Positive Progression
at Crisis Skylight Newcastle
Evaluation
Joanne Bretherton and Nicholas Pleace
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Crisis Skylight Newcastle is supported by the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities programme.

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Disclaimer
This report draws on statistical data which are collected by Crisis. The authors had no input into the collection, validation or analysis of these data. Interpretation, representation and discussion of these administrative data is however the responsibility of the authors. Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of Crisis or the University of York.
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Positive Progression at Crisis Skylight Newcastle

Executive summary

• This evaluation report summarises, explores and discusses the achievements of the Positive Progression project which is running at Crisis Skylight Newcastle over the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2015. The Positive Progression project is supported by the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities programme. The Reaching Communities programme is designed specifically to enhance the lives of people who are poorly socially integrated and who have restricted life chances as a result of their situation.

• The case for continued funding of this project and for supporting the Skylight programme for single homeless people more generally appears to be strong.

• The Positive Progression project was designed to support a wide range of informal and accredited learning activities at Skylight Newcastle. These included basic skills education, performance and creative arts. The project also supported wellbeing related activities and the provision of one-to-one support from a team of progression coordinators, whose role centres on promoting the social integration of the people using Skylight Newcastle. A range of workshops designed to promote self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation and assertiveness were also supported, as were group-based opportunities for Skylight Newcastle member involvement.

• The Positive Progression project supported and enhanced the core functions of Crisis Skylight Newcastle, which is part of a national programme of Crisis Skylight services. Crisis Skylight is designed to positively transform the lives of single homeless people. Using the Crisis model of change framework, Skylights are designed to improve the health and wellbeing, housing situation, social supports and employment/financial situation of single homeless people. Skylights aim to progress single homeless people away from the negative consequences of homelessness and reduce the risks of their experiencing sustained or recurrent single homelessness. Skylights also seek to prevent homelessness from occurring in groups who are at risk, due to specific support needs, their housing situation and/ or past experiences of homelessness.

• Skylight services employ a client-led approach, which reflects the personalisation agenda. The approach is non-judgemental, highly flexible and respects and responds to the choices of the single homeless people using a Skylight. There are extensive mechanisms for service user feedback.

• During the period July 2012 to March 2015, 1,715 people used the Positive Progression project at Skylight Newcastle. People using Skylights are generally referred to as members of Crisis Skylight. Overall, 41% of members using the Positive Progression project were women and 75% were of White European origin. The largest single group of members were aged between 25-44 (52% of men and 57% of women).

• A large group of members using the Positive Progression project were at risk of homelessness at first contact with Skylight Newcastle or had a history of homelessness (57%). A less substantial, but still considerable, number were actually experiencing various forms of...

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1 At the time of writing, data from the period 1 July 2012 to 30 March 2015 are available and the project has three months left to run.
homelessness at first contact with the Skylight, (43% were experiencing a form of homelessness, including 5% who were living rough, 21% who were in homeless hostels/supported housing and 15% who were experiencing sofa surfing/hidden homelessness).

• Rates of self-reported mental health problems and histories of drug/alcohol use were also quite high. Thirty-six per cent of Skylight Newcastle members using Progression Pathways reported a history of mental health problems, with 24% reporting a history of drug/alcohol issues. Rates of experience of domestic violence were high (12%), with experience being much more likely among women.

• Educational attainment was generally, although not universally, quite low. Unemployment was universal at first contact with the Skylight Newcastle service.

• This evaluation draws on evidence from three sources, the ongoing University of York led evaluation of the Skylight programme, which centres on tracking a large cohort of Skylight service users and also includes extensive interviews with members and staff, Crisis administrative/management information data and voluntarily provided, anonymised feedback from Skylight Newcastle members. According to all three sets of evidence, the Positive Progression project was delivering gains in self-confidence, educational attainment, employability and the housing situation of Skylight Newcastle members.

• The Progression Pathways project exceeded targets in promoting self-confidence during the period July 2012-March 2015. Two hundred and eighty-six members reported improvements in their confidence from participating in informal learning and wellbeing activities, which was equivalent to 114% of the target for the whole duration of the project (to June 2015). Targets to increase motivation among 80 members by the end of Year 1 (July 2012 to June 2013) and for 40 members to enter volunteering by the end of Year 2 (July 2013 to June 2014) were, respectively, exceeded at rates of 193% and 157%.

• A target to enhance educational attainment by 100 members learning a new skill at the end of Year 1 was also exceeded (114%) and a goal for 100 members to gain at least one accredited qualification or certificate by the end of Year 2 was greatly exceeded (301% of target achieved). Overall, 452 members had secured at least one accredited qualification or certificate as at March 2015, while the Skylight provided 4,653 sessions of informal learning activities during the same period.

• All the goals for employability were also exceeded. This included an aim to have 160 members reporting improved time management skills by the end of Year 2 (204% of target achieved) and an aim for 160 members to report improved communication skills by the end of Year 2 (218% of target achieved). A target for 100 members to report readiness to find work by the end of the project had been well exceeded as at March 2015 (275% of target achieved).

• Significantly, there was evidence that 100 members of Skylight Newcastle had, collectively, secured 131 jobs\(^2\) over the period July 2012 to March 2015. While only a minority of members participating in the Positive Progression project did secure work, this represents a major success with

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\(^2\) Some jobs were part time or temporary contracts.
a group of people who often face multiple, highly challenging barriers to paid work. The success of the Positive Progression project and Skylight Newcastle in getting currently, formerly and potentially homeless single people is in stark contrast to the Work Programme and sanctions led approach of Jobcentre Plus. Services run by Jobcentre Plus appear to be ineffective in improving employment prospects for single homeless people and, some evidence suggests, may actually be exacerbating single homelessness.

