have achieved their targets in full;
- Success rates were also marked amongst the schemes dealing with the ‘rough sleeper’ category, although it should be noted that the number of schemes in this category is small;
- Half the schemes dealing with young people as a specialism were in the top quartile of funding percentage, as were around half the ex-offenders’ schemes. Schemes dealing with either of these specialist groups were not necessarily more likely to fail to reach their targets; and
- The eighteen ‘bottom quartile’ schemes for funding outcomes were not readily distinguishable by organisation type, client group, specialism or region.

It is not possible to derive any statistically significant conclusions on either scheme success or failure.

There is some information available for the 81 R2 schemes which breaks down the outcome payment by tenancy target and tenancy sustainment.

Table 3.5 indicates that although there were roughly equal numbers of schemes meeting their tenancy creation and sustainment targets, success in *nearly* meeting the target was more marked when it came to

sustainment. Further analysis might be helpful in assessing the incidence of tenancy failure by scheme types. Although reference is made some Quarterly Reports to the positive and negative reasons for tenancies coming to an end, overall analysis of tenancy reason for failure and type of scheme might be useful in pinpointing areas of particular difficulty.

Understanding success

The Programme has provided extensive evidence of successful outcomes in placing single homeless people in PRS tenancies. Basic data analysis does not disclose clear trends in terms of schemes more or less likely to be successful. It is evident that success rests on the interaction of a number of variables including:

- an organisation’s history in working with the PRS and the extent to which it is ‘embedded’ in the local market and trusted by local landlords;
- the speed with which an organisation can employ the right individual to take on access work. Staffing difficulties have created substantial difficulties in some schemes arriving at effective operation and slowed – and in one or two cases undermined entirely – progress towards targets;
- the ability of an organisation to cross-subsidise schemes with additional staffing support for administration and tenancy support;

Table 4.5 Percentage of outcome payment for 81 R2 schemes by target

	100 per cent	75-79 per cent	50-74 per cent	25-49 per cent	0-24 per cent
Tenancy creation	30	8	14	16	13
Tenancy sustainment	33	16	8	10	14

- the ability to access funds to cover rent in advance and deposits or deposit guarantees;
- client housing need compared with the types of properties available so, for example, where there is competition for property suitable for sharing that can create difficulties for schemes dealing with younger age groups;
- pressure in the local market which limits all property availability;
- scheme operation in its known ‘home’ area compared with operation in a neighbouring and less familiar market;
- local authority co-operation with regard to local housing allowance administration and access to discretionary housing payments;
- the availability of statutory support for clients with more complex needs including addictions.

These variables will all have differential impacts across different areas, and what may be more successful or problematic in one location can be of major or minor importance in another.

Conclusion

The Programme has been delivered in three funding rounds. Funding at R2 and R3 were guided by principles learned from funding at R1, for example, in the need to re-interrogate scheme coverage to ensure that gaps were being addressed. The Programme has funded number of schemes with wide variation in type of organisation running the scheme, geography, client group and specialism. A breakdown of data on the outcomes payments indicates that no clear conclusions can be drawn on the type of scheme more likely to succeed in meeting their tenancy and sustainment targets. Certainly it appears that London schemes find the local housing market particularly difficult to work with and, contrary to expectation, schemes working specifically with young people and with ex-offenders had levels of success in line with less challenging client groups. There are intimations that the tenancy sustainment target was perhaps easier for schemes to meet than the tenancy creation target.

5. Programme outcomes

Introduction

This final chapter reviews whether and how far the Programme was able to meet its objectives for tenancy creation and tenancy sustainment. The final report for the funding programme indicated that 8,128 tenancies were created over the lifetime of the Programme. The Programme has come close to both targets, but individual scheme operation could be patchy. This is to be expected for a type of service that is so very localised in nature, and where the play of a range of local contextual factors can be difficult to predict. Furthermore, access work is being conducted in a funding environment that is increasingly unsupportive of work with non-statutory homeless groups. Nevertheless, beyond the basics narrative represented by Programme statistics, important lessons have been learned from the Programme's development and management.

