



Crisis Skylight

An Evaluation

Year One Interim Report

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June 2014

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

Crisis

Acknowledgements

The authors are very grateful for the extensive support received from the staff at the Crisis Skylights in Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, Merseyside, Newcastle and Oxford. The universally open, friendly and very helpful attitude of the staff at all the Skylights greatly assisted the first stage of the evaluation which is described in this report. We would also like to thank all the people making use of Crisis Skylights who agreed to participate in the cohort study and focus groups and to share their opinions of Skylight and their experiences of homelessness with us. We would also like to thank Lígia Teixeira, Sheba Qureshi and Steve Martin at Crisis for all their help and support.

Disclaimer

This report draws on administrative data which were collected by Crisis. The University had no input into the collection or validation of these data. The statistical analysis within this report was undertaken by the authors and they are responsible for any errors in that analysis. Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of Crisis or the University of York.

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ISBN 978-1-899257-94-2

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

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Foreword

Homeless people want to learn or work. They just need the right support. The people coming to Crisis often face a range of complex issues, including long-term unemployment, social isolation and mental or physical health problems. Many will have had deeply traumatic experiences. Some will have slept rough, some will have been abused; others will have had problems with drugs or alcohol.

Homeless people cannot be rushed, forced or sanctioned back into society. Homelessness can be devastating for confidence and self-esteem and any support must take this into account or risk doing further harm to already vulnerable people. Many will need to rebuild their confidence and social skills before they can even think about learning or work. The world may not seem an open or welcoming place.

Crisis services are designed to transform the lives of homeless people, helping them with housing issues while also supporting them to overcome isolation, poor health and a lack of work. From years of experience we understand that everyone has different needs and abilities and we work hard to foster an inspirational environment that brings out the best in everyone. People must be allowed to work at their own pace and level.

We commissioned the University of York to conduct this three-year evaluation because we are committed to demonstrating the impact of our work and ensuring we maximise the positive impact our services have on homeless peoples.

The final report will be published in early 2016 and will review the success of the Crisis education services over the period 2013-15. In the meantime, these interim results and the personal testimonies alongside them paint a clear picture. Crisis' approach works.



Leslie Morphy
Chief Executive, Crisis

Summary

Key Findings

- Crisis Skylight services are designed to transform the social and economic position of single homeless people. This report details the results of the first year of a three-year evaluation of Skylights in Birmingham, Edinburgh, London, Merseyside, Newcastle and Oxford.
- The main focus of the Skylight is on education, employment and arts-based activities. Arts-based activities, including performance, creative and visual arts are offered with a focus on building self-confidence and social skills. Alongside this, the Skylights offer extensive, accredited, basic-skills, intermediate level education and vocational training. The Skylights work with external providers of arts based activities, education and training to allow the people using Skylights to be referred on to further develop specific skills or enhance their level of education or training. The Skylights also offer specific support with job seeking, ranging from CV development through to mock interviews and job searching. *Crisis Changing Lives* grants are also available to enable the homeless people using Skylight to develop their own business ideas, become self-employed using artistic talent or pay for further education and training.
- Services are delivered through classes, group based sessions and one-to-one support. Some forms of one-to-one support are targeted primarily on homeless people with higher needs. All services and support reflect the personalisation model of service delivery, emphasising choice and control for people using a service within a framework of mutual respect and tolerance. The homeless people using Skylight are viewed and referred to as members of Crisis Skylight rather than as clients or service users.
- Skylights are one of the most systematic, comprehensive and focused attempts to increase the social integration of homeless people through targeted services ever attempted. While other relatively large scale services focused on socioeconomic reintegration of homeless people have been developed around the world, these services do not generally have the same breadth of service provision or the scope of ambition found in the Crisis Skylight Programme.
- During 2012 and 2013, 10,256 people made use of a Skylight. There is evidence that a majority of members of Crisis Skylight attend at least several sessions of education or support alongside evidence of more sustained use of Skylights. Skylights are successfully engaging with a wide range of homeless people, including homeless women, migrants experiencing homelessness in the UK and chronically homeless people.
- Skylight members often reported a view that using a Skylight service had improved their outlook for the future. Skylight services are viewed very positively by a clear majority of the people who use, work within and work alongside the Skylights. In 2013, there was extensive endorsement of the quality, range and effectiveness of Skylight services across all six of the Skylights included in this evaluation.
- Tangible achievements are being delivered by the Skylights. During 2012 and 2013, 852 paid jobs were secured, 3,904 exam passes and certifications were gained by Skylight members. During the same period, 1,191 referrals from Skylights to externally provided further education and training were taken up by Skylight members. In 238 instances, improvements in mental health were recorded, while improvements in housing situation were recorded in 680 cases.