- A single target, to improve the housing situation of 90 Skylight Newcastle members using the Positive Progression project by June 2015 had already been exceeded as at 30\textsuperscript{th} March 2015 (108\% of target achieved). As with the other core goals of the Positive Progression project, there was supporting evidence from the University of York led programme evaluation, showing the positive role that the project played in helping members improve their housing situation.

- Successes were not uniform and were in some respects relative, as the Positive Progression project was engaging with a group of people whose levels of social integration are poor and who can face considerable barriers to re-joining or entering normal social and economic life.

This report explores the outcomes of the Positive Progression project at Crisis Skylight Newcastle, which is for single homeless people and those at risk of homelessness or with experience of homelessness. The Positive Progression project is supported by the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities Programme.
1. Introduction

1.1 Methods
This report draws on the interim results of the 2013-2015 programme evaluation of Crisis Skylight covering the Skylights operating in Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, Merseyside, Newcastle and Oxford. The programme evaluation is being conducted by the University of York, using a mixed methods approach. At the core of the Skylight programme evaluation is the tracking of outcomes for a cohort of service users (known as members) over a three-year period. By looking in detail at the lived experience of members of Crisis Skylight, the often complex and sometimes challenging nature of progression away from homelessness can be thoroughly explored. This report draws on interviews, conducted in 2013, 2014 and 2015, with each cohort member. In total, 71 interviews with members were conducted.

The report also draws on the results of other elements of the University of York Skylight programme evaluation. The report draws on the results of focus groups with Skylight Newcastle members who were not part of the cohort and with Skylight Newcastle staff. Interviews with external agencies working in Newcastle are also included in the analysis. Analysis of administrative (management information) and member feedback data for Skylight Newcastle is also included. The use of a range of data sources enables the outcomes for the Positive Progression project to be explored from several angles and provides a mixed methods approach.

1.2 The report
The second chapter of this report describes the role of the Positive Progression project and the ways in which the project supports the wider goals of the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities programme. The following chapter looks at the characteristics of the members of Skylight Newcastle. Chapter 4 explores the outcomes of the Positive Progression project at Skylight Newcastle, reporting on progress towards targets, the views of members, staff and external agencies. The final chapter draws together the key findings and conclusions of the evaluation.
2. Positive Progression at Crisis Skylight Newcastle

2.1 Introduction
This chapter provides an overview of the goals and operation of Crisis Skylight Newcastle and describes the role of the Positive Progression project in delivering the core goals of the service. The relationships between the objectives of the Positive Progression, the wider Skylight Newcastle service and the objectives of the Reaching Communities programme operated by the Big Lottery Fund are also described.

2.2 Skylight Newcastle
Crisis Skylight is an innovative programme that draws on some of the latest developments in trying to understand, prevent and reduce single homelessness. In common with the other Skylights, Skylight Newcastle is intended for:

- Single homeless people
- Single adults at risk of homelessness
- Single adults with experience of homelessness

Since the 1990s, it has become increasingly apparent that, when single homelessness is a long term or repeated experience, it is often associated with both unmet health and support needs and with a situation of poor social integration. This poor social integration can exist on three levels:

- Poor social support, in the sense of an absence of a partner, family relationships and friendships. This means an individual is more likely to lack self-confidence, because they do not feel valued, lacks access to the advice, information or support that family and friends provide and can be socially isolated, which is detrimental to mental health. These forms of support are sometimes described as esteem support, informational support, social companionship and instrumental support.
- A lack of community participation, which refers both to having the kinds of positive relationships that can exist between neighbours, but also more generally to being a part of a community and political life. This can be broadly defined as an absence of citizenship.
- Poor economic integration, i.e. a lack of paid work, other work related activity and facing significant barriers to paid work, including poor educational attainment, lack of work experience, low self-confidence and limiting illness.

Crisis Skylight Newcastle opened in 2006. The Skylight is designed to focus on the social integration of single homeless people and those threatened with single homelessness in Newcastle. The Crisis theory of change, which underpins the operation of Skylight services, identifies four main domains, which Skylights work towards improving, with single homeless people:

- Good health and wellbeing
- Employment and financial security
- Achievement of housing stability
- Good relationships and social networks

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4 Initially the programme covered all experience of homelessness, but there has recently been some reorientation across the Skylights to focus on people with experience of homelessness within the last two years.
Skylight Newcastle seeks to progress single homeless people from a situation in which all or most of these domains are negative into a positive situation. As health, wellbeing, employment and financial security, relationships and social networks improve, the risk of sustained, or recurrent, single homelessness is reduced. Skylight Newcastle seeks to progress the people using the Skylight (known as members of the Skylight) transforming their lives in a way that takes them away from the risks to wellbeing and to life chances that are associated with single homelessness.

Skylight Newcastle offers services centred on arts-based activity, basic skills education and individualised one-to-one support with job seeking, volunteering and accessing training and further education. Alongside these services, there is a successful mental health coordinator service, which focuses on developing peer support and enhancing access to health and social services for Skylight Newcastle members who desire this form of support. Services are delivered through a building based model, which alongside offering classrooms, an arts studio, meeting rooms and computing facilities, has an onsite social enterprise, the Café from Crisis, which offers training and work experience in catering to Skylight members. During the most recent term, Skylight Newcastle was offering the following classes, activities and services:

- ICT classes and using ICTs for job-searching
- Basic skills classes in numeracy and literacy
- Work ready workshops, including help centred on building self-confidence, presenting a positive image, employability and life coaching workshops
- Renting Ready workshops, equipping members for living in their own home (including household management, rights and responsibilities as a tenant)
- Cooking workshops (linked to Renting Ready workshops)
- DIY workshops (linked to Renting Ready workshops)
- Money management and budgeting workshops (linked to Renting Ready workshops)
- Driving theory classes (theory component of driving test)
- Food hygiene and safety and catering related classes (via the Café from Crisis)
- Song writing and making music
- Animation classes
- Photography classes
- Creative writing and poetry classes
- Member newsletter (written by Skylight Newcastle members)
- Drama classes and workshops
- Art and craft classes
- Woodwork classes
- Ceramics classes
- Sculpture classes
- Millinery classes