Meeting Programme objectives Expanding PRS access services

As noted above, the final report indicated that over three funding rounds of the Programme, 8,128 tenancies were created by 153 schemes. The sustainment rate for tenancies in the Programme was 90 per cent. The rate of tenancy creation was 98% of Crisis' original target of 8,256 across the Programme. Taken in its totality, the Programme has fulfilled expectations, in establishing new schemes across all the English regions, and extending access work to demand groups that had been overlooked by existing service provision. For Crisis staff, there has been success in the degree to which the Programme has encouraged third sector agencies to add access work to their portfolio of services, and to encourage existing schemes to expand their services to other client groups. For these organisations new to access work, engagement with the PRS has been a demonstrably cost-effective option. There

are more 'dots on the map.' To this end, the Programme has been largely successful.

Crisis staff expressed concerns that gains under the Programme will be lost in a funding context that was deemed 'challenging,' and it was possible that although perhaps a third of the gap in provision for single homeless people had been filled, this provision would perhaps fall back over the next months although it highly likely that service provision will have stepped up compared with the position prior to the commencement of the Programme. However, it was felt that even where schemes closed, knowledge gained under the Programme by individual scheme workers would not disappear, but be retained and redeployed in other parts of the homelessness sector.

Problems emerge when reviewing the detail of individual scheme operation, where it becomes clear that in some areas, access work is becoming increasingly difficult. There are indications that difficulties lie less in meeting the sustainment target, but rather in securing tenancies in the first place. In the final survey scheme, conducted in February 2014 and which had 43 responses, the respondent was three times more likely to say that they found the sustainment target easy or very easy compared with the tenancy target. Eleven respondents found this aspect very difficult, but only one found tenancy sustainment very difficult.

Changes to the housing market, to welfare and cuts to social services have created a less favourable context for access work. Crisis staff recognised that the housing market has become harder to negotiate, with particular problems in the LHA reductions, problems with property supply and a stronger focus amongst local authorities on using the PRS to meet their statutory responsibilities. These broad issues translate to localised problems

that even very experienced organisations found difficult to resolve. So, for example, more than one highly successful and well-established scheme had found that support and co-operation from their local authority has been withdrawn without explanation, and in some cases alternative local authority schemes for statutorily homeless households have been set up. There have been wrangles over applications to local pots of funding for deposits or deposit guarantees, which have been denied to access schemes for single homeless people. Competition for property is becoming marked, and ‘incentive inflation’ is increasingly an issue. There are reports that London boroughs are starting to bid for property outside the Greater London region.

Despite all these difficulties, schemes are succeeding in finding ways forward. For example, growing attention is being paid to work around setting up and supporting shared tenancies, and Crisis has already been at the forefront here in establishing pilot schemes that will develop and disseminate good practice.

Securing longer-term Programme objectives

A more problematic development, however, is progress in longer-term objectives, and in particular securing ongoing funding for schemes. The overall management structure of the Programme could not have done more to encourage organisations to create funding partnerships with their local authority, through the reduction in continuation funding. A small minority of organisations had been successful in this regard, but more met their funding need through internal cross-subsidy and fundraising. Again, only a small minority of organisations with schemes funded at both R1 and R2 had secured funding from their local authority to continue with the schemes as they were currently operating. A similar proportion had managed to secure funding from charitable organisations. Consequently, the objective of creating financially sustainable schemes has not been met fully.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the Programme has still contributed to a substantial growth in access skills as a resource. The majority of the small number of organisations responding to the February 2014 survey indicated that access workers were likely to be absorbed by the organisation to work on other projects. The knowledge and contacts created by the worker would not be lost. Furthermore, for many organisations not continuing with schemes as they currently stood, where were plans to create alternatives that explored shared accommodation or looked to the creation of models including a charge to landlord for services.