- The role of the arts in Skylight was to promote self-esteem, confidence and positive social interaction with a specific focus on bringing people who had little experience of formal learning to a point where they could choose to engage with basic skills and other education, training and eventually job-seeking. Where artistic talent existed, the Skylights had the capacity to refer Skylight members on to further education and also support the development of full or part-time employment and self-employment in the arts. Arts-based activities provided by the Skylights ranged from drawing and painting through to the writing and performance of plays. Skylight members often reported that art could give them respite and also sometimes be a cathartic experience, alongside increasing their self-confidence, social skills and willingness to engage in other activities such as education.
- Vocational and basic skills education was widely praised by Skylight members and often seen as directly contributing to employability. Skylight members often reported that the education and training provided by Skylights helped give structure and direction to their lives. Skylight members particularly valued the focus on courses that were accredited and led to recognised qualifications and a sense of achievement and progression was often reinforced by the celebrations held by the Skylights at which members were presented with certificates and examination passes.
- One-to-one support with progression towards education, training and job seeking, alongside the practical help offered through one-to-one support and with health and well-being were very often highly valued by Skylight members.
- Criticism of Skylight by members, staff or external agencies was unusual.

About this Evaluation

- This report is the first in a series of three, which will include a second interim report and a final report, to be completed over the course of 2014 and 2015 by the Centre for Housing Policy, University of York.
- The core element of the evaluation is the longitudinal tracking of a cohort of 135 Skylight members who used a Skylight in 2013 over the course of 2014 and 2015, to monitor their progression towards a transformed social and economic position in which they are fully integrated into mainstream economic and social life. This tracking is designed to explore the role that Crisis Skylight has taken in promoting the social and economic integration. The evaluation also draw on focus groups with other members of Crisis Skylight, interviews and focus groups with Skylight staff and staff from external agencies and fully anonymised administrative and Skylight member feedback data collected by Crisis covering the period of the evaluation.

About Skylight

- In the last three decades it has become apparent that homelessness is often characterised as much by a lack of social integration as by a lack of adequate, affordable and secure housing. Crisis developed Skylight to counteract the experiences of sustained worklessness, poverty, disconnection from family, friends and mainstream social life that can often characterise homelessness, particularly where that homelessness is sustained or recurrent. Skylight was also designed to engage with homeless people, including chronically homeless groups, whose lack of social integration was combined with mental health problems or severe mental illness, problematic use of drugs and alcohol and poor, or very poor, physical health.

- Skylight began operations in London as a largely arts-based service designed to provide single homeless people with meaningful and productive activity that could help them towards engaging with education and paid work. Skylight was also designed to provide structure and counteract isolation and boredom.
 - In the last decade, Skylight has evolved into one of the most advanced and comprehensive attempts to enhance the social integration of homeless people. The combination of arts-based activities, education, training, support delivered through a mix of group based activities, classes and one-to-one support offers a breadth and diversity of support that may be unmatched. Skylights offer support ranging from one-to-one specialist support with mental health problems through to grants to enable Skylight member to establish their own business.
 - Skylights operate using one of two basic service delivery models. Building-based services concentrate all their services on a single site which is designed to deliver education, arts-based activities and support. The building-based Skylights, in London, Newcastle and Oxford include a social enterprise Skylight café which is designed to deliver vocational training and work experience for members who want to work in catering. Outreach-based Skylights, in Birmingham, Edinburgh and Merseyside, work in partnership with other homelessness and support services, delivering courses, activities and support to hostels, daycentres and other services which can offer suitable spaces.
 - Skylight is a highly innovative programme. Skylight emphasises social integration and well-being, this reflects an evidence base that suggests an absence of social and emotional support may be linked to recurrent and sustained homelessness and support needs such as mental health problems. Such support needs may also form a barrier to paid work, for example because someone lacks any self-confidence or has untreated mental health problems. Economic integration, through paid work, is also a core goal of Skylight, but the approach taken is heavily influenced by the personalisation agenda. Members of Skylight are treated with respect and tolerance and their choices and opinions guide the direction of support, this allows each member to follow a path towards greater integration, or progression, which they have chosen. This holistic, personalisation influenced approach is in marked contrast to interventions, such as the Work Programme, which take little or no account of individual need, opinions or choices and merely, and very often unsuccessfully, try to force homeless people into whatever form of work might be available.
- ### The People using the Skylights
- The Skylights engaged with 10,256 individual members in 2012 and 2013. Overall, 27% of the people who used a Skylight during 2012 and 2013 had first been in contact with a Skylight either during or prior to 2011, indicating sustained contact by some Skylight members.
 - During 2012 and 2013, most members using the six Skylights were male (67%), though the proportion of women varied between services, with Birmingham and Newcastle reporting higher levels than Skylights elsewhere. Women were more likely to be under 35 (50%) than men (41%), with only a minority of Skylight members being over 55. In London, there was evidence that a large proportion of Skylight members were migrants who had become homeless in the UK.
 - Overall, 61% of members were homeless at their first contact with a Skylight

and between 14% (London) and 3% (Edinburgh) reported that they were sleeping rough. Histories of homelessness were widespread. Overall, 80% of members during 2012 and 2013 had reported current or previous homelessness at first contact with a Skylight and 27% reported themselves as at risk of homelessness.