5th January to 28th March 2015.
Information, Communication and Technology, including ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence).
• An allotment project

• Football and Yoga

• A mental health coordinator providing one to one support with mental health issues and running a drop-in service and workshop

• Progression coordinators offering one to one support with job seeking, volunteering, further education and training alongside practical help and advice, also running a drop-in service

• Members’ feedback and members’ representative drop-in sessions

These activities and support offered by Skylight Newcastle centre on basic skills education, health and wellbeing (including mental health services), employability and progression support, life skills (including managing one’s own home) and creative/visual and performing art. There is no set pattern to engagement, with members being free to use any combination of services in any order. There is a broad goal to engage members who may have relatively little experience with formal learning by using arts-based activity as an initial stage, but if someone arrives at the Skylight and wishes only to take a computing course (for example), they will be enabled to do so.

Progression coordinators are specifically concerned with providing one-to-one practical and emotional support which is focused on delivering progression towards a transformed life. Their role can be described in terms of the Crisis theory of change. Progression coordinators are intended to help ensure Skylight members have good health and wellbeing, housing stability, good relationships and financial security and have a role in providing both direct support and facilitating access to other support (both within and external to the Skylight) as it is needed. The progression coordinators take a direct role in enabling Skylight Newcastle members to pursue employment, education and training and facilitate access to courses and volunteering, both within and outside the Skylight, while also actively supporting job searching.

Skylight Newcastle also has access to Crisis Changing Lives Grants. The grants can be used to facilitate entry into self-employment, which might be centred on anything from gardening or plumbing through to the performing arts. The grants can also be used to pay for externally provided courses and training, when a fee is required.

The methods by which support, education and training are delivered by Skylight Newcastle reflect ideas of coproduction and service user choice in service delivery which is sometimes referred to as the personalisation agenda. There is growing evidence that following an approach in which someone using a service like Skylight Newcastle is treated with respect, viewed in terms of their potential, rather than in terms of supposedly ‘negative’ characteristics and enabled to make their own choices, the higher the level of engagement and the greater likelihood of success.

Homelessness services that presume single homeless people ‘cause’ their own homelessness by action or inaction, or which assume single homeless people are overwhelmed by unmet support needs and are unable to care for themselves, often have variable outcomes. By contrast, services that aim to understand a reality of complex and varied needs and which recognise the capacities and strengths of many single homeless people and which listen to them and enable them to exercise choices, tend

12 http://www.sitra.org/policy-good-practice/personalisation/
13 Busch-Geertsema, V. et al. (2010) op. cit.
to perform better overall. Initial findings, from the ongoing programme wide evaluation of Crisis Skylight, indicate that treating members with respect, ensuring they can exercise real choice and recognising their strengths have all been instrumental in sustaining engagement with Skylights and in Skylights delivering progression which can transform lives.

In practice, this means that a Skylight Newcastle member should progress in a way that reflects their wishes and interests, rather than simply encouraged into any form of paid work that might possibly be available. Engagement with a Skylight means that if someone wishes, for example, to be a plumber or a chef, support focused on that goal is provided. Alongside being designed to facilitate and support transition to particular types of employment, volunteering, education or training that each member wishes to pursue, Skylights are also flexible in allowing members to work at their own pace. There is no requirement to meet a set target by a set date, rather it is a question of agreeing goals which are to be worked towards within a framework determined by each member. This said, Skylights are not a ‘passive’ service, they are designed to actively encourage members towards productive activity, education, training and paid work and to improving their health, wellbeing and housing situation.

2.3 Positive Progression at Crisis Skylight Newcastle

Supported by the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities programme, the Positive Progression project is designed to support the core objectives of Crisis Skylight Newcastle. The Positive Progression project is funded from July 2012 to June 2015 and was designed, supporting the broader framework and goals of Skylight Newcastle, to transform the lives of single homeless and vulnerably housed people. The strategic goal of the Positive Progression project is to equip single homeless and vulnerably housed people with the information, skills, qualifications and confidence needed to progress into housing, education and employment pathways.

The Reaching Communities programme is specifically focused on giving people who are not well socially integrated a better chance in life, with goals that include better access to training and development that enhance life skills, community participation and chances in life. The Big Lottery Fund is concerned to deliver outcomes that directly reduce deprivation, both at the individual and community level, across the UK. In supporting the Positive Progression project at Skylight Newcastle, the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities is focusing on a group of people who are socially and economically marginalised, who can face stigmatisation and who are not well integrated into their community or wider society.

Positive Progression is designed to provide Skylight Newcastle members with a range of informal and accredited learning activities. This includes the creative and performing arts, health and wellbeing activities and accredited learning. The project also gives Skylight Newcastle members access to one-to-one support from progression coordinators which could include issues such as housing, accessing volunteering and learning opportunities and emotional and practical support. Positive Progression also supports member involvement activities, including volunteering and producing the members’ newsletter. Workshops are provided that are designed to help Skylight Newcastle members build self-confidence and self-esteem, motivation and assertiveness.

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15 Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014a) op cit.
The Positive Progression project aims to give members the skills and confidence needed to compete in the labour market and to provide personalised support in accessing employment.
3. The people using Positive Progression

3.1 Introduction
This chapter briefly describes the characteristics of the people who were members of Crisis Skylight Newcastle and who made use of the services provided through the Positive Progression project.