Outcomes for Crisis

According to Crisis staff, the Programme has been successful in a number of areas that are relevant both to its work directly and to the broader task of supporting single homeless households. The Programme has:

- Demonstrated Crisis’s ability to balance the funding and support roles: management of the funding carried a minimal administrative burden for schemes in its approach to monitoring, and good use has been made of all the support elements of the Programme;
- Increased Crisis’s knowledge base in the area of PRS work, and that knowledge will be taken forward to inform future work in this area. One example is the development of ‘Renting Ready’ which will be available from 2014 and is a pre-tenancy training module for homeless people, and another is a revision of the model job description in the PRS access work toolkit;
- Provided a critical mass of evidence that successful access work rests on the creation of relationships between access schemes, landlord and tenants, and does not have to rely on cash incentives;
- Taken a message to landlords that

engaging with access work can be beneficial;

- Been the context for the development of a range of toolkits freely accessible from the Crisis website.
- Demonstrated the value of active ‘handholding’ of schemes unfamiliar with access work, so and requiring a degree of support from Crisis to help them develop their own protocols and portfolio of services. Without intervention, many schemes would have made common mistakes; and
- Created a framework for the collection of robust performance data to demonstrate the value-for-money of access work. Schemes can use the data internally with their own organisations to support the continuation of access work and externally to make funding applications.

Crisis staff also felt that there were some ‘lessons learned’ for themselves. These included:

- The need for more effective engagement with landlords as an audience for best practice in dealing with LHA tenants and access schemes.
- The geographic spread of access work could have been wider. Identifying a gap in provision did not lead very easily to the development of services to meet that gap. Local contexts are often key to understanding why third sector agencies find it difficult to develop access work in a particular area.
- There were challenges in having the dual role of both supporter and funder, and problems in balancing the degree of support needed. Less emphasis could perhaps have been placed on scheme visits, or the visits could perhaps have been more targeted rather than routine.

Lessons learned

With a Programme of this size, and including a wide range of local and national stakeholders, it is appropriate to order other lessons learned depending on the audiences for those lessons.

Landlords

- Access schemes constitute effective partners for the management of small and medium-sized portfolios, particularly where shared lets are involved.
- The Programme has demonstrated that access schemes can be particularly effective in setting up and supporting longer-term tenancies, and so reducing income lost through void periods.
- The service offered by access schemes tends to be tailored to both landlord and tenant need. Access schemes have been shown to be ‘honest brokers’ in their dealings with landlords, and relationships of trust have developed in very many cases so that landlords’ first preference is to offer property to their local access scheme.

Third sector organisations operating schemes

- There can be difficulties in rolling out service delivery beyond an original ‘home’ local authority. It is easy to make presumptions about market operation in a neighbouring area but then find that, for example, the play of local politics or relations between landlord and local authority create unexpected difficulties.
- Third sector agencies should give better consideration to ongoing professional development for access scheme workers. Access work is not a poor relation of housing support work or social work. A good access worker will combine support skills with market acumen, and the ability to place the right client with the right landlord at the right time. This level of

operational skill needs to be rewarded through some level of qualification.

- Success in the creation of tenancies creates added workload over time in terms of tenancy sustainment: it is difficult to formulate exit strategies that take particular tenancies ‘off the books’ particularly where the scheme aims to continue working with the landlord. An effective balance needs to be sought between new tenancy creation and existing tenancy support.

Third sector agencies considering operating schemes

- There can still be some resistance to access work amongst voluntary sector schemes, which means that there are gaps in service provision across the country. The Programme has encouraged many new third sector organisations to move into access work, and to see that the PRS can be a viable alternative for their core client groups, however complex their needs. As the supply of social housing tenancies decreases, reliance on the PRS will increase, and the Programme has helped to gather a wide range of best practice tools. For voluntary sector agencies considering access work, considerable support is available.
- Access work does not need capital investment, and can be developed as an effective adjunct of existing services.
- There is no one model for access schemes, as wide variation in the Programme indicates, and access schemes are managing to operate in all types of housing market. The concept of access work is innately flexible, and can be made to fit a range of contexts.
- Successful access work rests on the ability of the access worker to instil trust and confidence in landlords. Finding the right person for the job is key to scheme development.
- The Programme has developed a ‘holistic’ approach to accommodating tenants in the PRS, with a stress on the need for pre-tenancy training that prepares clients to take responsibility for their tenancy. This work has also proved to be effective in shifting tenant expectations with regard to their likely longer-term housing outcomes.