- Educational attainment was generally low and most Skylight members were unemployed at their first contact with a Skylight (93%). One third of members reported current, or a history of, mental health problems at first contact with a Skylight, with 27% reporting a history of, or current, problematic use of drugs and alcohol. Evidence was incomplete, but suggested that chronically homeless people were among the people who were members of Skylight, perhaps representing up to 9% of the members during 2012 and 2013. Twenty-four per cent of women reported a history of gender based/ domestic violence.

Services and Outcomes

- Most members had been referred to Skylight by another homelessness service (41%) or had heard about Skylight through positive word of mouth (38%). The importance of positive word of mouth as a source of new members was stressed by both staff and members of Skylight.
- The decision to use Skylight appears to centre on the quality and range of services on offer. There is some evidence that building-based Skylights are attractive because of the range of activities and support on offer under one roof, but could sometimes be difficult to reach. By contrast, outreach based Skylights can go directly to the services that homeless people use.
- Collectively, the Skylights delivered 116,356 classes and group-based

activities during the course of 2012 and 2013. English (16% of sessions) and IT (12%) courses were the most popular, although visual and creative arts sessions (13%) and group sessions centred on health and well-being (9%) were also popular. A wide array of education, training, arts-based activities and support with health and well-being was on offer across the Skylights.

- Collectively, 20,200 one-to-one support sessions were delivered by the Skylights during 2012 and 2013. Employment related support was the most common form (50% of one-to-one sessions), followed by education and education related sessions (14%), specific one-to-one support for mental health problems offered by mental health coordinators (13%) and help with housing (13%). A wide range of one-to-one support was on offer.

Views of Skylight

It's not just a case of you kind of tread water, you're on a hamster wheel. You can actually move forward with this place. It helps you to actually get your life back on track in some way.

If it was not for Skylight, I would have been on the streets, in hostels, I could be using – misusing – alcohol.

- Views of Skylight from members were almost overwhelmingly positive. All aspects of service provision tended to be praised and overall views of all the Skylights were often extremely positive. The evaluation is using a cohort of 135 people who were members of Skylight in 2013, whose progress towards social integration will be checked and tracked over the course of 2013-2015. This group had engaged with Skylight for a least several weeks and to control for possible positive bias in selection, additional focus groups with members who were not part

of the cohort, who could have started using Skylight at any point, were held in each area. Results from both sets of fieldwork were equally positive.

- Skylight members often regarded Skylights as offering a high level of respect and understanding. Feeling they were being listened to and could exercise real choices about their future was greatly valued. The flexibility and personalisation of education, training, arts-based activity and one-to-one support were widely viewed as integral to the success of Skylight by staff and representatives of external agencies.
- The role of Skylights in providing structure and meaning to their lives was often praised by Skylight members. This sense of purpose could often be combined with a sense of progression towards a better future. Staff and representatives from external agencies generally shared this perception.
- Arts-based activity, education and training offered by the Skylights was widely praised by members on five levels. First, there was not a sense of being pressured or rushed, sometimes particularly important when a member had little experience of a learning environment, a strength also recognised by staff. Second, education was generally thought to be pitched at the right level, not too basic but not too challenging either. An ability to pitch learning at the right level and on the right subjects was also seen as important by staff. Third, accreditation, and the fact that education and training led to recognised qualifications was prized as giving a real sense of achievement by both members and staff. Fourth, arts-based activities and education and training were often valued as boosting self-confidence, being enjoyable and sometimes as being cathartic and finally, staff saw a direct and effective role for the arts-based activities in building self-confidence and capacity to

engage with education, training and job-seeking.

- One-to-one support with progression towards education and training alongside the practical help offered through one-to-one support and with health and well-being were very often highly valued by Skylight members. Job-seeking support was generally seen as excellent and opportunities to pursue self-employment, through *Crisis Changing Lives* grants, were also viewed very positively.

Challenges for Skylight

- Criticism of Skylight from members, staff or external agencies was unusual. Most opinion about most aspects of the Skylight programme was positive, although this did not mean that no negative comments or feedback were ever received.
- One concern for staff was the position of people who had become long-term users of a Skylight without the possibility of further progression. There were both practical and moral questions, from the perspective of staff, about how best to eventually stop working with people who could not progress into fully independent lives and paid work, but who often remained vulnerable.
- There were some worries about ongoing cuts to other homelessness services among staff, which it was thought might negatively affect Skylight in two senses. First, the number of potential venues for outreach-based Skylights might be reduced, for example if daycentres or supported housing services with classrooms or suitable communal space in which to deliver services closed. Second, the pressure on Skylights might increase, perhaps in areas other than education and employment, as other sources of support and advice were closed or constricted due to cuts.