The bulk of members using Positive Progression had White European origin (75%) with smaller representation of people of Asian and Black origin (each 9%) while people with other ethnic origins or a mixed origin were the smallest group (8%).

3.2 Demographics
In total, 1,715 members of Skylight Newcastle made use of the Positive Progression project during the period July 2012 to the end of March 2015. Overall, among those who chose to share their age and gender, 41% were women, with a majority of both genders being aged between 25 and 44 (52% of men and 57% of women) (Figure 3.1).

Rates of recruitment to the Positive Progression project have remained similar for each of the years of the project. During year 1 (1/7/12-30/6/13), a total of 808 members made use of Positive Progression, equivalent to 67 new members per month. In year 2 (1/7/13-30/6/14), 916 members used the project, equivalent to 76 members per month and from the data available at the time of

Figure 3.1: Age and gender of members using Positive Progression

Source: Crisis Administrative Data (July 2012-March 2015) Base: 1,608, 107 members chose not to share their exact age or to have their gender recorded
Positive Progression at Crisis Skylight Newcastle

writing, year 3 (1/7/14-30/6/15) will be similar, with 570 members using Positive Progression during the period 1/7/14 – 30/3/15, equivalent to 71 members per month. Participation in Positive Progression is measured through participation in at least one learning activity.

3.3 Homelessness

Users of Positive Progression were somewhat more likely to report they were at risk of homelessness, or had a history of homelessness (57%) than they were to report actually being homeless (43%) at their first contact with Skylight Newcastle (Figure 3.2). The three largest groups were people who were at risk of losing social rented housing (31%) or a private rented tenancy (16%), followed by those experiencing hidden homelessness or sofa surfing, i.e. staying with friends or relatives because they had nowhere else to go.16 Twenty-one per cent of members were living in supported housing and hostels at first contact (which offered temporary accommodation). Rates of squatting and current rough sleeping were low (Figure 3.2).

3.4 Support needs

Rates of self-reported mental health problems were high among the members using Positive Progression. Overall, 615 people reported they had mental health problems at first contact with Skylight Newcastle (36%), over the course of the period July 2012 to March 2015. In total, 24% of Skylight Newcastle members using Positive Progression reported they had a drug or alcohol problem at first contact with the Skylight. Experience of domestic violence was also high (12% of members). The bulk of members reporting these experiences were women.

16 This is defined as homelessness in the European Typology of Homelessness (ETHOS) as it represents a state in which someone does not have their own physical space, has no legal tenancy (and hence no legal protection) and is unable to exercise a private life in the way they can in their own home [physical, social and legal domains of homelessness], see: http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article120
Members quite often reported an experience of bereavement (17%) and of relationship breakdowns (28%). Members could report multiple support needs (Figure 3.3).

The interviews with members showed that experience of homelessness could sometimes be sustained and recurrent among the people using Positive Progression at Skylight Newcastle. Sometimes it was the case that experience of homelessness was recent, or that someone was at risk of homelessness again, after a period of stability in the lives. In a few cases, the members engaging with Positive Progression were vulnerable individuals who faced the risk, but had not yet experienced the reality of homelessness.

“I’ve been through literally kipping outside in sleeping bags, tents or whatever, to basically going into hostels. I’ve been through that whole situation. Even bail hostels, I’ve been through all sorts…” (Skylight member)

“I went ten years homeless when I had nowhere to live. Obviously, there’s a difference between homelessness then and homelessness now. When I was homeless, I’m 49, I was homeless when I was in my twenties.” (Skylight member)

“Yes, I’ve got somewhere to live, but I’ve experienced some harassment off neighbours, so that can make things quite difficult.” (Skylight member)

“I was going through, like, a transitional period around about this time last year, it was July. I’d been in a private rented accommodation and unfortunately the person that owned my flat went bankrupt, so it got repossessed by a company. So I had to put in for council housing.” (Skylight member)

Figure 3.3: Summary of support needs reported at first contact

Source: Crisis Administrative Data (July 2012-March 2015) Base: 1,715 members. Members could report multiple support needs.
"I have been to different charities to try to solve my homelessness, but they and even then council were not very helpful. But after I came here, it got better, I think they know how to resolve things." (Skylight member)

Unemployment at first contact was effectively universal. The people using Positive Progression at Skylight Newcastle were not in paid work at first contact.

There was clear evidence that the Positive Progression project at Skylight Newcastle was engaging with a high need group, experiencing high rates of actual homelessness and who were often at risk of homelessness. This was also a group of people characterised by quite low levels of educational attainment and who were very likely to be unemployed.

3.5 Education and work

Educational attainment among the members of Skylight Newcastle who used Positive Progression was not always very high, but many members had at least some qualifications. The largest single group reported no qualifications or had educational attainment lower than an NVQ level 1 (GSCE passes at D-G) (30%). A smaller group had NVQ level 4 and level 5 qualifications (up to degree level) (11%). Overall, 80% of members engaging with the Positive Progression project had at least one form of qualification (Figure 3.4). The data recorded by the management information system were not complete for the period July 2012 to the end of March 2015 and so these data should be seen as indicative.
4. Positive Progression outcomes

4.1 Introduction
This chapter outlines the key outcome measures for Positive Progression and reports performance in relation to those outcomes over the course of the period July 2012 to 2015. It is important to note that Positive Progression runs from July 2012 to June 2015 and that this report only covers the period July 2010 to March 2015 and that some additional progress towards these key outcomes is likely to occur. After the key outcome measures have been described, the specific progress that Skylight Newcastle has made in relation to each one is reviewed. This progress is assessed in four main ways, first is analysis of Crisis administrative data, the second the results of feedback collected from Skylight Newcastle members by Crisis and the third source of data centres on the results of the tracking of Skylight Newcastle members conducted by the University of York. The final source of data is focus groups and interviews with members and staff at Skylight Newcastle and with external agencies in Newcastle, also conducted by the University of York.17

4.2 The outcome measures
Four main outcome measures for the Positive Progression project were agreed with the Big Lottery:

1. Single homeless people and vulnerably housed will improve their confidence through accessing positive progression routes through informal learning and wellbeing activities.