Local authorities

- Some local authorities were proactive in seeking funding opportunities for local organisations working with single homeless households. These local authorities were able to bring additional resources to their area, and forge close working relationships with those agencies. The ‘Making it Count’ tool demonstrated the extent of local savings that could be made particularly in comparison to hostel use.
- Local authorities could be clearer about how they consider issues such as value for money in commissioning services, and about preferences when it comes to options for match-funding or part-funding a service.
- Where local authorities are unable to fund schemes directly, it would be appropriate for them to create as benign a context as possible for scheme operation, including where access to any deposit guarantee or rent in advance funding; pro-active support for the development of shared tenancy options; and avoiding the escalation of any incentive inflation where properties are being sought for statutorily homeless households.
- Learning from the Programme has been directly communicated to local authorities through work around the Gold Standard for homelessness service development. The Programme has created a substantial opportunity for that learning to progress rapidly, and is now moving into the development of shared opportunities

and social enterprise models for letting agencies.

- Crisis is currently developing good practice around shared PRS tenancies, which helps that part of the market to work more effectively with fewer tenancy failures. In the long run this development will reduce the LHA administrative burden and repeat homelessness applications. Co-operative working benefits all the stakeholders involved.

Department of Communities and Local Government

- Service development for single homeless households can take place effectively through working with the voluntary sector. There is a certainty that the funding will be used directly to assist that client group: *'the money goes straight to the front line.'*
- Supporting better access to PRS properties is effective homelessness prevention, and for some households can be effective in shortening or reducing altogether a reliance on costly hostel provision.
- Lessons learned from the Programme's administration include the fact that even a low-bureaucracy on-line monitoring portal can give effective 'real time' performance against targets. The portal allowed Crisis to spot schemes that were having difficulties, and intervene proactively rather than wait for quarterly or year-end reports. An element of payment by results keeps schemes motivated to continue logging performance.
- Learning from the Programme has been effectively integrated into the development of the Gold Standard for local government homelessness services, through the development of Challenge Six, 'which is to make available a suitable private rented sector offer to all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord.'
- In addition, the creation of the 'Making it Count' tool has informed cost-effectiveness assessment under the Gold Standard. It is possible to monetise the benefits of access work, and to demonstrate real savings across broader local statutory service delivery.
- The PRS can meet demand at the bottom of the market, and for clients that have had experiences of homelessness, and with sometimes complex housing needs. However, meeting demand is dependent on the operation of a trusted intermediary organisation. Landlords are more likely to trust charitable organisations than local authorities, but trust may be eroded by perceptions that funding for charitable organisations may not be stable.
- Importantly, access schemes can be successful in securing property that might not otherwise be available to local authorities. Schemes generally work with landlords who have an active interest in their portfolio management, but want to share some of the management burden particularly for their shared property.
- The Department should be mindful of the level of competition that is building for PRS properties. The Gold Standard represents an encouragement to step away from the use of temporary accommodation and incentive inflation.
- Greater support could be given to developing income generation capacity amongst access schemes.
- Failures under the Programme often reflect low levels of engagement with local authorities. The Gold Standard represents an opportunity for local authorities to move towards more strategic engagement with voluntary agencies working with the PRS.

Conclusion

The PRS Access Development Programme has created a critical mass of evidence that has underlined three key things.

First, the PRS can operate as an effective homelessness measure for people at all stages of housing difficulty: as a preventive measure, to facilitate move-on and as an option for complex-needs clients. A number of schemes were successful in achieving good results in housing young people and ex-offenders – both groups that have been regarded as presenting particular challenges to landlord recruitment. Schemes are creating innovative solutions to make shared housing work for young people; and with the right kind of support landlords can be found even for high-risk groups such as ex-offenders. Pre-tenancy training has been demonstrated as being an essential element to tenancy creation.