- There is evidence of a hybridisation occurring in Skylights which took the strengths from both the building-based and outreach-based services to deliver a core and cluster service model. A combined approach, offering both fixed site classrooms and private space for one-to-one support, but with the flexibility and reach to take Skylight services directly to people using homelessness services, was sometimes seen as a positive way forward.

Interim Results

- Crisis Skylight represents a major innovation in service provision focusing on the social integration of homeless people.
- Crisis Skylight offers a range of services that many homeless people want, evidenced by their willingness to engage with Skylights and their high levels of enthusiasm about the Skylight services they are using. Other homelessness service providers regard Skylight as filling a significant gap in existing service provision.
- Skylight possesses strategic coherence and has a clear set of goals. There are clear indications that Skylight delivers extensive and tangible outcomes in education, training and paid work. Skylight services are often reported to be enhancing the self-confidence, social supports and well-being of Skylight members.
- This evaluation has generated evidence that many homeless people want paid work, access to education, training and support with job searching that will help them secure paid work, help with addressing their support needs, structured and meaningful activity in their lives and to be a part of mainstream UK society. Skylight was perceived by many of the homeless people using it and the staff and representatives of external agencies as a means by which reconnection with ordinary life could realistically be pursued.
- Access to suitable, adequate, affordable housing with a reasonable degree of security of tenure remains an essential part of what it means to be socially and economically integrated in UK society. Skylight's role in promoting economic integration, access to social supports and promoting health and well-being will always need to be combined with adequate welfare safety nets, preventative and housing-led service interventions, including the housing related support directly provided by Skylights themselves, to bring a lasting end to homelessness.

1. Introducing Crisis Skylight

Introduction

This chapter looks at the history of the Crisis Skylight programme and then describes the operation of the Skylights. Each Skylight that is the subject of this evaluation is then briefly described. The final parts of the chapter explore the case for regarding Skylight as an innovative programme and briefly describe the evaluation methods and the structure of the remainder of this report.

The Origins of Crisis Skylight

Recurrent and sustained homelessness, experienced by lone adults and couples without children, including rough sleeping or street homelessness, is still often referred to as single homelessness in the UK. These forms of homelessness are increasingly recognised as being situations of social and economic marginalisation, in which people are removed not only from housing, but also from community, friends, family and from paid work. Links between mental health problems, problematic drug and alcohol use and recurrent and sustained single homelessness are also widely recognised.¹ In the late 1990s, New Labour went as far as to define people sleeping rough as examples of 'social exclusion', effectively defining homelessness as much in terms of someone's marginalised economic and social position and their unmet support needs, as by their lack of adequate housing.²

Lone adult homelessness associated with support needs, including rough sleepers and the groups often referred to single homeless people, are now widely defined as being a social problem that it takes 'More than a Roof'³ to solve. Policy attention on homelessness has waned in recent years. Although there has been the *No Second Night Out*⁴ initiative focused on people sleeping rough since the Coalition took power in 2010, other homelessness policies and services have, in effect, been subject to significant cuts in England.⁵ Government continues to approve of service interventions that promote paid work as a route out of poverty and homelessness.⁶

Since the 1980s, policy and academic researchers have consistently been finding that simply providing housing to homeless people with support needs may not provide a sustainable solution to their homelessness. Some vulnerable homeless people were being rehoused and then losing their housing. At first, it was thought that teaching people to live independently, developing their 'daily living' or 'life skills', and treating physical or mental health problems and problematic use of drugs and alcohol would increase levels of housing sustainment. However, it soon became apparent that only a minority of homeless people had high support needs, a group who are currently defined as chronically homeless people⁷ and that teaching homeless people 'life skills' did not

1 Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000 - 2010*, London: Crisis; Busch-Geertsema, V., O'Sullivan, E., Edgar, B. and Pleace, N. (2010) *Homelessness and Homeless Policies in Europe: Lessons from Research* Brussels: FEANTSA.

2 Pleace, N. (1998) 'Single Homelessness as Social Exclusion: The Unique and the Extreme', *Social Policy and Administration* 32 (1), pp. 46-59.

3 ODPM (2002) *More than a Roof* London: ODPM.

4 <http://www.nosecondnightout.org.uk>

5 Nominally, the main funding source for single homelessness services in England, the former Supporting People grant to local authorities has been relatively protected, but in a context in which this budget is no longer ring-fenced (i.e. it can be used for any expenditure) and many local authorities have been subject to reductions in funding, levels of expenditure on homelessness services have often fallen. See: *Homeless Link (2012) Survey of Needs and Provision 2012: Homelessness Services For Single People And Couples Without Dependents In England* London: Homeless Link.