2. Single homeless and vulnerably housed people will improve their employability skills and be closer to the employment market through developing their time management and communication skills.

3. Single homeless and vulnerably housed people will increase their knowledge around available housing options and improve their housing situations by accessing one-to-one advice and support.

Improving confidence by accessing Positive Progression
A number of specific outcome measures were developed to explore the extent to which the confidence of single homeless people was being improved by Positive Progression. These outcome measures were as follows:

• A target for 80 members to report increased motivation through attending informal learning and wellbeing activities by the end of Year 1 of the project.

• Forty members to move into volunteering opportunities by the end of Year 2.

• Two-hundred and fifty members to report an improvement in their confidence through attending informal learning and wellbeing activities by the end of the Positive Progression project.

Improvements in educational attainment
Improvements in educational attainment were followed through the development of three outcome measures for the Positive Progression project:

• One hundred members to report learning a new skill from attending an accredited learning course by the end of Year 1 of the Positive Progression project.

• One hundred members to gain at least one accredited qualification or certificate by
the end of Year 2 of Positive Progression.

- Fifty members to move into further education or training, i.e. provided externally to the Skylight, by the end of the Positive Progression project.

**Improvements in employability**

Improvements to employability from the Positive Progression project are measured against three sets of outcomes:

- A total of 160 members to report improvements in their time management skills by the end of Year 2 of the Positive Progression project.
- A total of 160 members to report an improvement in their communication skills by the end of Year 2.
- One hundred members reporting readiness to find work after attending at least two workshops or have one-to-one support from a progression coordinator by the end of the project.

**Improvements to housing situation**

One outcome measure was employed to monitor the goals of the Positive Progression project in improving the housing situations of members:

- Ninety members to report improvements in their housing situation, including moves from street to home (living rough to housed) or from a homeless hostel (temporary supported housing) to long-term accommodation by the end of the project.

### 4.3 Improving confidence

**Outcome measures on improving confidence**

Outcome measures for improvements in motivation and confidence centred on self-completed feedback forms provided by Skylight Newcastle members. According to these measures, the targets for improving confidence were not only met, but exceeded, within the agreed timeframes for the Positive Progression project. One caveat is that the completion of these feedback forms was voluntary, which meant that the actual achievements of the Skylight on these two measures might be somewhat underrepresented (Table 4.1). Conversely, these forms were based on a self-assessment by members and were not externally verified.

Volunteering targets were also met, this being simply recorded as a part of management information. Volunteering levels would reach the equivalent of 252% of the original target as at 30th March 2015. During the period July 2012 to March 2015, 101 members took up volunteering opportunities. One third of the members (33%) who took up volunteering opportunities were homeless at their first contact with Skylight Newcastle and the Positive Progression project, the remainder were at risk of homelessness or had a history of homelessness (see Chapter 2).

**Interview and focus group results on improving confidence by accessing Positive Progression**

Members interviewed in 2012 and 2013 often reported increases in their self-esteem and confidence arising directly from their work with Skylight Newcastle. These increases in self-confidence took three main forms:

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The feedback form has existed in two versions, the first used from 2010 to early August 2013 and the second being in use from August 2013 onwards. Both forms asked members directly if they felt more motivation and more self-confident as a result of participating in informal learning activities.
The discovery or re-discovery of a capacity to achieve, which could arise from completing their own piece of creative art, such as painting or creative writing, or finding themselves able to perform music or drama. Equally, a sense of achievement could result from completing vocational or basic skills courses in maths, English or computing. The sense of achievement was reinforced by being given certificates and awarded with accreditation and by the celebrations of achievement at Skylight Newcastle.

Increased social interaction through working with others in classroom or group based arts activities. Members might also become involved in feedback sessions or, in a few cases, act as Members’ representatives, putting across the views of the people using Skylight Newcastle to the staff team.

Building self-esteem through directly providing volunteering opportunities at Skylight Newcastle itself, or via arranging access to volunteering activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Outcome achieved</th>
<th>Performance achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80 members to report increased motivation, as a result of informal learning and wellbeing activities, by the end of Year 1 (July-Jun 12/13)</td>
<td>155 members reported increased motivation</td>
<td>193% of target achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 members to move into volunteering opportunities by the end of Year 2 (July-Jun 13/14)</td>
<td>63 members moved into volunteering opportunities</td>
<td>157% of target achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 members to report improvement in their confidence resulting from informal learning and wellbeing activities by the end of the Positive Progression project (Jul 12 to Jun 15)</td>
<td>286 members reported improvement in self-confidence at March 2015*</td>
<td>114% of target achieved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crisis administrative data. *Most recent data available at time of writing, year 3 will run from July 2014 to the end of June 2015.

“People who have similar issues as well.”

(Skylight member)

“So it’s helped us realise my problems and stuff, it’s helped with my confidence. I did enjoy the courses here, like, all the people are nice here. I do like all the people here.”

(Skylight member)

“I’ve gained quite a bit of self-confidence back. I think me self-esteem’s lifted. Because I go to meetings and that and I go to talks and things like that now. It’s bringing us back out me shell. Basically the shell that I’ve put myself in, I’m starting to track out of it.”

(Skylight member)

“It’s improved me confidence, it’s given us some focus, some structure.”