Second, the PRS can provide sustainable tenancies that are highly likely to continue beyond their first six month period. This is not a short-term option, but can be a long-term solution and provide a solid basis for a tenant's re-engagement with the labour market.

Third, using the PRS effectively is not a zero-cost option. Access schemes do require financial support, and the Programme has demonstrated that the current funding climate presents challenges for many schemes. However, the local authority is not the only funding body available. Schemes have pursued funding through the Probation Service and through Primary Care Trusts, and through other charities. The 'Making it Count' tool demonstrates that investment in access outcomes clearly constitutes a cost-effective approach. Furthermore, funding the third sector to deliver access work is particularly beneficial. Landlords clearly engage more readily with third sector agencies and are less likely to require monetary incentive in those circumstances. Monitoring outcomes rather than service delivery means that a lower-

level of bureaucracy is required. Furthermore, Crisis has in place an effective network to circulate and promote best practice and service innovation.

The Programme has delivered over 8,000 tenancies at the cost to taxpayer of around £1,000 a tenancy. This investment has not contributed to 'incentive inflation' but has, rather, created circumstances in which landlords are more likely to settle for longer-term tenancies with rents at local housing allowance rates. In doing so, the Programme has helped to stabilise the lower end of the PRS and create a framework in which it can work more effectively for single homeless households.

APPENDIX: Funding rationales

This appendix gives further detail on the scheme selection process, and on the rationale for each funding round.

Selection process

The selection of schemes for funding constituted an extended process with input from the Programme's advisory committee. Each application was reviewed by more than one Crisis staff member using a score sheet, and once a score had been agreed then the highest graded schemes then being sent through to a next stage for assessment by advisory committee members. For example, at R2, 100 schemes were put forward for assessment. The advisory committee were also given copies of all applications, so they could test the scoring process and make the case for borderline applications if so wished. Once a shortlist had been drawn up, there was a formal meeting of the Crisis Programme team and the advisory committee to make a final selection.

Funding rationales

Round 1

Grants were made available both to existing organisations already running access schemes, and to promote the creation of new schemes in local authority areas where no similar assistance was available. An audit of PRS schemes across England in late 2010 was used to update and expand the existing Crisis access scheme database, and presented an opportunity to advertise availability of funding under the Programme. Crisis engaged in dialogue with service providers and brokered a number of stakeholder meetings in areas with no or limited access coverage.

The deadline for applications for R1 was at the end December, 2010. Particular encouragement was given to schemes aiming to support the housing needs of ex-offenders. Of the 111 applicants for funding, 49 were selected. One of these schemes, Broadway Real Lettings, was funded with a smaller award and started later in the year, in October. Thirteen of the 49 schemes were located in London, and the remainder spread cross the regions (see Table 4.2). Funding of £50,000 was made available to each London scheme, and the majority of the remaining schemes were allocated grants of £40,000. Six schemes had made applications for funds below £40,000.

In order to be eligible for continuation funding, schemes were expected to meet at least the equivalent of their first year targets. R1 continuation funding was also contingent on schemes:

- Achieving outcomes at an appropriate level;
- being positively regarded by local stakeholders including local authorities and other relevant agencies;
- progressing a continuation strategy to secure funding beyond the period of Crisis funding; and
- demonstrating ability to maintain service despite a cessation of Crisis funding.¹⁹

It was anticipated that 85 per cent of R1 schemes would be eligible for continuation funding. Four did not apply, and three had chronic and unresolved difficulties in meeting targets. The remaining 42 R1 schemes all applied for and secured continuation funding, three with a modified operational model.