6 www.gov.uk/government/publications/minutes-of-the-ministerial-working-group-on-preventing-and-tackling-homelessness

7 High need single homeless people with recurrent or sustained experience of homelessness.

help with risks to housing sustainment in the forms of isolation, boredom, lack of structure and meaningful activity (including paid work) and feeling stigmatised.⁸ Meeting support needs and teaching life skills did not address the lack of social integration many homeless people experienced and that lack of social integration presented a series of risks that homelessness would recur.⁹

Chronically homeless people with high support needs can now often be successfully rehoused using housing-led services, including Housing First¹⁰ and the Tenancy Sustainment Team (TST) approach originally used in London with long-term rough sleepers,¹¹ but research reports these formerly chronically homeless people still face potential risks to well-being - and also to their long term housing sustainment - if issues including isolation, boredom and lack of meaningful activity are not effectively addressed.¹² Current research evidence shows that effectively preventing or ending that homelessness centres on improving that person's social and economic position¹³ alongside meeting housing needs.

Crisis was among the first to recognise the need for service innovation that addressed the poor social integration of homeless people. Skylight began operation in London as an experimental service and focused on meaningful activity based around art. In 2005, Skylight London was described as providing theatre skills, writing for performance, Samba, music making, singing, dance and movement, a young actors company, circus, learning to DJ, video, learning magic, producing radio

drama, performing Shakespeare and learning puppetry.¹⁴ While much of this arts-based activity has been retained, Skylight has been significantly remodelled and expanded, to also provide basic skills education, work related qualifications and direct support with job-seeking.

How Skylights Operate Goals of the Skylight Programme

Skylight is designed to *transform* the lives of homeless people. This transformation centres on social integration with the goal of overcoming isolation, poor health and well-being and lack of structure and worklessness that is associated with both the causation and consequences of homelessness.

Skylight seeks to promote this transformation by promoting economic integration through securing paid work, building self-confidence and helping improve health and well-being and increasing capacity to form and sustain positive networks of social support. The Skylights offer arts-based activities, including performance, creative and visual arts groups which focus on building self-confidence and social skills. Alongside this, the Skylights offer extensive, accredited, basic-skills, intermediate level education and vocational training. The Skylights also work with external providers of arts based activities, education and training to allow the people using Skylights to be referred on to further develop specific skills or enhance their level of education or training. Additionally, Skylights offer specific support with job seeking, ranging from CV development through to

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- 8 Dant, T. and Deacon, A. (1989) *Hostels to Homes? The Rehousing of Single Homeless People* Aldershot: Avebury; Pleace, N. (1997) 'Rehousing single homeless people' in Burrows, R.; Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (eds) *Homelessness and Social Policy* London: Routledge, pp. 159-171.
- 9 Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) *A Review of Single Homelessness in the UK 2000- 2010*, London: Crisis; Busch-Geertsema, V; O'Sullivan, E.; Edgar, B. and Pleace, N. (2010) *Homelessness and Homeless Policies in Europe: Lessons from Research* Brussels: FEANTSA
- 10 Pleace, N. (2012) Housing First DIHAL. http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?action=accéder_document&arg=1288&cle=6d522395f45f76970945c4861967c39abacd9cfb&file=pdf%2Fhousing_first_pleace.pdf
- 11 Lomax, D. and Netto, G (2007) *Evaluation of Tenancy Sustainment Teams* London: DCLG
- 12 Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2014) *Improving Health and Social Integration through Housing First: A Review* DIHAL
- 13 OSW and Inclusion (2007) *European Research Study into Homelessness and Employment* http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/TMD_London/european_research_homelessness_and_employment.pdf
- 14 Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2005) *Daytime Homelessness*, London: Crisis.

.mock interviews and job search. *Crisis Changing Lives* grants are also available to enable the homeless people using Skylight to develop their own business ideas, become self-employed using artistic talent or fund further education and training.

Crisis services are designed around a theory of change which can be encapsulated in four main domains:

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

Homelessness, from the perspective of Crisis, can be represented as all these domains being in a negative state, i.e. health is poor, there is no employment or financial security, housing is not stable and someone is isolated, bored and lonely. In the Crisis model, when all these domains are negative, there is a heightened risk that single homelessness will be sustained or recurrent. There is considerable research evidence, from the UK, Europe, Australia and North America, which broadly supports the underlying logic of the Crisis theory of change.¹⁵

What Skylight aims to do is to help address most of these needs, focusing on employment and financial security, health and well-being and helping individuals develop good relationships and social networks. Interventions to address housing need by Crisis have in recent years centred on Private Rented Sector schemes,¹⁶

although Skylights also play a role in promoting housing sustainment.

Core operation

Crisis Skylight is not a fixed form of service provision. Skylights are frequently modified to adapt for variations in need and changes in context. Skylights are also designed to have an organisational capacity to learn rapidly from emerging good practice and adapt their services accordingly.

Skylights emphasise respect for homeless people and the adoption of a non-judgemental attitudes in service delivery. One aspect of this approach is that rather than referring to the people using Skylight services as 'service users' or 'clients', Crisis instead describes them as being *members* of Crisis Skylight.