(Skylight member)

“I got new skills, I got to meet people, I got my confidence back. I got to do things that maybe like in other places you wouldn’t be allowed to do. So I got, you know, I got to mix with the staff and the members and the volunteers and all that sort of thing. So like from that point of view, if I think back to a couple of months before like I started working and stuff, I was still accessing
the centre [Skylight Newcastle] but like in a voluntary role, but also doing other things with other volunteers and members and stuff. So yeah, it’s helped immensely.” (Skylight member)

Initial analysis of the 2015 interviews indicates that positive results are still being achieved in boosting self-confidence and self-esteem by the Positive Progression project at Skylight Newcastle. This pattern is consistent across all the Skylights which are being evaluated by the University of York team.19

These largely very positive outcomes are not entirely uniform. A few members report that working with Skylight Newcastle has not improved their self-confidence or that their experience of homelessness, or risk of homelessness has not had an adverse effect on their self-image. There is some evidence that gains in self-confidence can be relatively fragile among some members whose self-esteem can be very low as a result of their lived experienced and related to the presence of mental health problems. Failures and setbacks, such as not being able to complete a course, or failing to pass an exam, can sometimes cause what might seem to be a disproportionate loss of self-belief if observed by someone who has not had the life experiences of some Skylight Newcastle members or who experienced poor mental health.

4.4 Improvements in educational attainment

Outcome measures in educational attainment
Measurement of learning new skills was again dependent on members completing feedback forms.20 Performance in terms of gaining at least one accredited qualification or certificate by the end of year 2 was recorded in Crisis management information systems and the levels achieved were much higher than the original target.

Performance with respect to enabling members to move on into further education and training, again measured through management information systems, was also well in excess of the original target for the Positive Progression project. There were also

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Outcome achieved</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 members to report learning a new skill from an accredited course</td>
<td>114 members reported learning a new skill</td>
<td>114% of target achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an accredited course by the end of Year 1 (Jul-Jun 12/13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 members to gain at least one accredited qualification or certificate</td>
<td>301 members gained at least one accredited qualification or certificate</td>
<td>301% of target achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by the end of Year 2 (Jul-Jun 13/14)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 members to move into further education or training by the end of</td>
<td>75 members had moved into further education as at March 2015*</td>
<td>150% of target achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Positive Progression project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crisis Administrative Data. *Most recent data available at time of writing, year 3 will run from July 2014 to the end of June 2015.

19 Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014a) op. cit.
20 The feedback form used during this period asked members directly if they had learned a new skill on an accredited course. These data were based on member’s own assessments and were completed voluntarily.
still three months left before the project came to a close at the time of writing, which could mean the eventual achievement in this area of activity will be greater than can be recorded here.

Four hundred and fifty two Members of Skylight Newcastle secured at least one examination passes and/or other accreditation during the period 1st July 2012 to 30th March 2015. These accreditations and exam passes were achieved across a range of subjects and vocational qualifications, including:

- European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) (at all levels)
- BCS (British Computing Society) qualifications in software
- National Numeracy Test
- First Aid
- Oxford, Cambridge and RSA examinations board (OCR) certificates in computing and ICT use
- NCFE learning to learn courses, writing awards, financial literacy and volunteer training qualifications.
- Health and safety qualifications (City and Guilds)
- Food hygiene and preparation certificates
- City and Guilds awards in the creative arts
- Qualifications and certificates in digital photography
- Open College Network (OCN) qualifications and certificates in the performing arts

During the course of the period for which management information is available, Skylight Newcastle provided a total of 4,653 learning activities, equivalent to each member involved in the Positive Progression project undertaking 2.7 learning activities each (Table 4.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total learning activities provided</th>
<th>Number of Skylight members participating in one or more learning activities</th>
<th>Average per member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 (Jul-Jun 12/13)</td>
<td>1,656</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2 (Jul-Jun 13/14)</td>
<td>1,769</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 (Jul-Mar* 14/15)</td>
<td>1,228</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Years</td>
<td>4,653</td>
<td>1,715</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crisis Administrative Data. *Most recent data available at time of writing, year 3 will run from July 2014 to the end of June 2015.
Interview and focus group results on improvements in educational attainment

Members, interviewed in 2013 and 2014, talked about their achievements in education, vocational training and exams and accreditations in arts-based activities.

Reference was made to what they had been able to accomplish on the basic skills courses, vocational training and accreditations for arts-based activities offered directly by Skylight Newcastle. Members also talked about their engagement with externally provided education and training, which had been directly facilitated by the Positive Progression project, both through referrals and by using funding from the Changing Lives grants.

“I’m getting the certificates for that.” (Skylight member)

“Not here, but through [Skylight Newcastle staff member] I have been put on two courses, one was NCFE level II certificate for working in the health sector, which I have just completed, and the NCFE level II safe handling of medicines, which I am still doing at the moment until the end of this month. I want to try and get into the health care, or the care sector anyway.” (Skylight member)

“I mean, I got a Changing Lives grant, so I went to college and I’m now an NVQ assessor.” (Skylight member)

Preliminary analysis from the 2015 interviews shows that this pattern has continued for members of Skylight, with some evidence of further progression into further education and training provided outside Crisis.

Sustained engagement with education and successful attainment of qualifications is not something achieved by all Skylight members. A minority can experience challenges in engaging with the flexible learning environment offered by Skylight Newcastle, while some members reported experiencing being unable to complete courses, for example because they had a significant downturn in their mental and physical health.

“Yes, I still come to Crisis to do mainly my classes, my art and my craft and so on and making hats. It gets me out of the house and it keeps me mixing with other people because if I was stuck in the house 24 hours a day, again, I don’t think that’s very good for anybody, you know, sitting staring at the ceiling or four walls. Saying that, sometimes it is hard to drag yourself out, especially when you get up in the morning and you’re not feeling on top of things.” (Skylight member)
4.5 Improvements in employability

Outcome measures on improvements in employability
All of the measures used to assess improvements in employability were centred on data collected from the feedback forms. Performance against the targets for improvements in employability was well in excess of the original targets. However, there was also direct evidence of success in improving employability through the securing of paid work by Skylight Newcastle members.