Round 2

Under Year 2 of the Programme, another open call for applications was disseminated, and it was anticipated that 80 new schemes would be funded, in addition to the 42 R1 schemes securing continuation funding. It was felt that funding should be proactive in promoting the development of services in under-resourced areas, and to that end Crisis undertook research to identify local authority areas where access services for single homeless people were either entirely absent or had limited availability.

The exercise drew on the following data:

- Estimated rough sleepers and street counts in England (2010);
- Local authority actions under homelessness provisions of the Housing Acts, financial year 2009-10;
- Supporting People household units (2009);
- SNAP (Homeless Link) average daily users of day centres (2008);
- SNAP (Homeless Link) Direct Access Hostel bedspaces (2008) ;
- English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2010);
- Crisis survey of PRS access schemes; and
- English Needs Analysis performed by Crisis New Developments Team (2010).²⁰

A total of 210 areas were identified as having identifiable need and substantial service gaps, and a 'score' was calculated for each area. Information about Programme funding was sent to lead contacts at the 90 top-scoring local authorities. Phone contact was

made with the top ten authorities in order to explore the feasibility of setting up a scheme.

It was later judged that this process had yielded poor results, and that few additional applications were received as a consequence of this intervention.²¹ Often, limits in service delivery reflected the lack of an appropriate third sector agency able or willing to develop an access scheme. Some of the areas were places with very tight private rental markets that presented particular challenges, including areas with large student populations.

There were some amendments to the Programme at R2, as lessons learned from R1 were implemented. Targets for schemes were adjusted to an average of 32 tenancies per year rather than 40. In addition, some refinement took place to target client groups. These were redefined as:

- Prevention: falling outside priority need legislation and at risk of homelessness but with low support needs;
- Move-on: engaged with services such as hostels or supported accommodation, but needing assistance to achieve independence, and including ex-offenders and people with substance misuse issues; and
- Rough sleeper: people who are homeless or who have experienced long-term homelessness and have had multiple service engagements.

In selecting schemes, some attention was made to address the disproportionate percentage of schemes addressing the 'move-on' category of clients at R1, and more schemes serving the 'prevention' category were funded at R2. Seventy-three

²⁰ Crisis PRS Access Development Programme April-June 2011.

²¹ Crisis Private Renting Access Development Programme: Report on the Achievements of Round 1 schemes.

new schemes were funded at Round 2. There had been a target of 80 new schemes funded at R2 but the advisory group had been able to select only 73 that were deemed to be of sufficient quality. It was agreed by the steering committee that Crisis give additional funding to seven existing R1 schemes that had performed well, to set up new schemes that extended their services to new client groups or housing markets. These schemes started later than the original R2 cohort.

Round 3

Grants were prioritised in a range of categories where existing schemes had faced challenges in meeting their targets, including schemes operating in London; those working with ex-offenders; and schemes working with groups affected by the Shared Accommodation Rate. Funding was also given to schemes operating in areas that had so far not received any funding under the Programme. Innovation was also a factor in choosing schemes, including larger initiatives that scaled up service delivery over a broader region.

Grants were given up-front to schemes in a single payment, since the Crisis Programme was not guaranteed to receive funding beyond March 2014, and so no performance-related outcomes payments could be made at the end of the funding year. However, in order to meet the sustainability principle, the grants were given on the basis of strong evidence of local network support and included a requirement for the Programme grant to be match-funded locally for the grant period, and strategies in place to secure further funding when the Programme came to an end. The application process ran from June to September 2012.

Sixty-two applications were received, and 23 new schemes were funded with the expectation that they were to begin work in January 2013. The start date was revised to March, 2013 in response to feedback from R2 schemes that a longer lead-in time would have been beneficial in terms of staff recruitment.

The R3 schemes covered one or more of the funding criteria prioritised for the Round:

- eleven in areas with no existing PRS service;
- five schemes in London;
- thirteen working with under-35s; six working with ex-offenders and two working with ex-offenders under the age of 35.

There was substantial variation in the amount granted to each scheme, from £32,000 to £125,400 depending on their scope, with the largest two schemes each aiming at a tenancy target of over 130 tenancies.