Skylight members are able to exercise choices and support plans and services should closely reflect their own preferences as well as their needs. This approach reflects recent developments in the development of 'personalisation' of health, social care housing support and other homelessness services.¹⁷ An emphasis on tolerance, patience and allowing members to work at their own pace and exercise control over the direction of their lives is integral to this approach, Skylights are designed to avoid imposing a course of action on the people who use them.¹⁸

Skylight is not however an open ended, or entirely flexible, service model. The goal of the Skylight programme is to socially and economically integrate formerly, currently and

¹⁵ Busch-Geertsema et al (2010) op. cit.

¹⁶ http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/Private_Rented_Sector/PRS_Year1Report.pdf

¹⁷ <http://www.sitra.org/policy-good-practice/personalisation/>

¹⁸ There is evidence that homelessness services that try to "force" behavioural changes are less effective at ending homelessness than services that emphasize service user choice, show tolerance, respect and understanding see Busch-Geertsema et al (2010) op. cit. This reflects evidence that services for all many people with support needs appear to be more effective when those services both maximise and respect service user choices, including service interventions for people with severe mental illness, frail older people and people with disabilities, which is encapsulated in the 'Community Care' philosophy. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-health-and-care-system-explained/the-health-and-care-system-explained>

potentially homeless people. In other words, Skylight enables and supports individual choice *only* where that choice is deemed by staff to be 'progression', towards better health and well-being, towards education and training, towards better social support and also towards paid work, in essence towards what is commonly regarded as a normalised, socially integrated life. Skylight has a clear aim, but seeks to deliver the core goal of promoting social and economic integration within a tolerant framework that emphasises understanding and enables members to choose their own route towards a 'transformed' life. There are also some rules, for example, members are expected not to attend services in an intoxicated state and may be temporarily barred if they are violent or abusive.

Skylights are designed to be interactive services, encouraging members to share their views, suggestions and any complaints they might make and to react positively to that feedback. Each Skylight has a Members Forum which members are asked to attend and provide feedback to staff. Individual Skylights also select members who are part of a national forum that meets periodically to discuss Skylight services. In addition, feedback forms are provided by each Skylight, which can be completed anonymously.

All the Skylights celebrate the successes that are achieved by their members. Skylight members are invited to regular celebration days where they are given their certificates and congratulated on their success. This positive reinforcement of achievement is also a core element in the Skylight approach.

The criteria for accessing Skylight services are broadly defined. The following groups of people can access Skylight:

- People currently sleeping rough.
 - Homeless people in hostels, nightshelters and other direct access accommodation and in supported housing.
 - People experiencing hidden homelessness, i.e. sofa surfing or staying with friends and family on a temporary, often precarious, basis.¹⁹
 - People at risk of single homelessness because their tenancy or owner occupation is under threat e.g. due to arrears linked to a non-violent relationship breakdown or the loss of a job.
 - People who cannot stay in their current home because they are at risk from domestic/gender based violence or violence from neighbours.
 - People with high support needs who are at risk of homelessness because their health and/or personal care and other support needs are not being met.
 - People with a history of homelessness (including rough sleeping).
- Services are delivered through classes, group based sessions and one-to-one support. Some forms of one-to-one support are targeted primarily on homeless people with higher needs. Each Skylight provides the following types of services:²⁰
- A variety of arts-based activity, covering both visual and performance art, usually including - but not confined to - painting and drawing, drama, music and creative writing.
 - Accredited, basic skills education in study skills, English, maths and computing (IT).
 - In-house or externally arranged opportunities

19 Reeve, K. with Batty, E. (2011) *The hidden truth about homelessness: Experiences of single homelessness in England* London: Crisis

20 See Chapter 3 for more detail on what is provided by each Skylight. Not all Skylights provide all the services listed here.

- to pursue specific qualifications or certification needed for a particular form of employment, e.g. HGV²¹ licences, fork-lift licences, CSCS²² cards, food hygiene and hospitality and catering certificates and ECDL²³ and CLAI²⁴ qualifications.
- One-to-one support with education and progression towards education, training, volunteering and job searching. Some forms of one-to-one support are focused on members with higher support needs.
 - One-to-one practical support and support with health needs, including support with mental health problems, housing issues and welfare rights.
 - Support with personal and healthcare needs, including help with accessing health and social services, one-to-one support, and group activities designed to enhance mental and physical health and well-being.
 - Support in seeking paid work (mock

Figure 1.1 The Basic Structure of Skylight Services



21 Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) driving licence required for large commercial vehicles.

22 Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) see: www.cscs.uk.com/

23 European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) see: www.ecdl.com/

24 Computer Literacy and Information Technology qualifications see: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/courses/typesoflearning/Pages/computerskills.aspx>

interviews, CV writing, job search) and accessing externally provided education and training, delivered by specialist staff.