Securing paid work
Overall, 100 members of Skylight Newcastle who had used Positive Progression had secured paid work during the period July 2012 to March 2015. This figure represented a particularly significant achievement, as 100 individuals with experience of single homelessness, facing multiple, significant, barriers to paid work had been brought to the point where they could earn a wage and make an economic contribution to society. Work was not always full time, or permanent, so it was the case that while 100 members got paid work, they actually secured 131 jobs between them.

It is also important, that there is evidence that orthodox interventions aimed at unemployed adults, notably the Work Programme, cannot claim to have achieved any significant success in bringing single homeless people and those with experience of homelessness into paid work. There is also some evidence that the operation of Jobcentre Plus, using a sanctions led approach to try to force people into any available work, is insensitive to the realities of single homelessness and may actually be exacerbating both the rate and duration of single homelessness in the UK.

During the period July 2012 to March 2015, 26% of the Skylight Newcastle members

Table 4.4: Performance in improvements in employability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Outcome achieved</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>160 members to report improvements in their time management skills by the end of Year 2 (Jul-Jun 13/14)</td>
<td>327 members reported improved time management skills</td>
<td>204% of target achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160 members to report an improvement in their communication skills by the end of Year 2 (Jul-Jun 13/14)</td>
<td>349 members reported improved communication skills</td>
<td>218% of target achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 members to report readiness to find work after attending at least two workshops or having a one to one session with a progression coordinator, by the end of the Positive Progression project</td>
<td>275 members reported readiness to find work as at March 2015*</td>
<td>275% of target achieved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crisis administrative data. *Most recent data available at time of writing, year 3 will run from July 2014 to the end of June 2015.

22 The feedback form has existed in two versions, the first used from 2010 to early August 2013 and the second being in use from August 2013 onwards. Both forms asked members directly if they felt they had improved their time management skills, improved their communication skills and felt readiness to find work. These data were based on member’s own assessments and were completed voluntarily.

23 As noted in Chapter 2, Progression coordinators are specifically concerned with providing one-to-one practical and emotional support which is focused on delivering progression towards a transformed life. During the period July 2012 to March 2015, 579 members of Skylight Newcastle using the Positive Progression project received at least one session of one-to-one support. This was equivalent to one third of all the members using Positive Progression.


who found paid work were women and 42% reported themselves as being homeless at first contact with Skylight Newcastle (again the remainder were at risk of homelessness or had experience of homelessness). Six individuals who moved into paid work through the Positive Progression project had been living rough at their first contact with Skylight Newcastle.

Interview and focus group results on improvements in employability
Improvements in employability are achieved through increasing levels of self-confidence, the attainment of accreditations in basic skills, arts-based activities, vocational training, further education and through volunteering. Skylight Newcastle both directly provides these opportunities and facilitates access to opportunities available from external agencies. Direct help with job search, presenting a CV and with interviewing skills are also available from the Skylight.

The help with job searching was generally viewed very positively by members, with a few examples of members reporting it was instrumental in their securing paid work. Self-confidence could also be enhanced through the process of preparing for interviews.

“I’ve been working with the work coach as well. She’s been helping me with my CV and doing things like that. Putting all my experience together, which has all been a bit scattered. Trying to shape that up and support me in confidence and give me a reference point and saying this is really great, don’t be down on yourself at all. Putting things into perspective because if you haven’t worked for two years you don’t really know who you are and what you’re doing. So that’s been really great.” (Skylight member)

“They’re pretty good at what they do. When I was eighteen, nineteen, there was none of this and I’m thirty-eight now. There was none of this… not like it is now… Mostly for me, it’s mainly about my work situation, writing my CV, help looking for work…” (Skylight member)

“…chef work. Full Time. It was with the help of this place [Skylight Newcastle].” (Skylight member)

“[Skylight Newcastle staff member] got me a job in a place called [ ], it wasn’t permanent but it was just a temporary basis and all that. They [Skylight staff] always kept me going, gave me that confidence.” (Skylight member)

“So I was just doing that and a job come up. And most…well, it was nearly every member of [Skylight Newcastle] staff behind us, you know, go for the job… And I started last August full-time.” (Skylight member)

Enhancements to employability did not automatically result in work for members who were interviewed in 2013, 2014 and 2015. This was sometimes because other factors could be significant in creating barriers to work for some Skylight members. Some had poor physical and mental health, which could make some sorts of work unsuitable, and personal histories, such as a history of offending, might also make securing work in some areas more difficult. It was also the case that the local economy in Newcastle was, particularly during 2013, still at a stage where there was significant competition for each new vacancy in a city which, in common with Tyneside more generally, had quite significant levels of unemployment.

The research findings from the University of York evaluation, both in terms of Newcastle and the Skylight programme more generally, strongly indicated a willingness and desire to work among many Skylight members.
4.6 Improvements to housing situation

Outcome measures on improvements in housing situation
The single goal for improvements in housing situation was for 90 Skylight Newcastle members using the Positive Progression project to report their housing situation had improved during the life of the project. This improvement could be relative, i.e. leaving a life of living rough for temporary supported housing, but it could also include achieving a sustainable exit from homelessness into settled housing in the social rented or private rented sector. Overall, 98 members were recorded as having an improvement in their housing situation as at 30 March 2015, three months before the project was due to come to a close, equivalent to achieving 108% of the target.28

Interview and focus group results on improvements in housing situation
Skylight Newcastle, through the Positive Progression project, could offer three main forms of assistance with housing problems. The first was support and referral to agencies that could enable someone who was a member to access the private rented sector to secure a flat or a house. The second was to engage with the allocation systems of social landlords in support of members who were encountering difficulties in securing access to social housing. In practice, this meant working with members who were trying to use the Tyne and Wear homes agency, which runs a common allocations system, based around choice based lettings, on behalf of the city’s social landlords. The third form of assistance was centred on helping with problems or disputes that had arisen in existing housing, such as rent arrears, which meant a member was potentially at risk of homelessness or at risk of recurrent homelessness.

“I told [Skylight Newcastle staff member] about the housing and she said, come with me…because, they’d given me a registration number but they wouldn’t register it, they wouldn’t activate it. They took my application for housing, but they wouldn’t activate it so I couldn’t bid. Within a couple of weeks I had my activation number and I could bid.” (Skylight member)

“Crisis have helped me a great deal, I mean, the council wouldn’t let us on the housing list, and [Skylight Newcastle staff member] has pushed it and pushed it, and…ended up putting this one to a solicitor, through Crisis, and I’ve just found out last week, that the council has accepted us, and I’m on the waiting list now.” (Skylight member)

“Jobs, CV, [Skylight Newcastle staff member] helping me with the housing now, you know what I mean, [Skylight Newcastle staff member] seeing me on a regular basis about my housing, because my housing had become a big problem.” (Skylight member)

Not all members required assistance with their housing. Some had a history of homelessness but were stably and suitably housed at the points they were interviewed by the University of York team. Others received assistance that brought them out of living rough or temporary accommodation from the range of homelessness services operating in the city. There was evidence that most members of Skylight Newcastle had found at least temporary supported accommodation and that few were living rough for a sustained period.

27 Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014a) op. cit.
28 Source: Crisis Administrative Data using March 2015 data, the most recent data available at the time of writing. Year 3 will run from July 2014 to the end of June 2015.
5. Conclusions and recommendations

There was clear evidence that the Positive Progression project at Skylight Newcastle, which has been supported by the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities Programme for the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2015, is achieving very positive results. Positive Progression is improving levels of social and economic integration among single homeless people and lone adults at risk of homelessness and who have a history of homelessness.

• The case for continued funding of this project and for supporting the Skylight programme for single homeless people more generally appears to be strong.

• There was evidence that the Positive Progression project was enhancing self-confidence and self-esteem among a group of people with an often poor self-image. Improvements in educational attainment were also being delivered, alongside gains in both employability and in getting people with experience of homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, into jobs. The Positive Progression project was also helping improve the housing situations of members of Skylight Newcastle who engaged with the project.

• Three separate sources of evidence pointed to the same positive findings. Administrative and management information data from Crisis, anonymised voluntarily provided feedback from members of Crisis Skylight and the results of the interviews, focus groups and cohort tracking Skylight programme evaluation being conducted by the University of York across six Skylights, including Skylight Newcastle.

• Positive Progression sits within and directly supports the wider role of Skylight Newcastle as one element within a national programme designed to promote social integration for single homeless people and those at risk of homelessness or with a history of homelessness. Skylight services appear to be a more effective way to promote progression and positive transformations in the lives of potentially, formerly and currently homeless single people than some existing approaches. The sanctions based Work Programme may, for example, actually be exacerbating single homelessness, in stark contrast to the positive achievements of the Positive Progression project and Skylight Newcastle more widely.

• The Positive Progression project is of policy interest, as is the wider Skylight programme, because it challenges and fractures the assumption that unemployment and social marginalisation is a choice that many single homeless people choose to pursue. There is clearly a group of people, including those with direct experience of the extremes of single homelessness, who wish to be part of British society, who want to be educated and trained and who wish to work.

• The success of the Positive Progression project was relative, as while all the targets were not only achieved, but surpassed, the project was designed to engage with an often high-need group of people who can face multiple, significant, barriers to social integration. While it is clearly the case that not all Skylight Newcastle members saw benefits from participating in Positive Progression, the successes of the project are nevertheless considerable.

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29 Pleafce, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014a) op cit.
In many ways, the group of people on whom Positive Progression has been targeted are the most distant from mainstream social and economic life in British society. Single homeless people can face many barriers to work\(^{31}\) and the achievements of Positive Progression must be seen in this light. There is clear evidence that the project has directly helped many people who were homeless at first contact with Skylight Newcastle, had experience of homelessness or who were at risk of homelessness.

One recommendation for the future development of Positive Progression at Skylight Newcastle is to explore what further supports may be necessary for members of Skylight who will face significant barriers to paid work in the medium to long term. For members able to work, the Skylight can both provide a range of direct support and facilitate access to externally provided training, education and volunteering. Changing Lives grants are also available to facilitate self-employment and access to training courses or higher education for which there is a financial charge. However, not all members of Skylight will be able to progress to paid work, volunteering, training or further education in the medium to long-term. For those members who will not be able to progress beyond a certain point, the often rewarding art-based and informal learning activities that Skylight Newcastle offers can be a significant source of self-esteem and provide a sense of structure in their lives. Yet Skylight Newcastle and Positive Progression are designed to enable people to move towards paid work, and this goal must be balanced against the ongoing needs of those members whose progression is likely to remain more limited. It may be useful to explore the creation of structured, rewarding activities outside the Skylight for this group of members, both meeting their ongoing needs and ensuring all the progress they have made is maintained. Exploring this possibility will help create capacity to continue to progress new Skylight members towards education, training, volunteering and paid work.

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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 measure our success and can demonstrate tangible results and value for money.

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

We have ambitious plans for the future and are committed to help more people in more places across the UK. We know we won’t end homelessness overnight or on our own. But we take a lead, collaborate with others and together make change happen.

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Homelessness ends here