- Access to *Crisis Changing Lives* grants, when assessed as appropriate, which can pay for further or higher (externally provided) education, enable someone to set up their own business, and facilitate access into paid work offered by an employer. These grants had been used to enable members to start working as anything from a stonemason through to a musician or hat maker.²⁵

Skylights are designed to have the capacity to respond to different sets of needs using a mix of services in flexible ways. There are multiple ways in which to access Skylight services, at different levels and in different ways, all of which are designed to orientate members towards greater social integration (Figure 1.1).

Building Based and Outreach Models of Skylight

Skylights exist in two broad forms:

- **Building-based Skylights** which have a dedicated, modified building through which the bulk of education, arts-based activities and support services are delivered. These Skylights also have a Skylight Café which is a social enterprise open to, and primarily targeted at, the general public. Each Skylight Café provides work-based training and work experience for formerly, potentially and currently single homeless people who are interested in a career in catering. Three of the Skylights which are part of this evaluation are building-based services, **London, Newcastle and Oxford**.
- **Outreach-model Skylights** use mobile teams of workers and tutors to provide services to single homeless people. These Skylights work in close coordination with hostels, daycentres and communal and congregate supported housing/ accommodation based services for homeless people. Outreach-model Skylights work on multiple sites, using training rooms, meeting rooms or resident lounges, within the homelessness and other services they work with, to deliver their services. Three of the Skylights which are part of this evaluation are outreach-model Skylights, **Birmingham, Edinburgh and Merseyside**.

Staff Roles within Skylight

Staff roles within the different Skylights were not always identical and some Skylights possessed specific staffing which others did not. Skylights had a specific terminology to describe the different roles that staff played and to aid readers not familiar with the detail of Skylights, the remainder of the report will describe the *kinds* of support being provided, rather than reference specific job titles.

- **Progression Coaches** provide holistic practical support, particularly focused on goal-setting, directing people towards within Skylights courses and activities and specialist services and facilitating access to education and training provided by external agencies. Alongside these aspects of their work, progression coaches may also provide some help with welfare rights and benefits and sometimes with housing issues and job seeking. Progression coaches are primarily targeted on providing holistic support to homeless people with high support needs.
- **Work and Learning Coaches** provide support with all aspects of employability, careers advice, help with CVs, interview

techniques and with job searching. The role of work and learning coaches can also extend into practical support.

- **Learning Managers/Coordinators** manage teams of tutors. Some tutors are directly employed by a Skylight, such as a Smartskills tutors in Birmingham and Merseyside and IT tutors in London. All Skylights use sessional tutors (outside tutors, paid on a per-session or per-course basis) and may, occasionally, also use volunteer tutors to deliver education. The role of learning managers is to supervise and coordinate all the sessional tutors and design the timetable for each term.
- **Arts Managers/Coordinators** essentially have the same function as the learning managers/coordinators but focused on the provision of arts-based activities, within the Skylight and in cooperation with external agencies. In London, for example, part of this role is coordinating with a range of specific arts-based charities, such as Streetwise Opera²⁶ and Cardboard Citizens²⁷ while in Oxford, the Skylight works closely with the Old Fire Station arts centre with which it shares a building.
- **Volunteer Coordinators** were centred on generating and organising volunteer support at the Skylights. Crisis has a longstanding tradition of working extensively with volunteers, the most well-known example of their volunteer services being the annual *Crisis at Christmas* provision of support to single homeless people over the festive period. In common with other Crisis services, volunteers were encouraged and could be used for health related services and support, as well as in other aspects of service provision. In Newcastle, for example, volunteers (who

are trained mental health professionals) provide a counselling service. There is also scope for current and former members to become volunteers within the Skylights and in other Crisis services and activities.

- **Mental Health Coordinators** based in the Birmingham, London, Newcastle and Oxford Skylights. The mental health coordinators role centred on raising awareness of mental health issues among single homeless people, delivering a forum/support group for members with mental health problems and offering one-to-one support to improve access to mental health services and help promote individual well-being.²⁸ Merseyside was scheduled to have a mental health coordinator start work in 2014.
- **Housing Coach** during the first phase of the fieldwork housing coaches were only located in the London Skylight. At the point of writing, this service has recently been expanded to include two further housing coaches in Skylight Oxford and there is the possibility that more will be added elsewhere. This role is centred on securing access to adequate and affordable housing in the private rented sector.

Some of the larger Skylights had additional tiers of management depending on the scale and complexity of the activities, learning and support being provided. Some staffing was also dependent on Crisis's success in securing external funding, which meant some posts would only be appointed or reappointed if a grant application were successful. Each Skylight has a Director, who is the overall manager and who also contributes to the strategic planning for their Skylight. London-based staff who oversee

26 www.streetwiseopera.org/

27 www.cardboardcitizens.org.uk/

28 Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) *A Review of Crisis Skylight's Mental Health Services*. London: Crisis.

the entire Skylight programmes and regular meetings are held with the Directors as a group.

The Six Skylights Birmingham

Crisis Skylight Birmingham²⁹ is an outreach-based Skylight which began operation in 2010. Like the other outreach services, education, training, arts-based activities and support are delivered through partnership working with daycentres, hostels and supported housing projects for single homeless people. Birmingham offers 12 week terms of accredited basic skills courses in maths, English and computing, an employability drop-in service, cookery classes and arts based activity including its own magazine, drawing classes, poetry, guitar lessons, jewellery making and printing. Birmingham also offers a mental health coordinator service and had ESOL³⁰ and women-only courses and activities available. At the time the first round fieldwork was conducted, Birmingham was undergoing a process of expansion which would see a second, outreach based Skylight begin operation in the West Midlands..

Edinburgh

Crisis Skylight Edinburgh³¹ is another outreach-based service and like Birmingham delivers services through partnership working with other agencies. Although it initially began operations some years before, logistical issues were encountered that meant that Skylight Edinburgh was only starting to take its final form in early 2013, making it effectively the newest example of a Skylight included in this evaluation. Edinburgh provides a very similar range of education, arts-based activity and support to that

offered by Birmingham, with some differences such as keep fit sessions and photography lessons. As with Birmingham, the courses and arts-based activity are delivered using 12-week terms. Edinburgh was also the smallest of the Skylights in 2013.

London

Crisis Skylight London³² is the largest Skylight. This building-based service began operations in 2002. In the last decade, Skylight London has moved from being a largely arts-based service to one which combines arts-based activity with a shared focus on education, training and securing paid work for homeless people. London offers the largest range of activities and services. Alongside very similar services to those offered by Birmingham and Edinburgh, London also offers courses on song writing, Shakespeare, Karate and Yoga, specific training in different aspects of computing, film-making and both men-only and women-only services. Outside agencies, such as Streetwise Opera, also use the London Skylight building to deliver support and activities to Skylight members. In common with the other Skylights, London uses a 12-week term structure, but also provides activities during the breaks between terms. In common with the other building based Skylights, London contains a Skylight Café,³³ a social enterprise providing experience and training in catering for members.

Merseyside

Beginning operations in 2011, Crisis Skylight Merseyside³⁴ is an outreach-based Skylight that works in partnership with other homelessness services. Again, Merseyside's programme is very similar to that delivered by the other Skylights, but there are some differences. Like Birmingham and Edinburgh, Skylight Merseyside runs a magazine, called

29 www.crisis.org.uk/pages/-crisis-skylight-london-cafe-62496.html

30 <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/crisis-skylight-merseyside.html>

31 <http://www.oldfirestation.org.uk/>

32 <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/crisis-skylight-newcastle-cafe.html>

33 Pleace, N. (2012) *Housing First* DIHAL

34 *OSW and Inclusion* (2007) op. cit.

Merseysiders, which is produced by members and which is available online.³⁵ Courses in the history of art sit alongside accredited basic training in maths, English or computing. Merseyside also has courses in plastering and room renovations, using temporarily void (empty) social housing stock for members to practice on and courses in gardening. Like London, Merseyside offers a 'GOALS' course, centred on developing self-confidence and realistic life 'goals', with support being offered to pursue those goals. Like Birmingham, Skylight Merseyside directly employs a dedicated Smartskills tutor.

Oxford

Established in 2011, Crisis Skylight Oxford³⁶ is a building-based service like London and Newcastle, but it differs from both those Skylights because the Skylight shares the same building as an arts centre, the Old Fire Station,³⁷ that is open to the public. Skylight Oxford and the Old Fire Station arts centre share many common areas in their building, including reception, and work closely together. This creates particular opportunities, for example, the theatre which is part of the arts centre is available for Skylight members to stage plays and the arts centre provides volunteering opportunities for Skylight members. The core services offered by Skylight Oxford are similar to those offered by the other Skylights, although again with some local variation. For example, there is a football club and Zumba lessons are held alongside basic skills tutoring in maths and English, computing, CSCS card training and a job (seeking) club. Like London, Newcastle and Birmingham, Oxford offers a mental health coordinator service and in common with London and Newcastle, has a Skylight Café.³⁸

Newcastle

Crisis Skylight Newcastle³⁹ is a building based service which opened in 2006. During 2013, Skylight Newcastle was the second largest Skylight in terms of overall scale of operations. The range of learning opportunities, accredited courses and arts-based activity was again similar to that offered by other Skylights. Alongside sessions on job-seeking, including specifically looking at using the Internet to find work, there is was accredited basic skills education in maths, English and IT, alongside sessions on carpentry, learning the guitar, creative writing, printmaking, textiles and teaching for some more advanced qualifications such as the ECDL. Newcastle also has a mental health coordinator service and, as with the building based services in London and Oxford, runs a Skylight Café.⁴⁰

Setting up the Skylights

Four of the six Skylights were relatively new services that had only just completed their first year or two of operation. Memories of setting up the Skylights and becoming operational were still fresh in the minds of the staff and representatives of external agencies who took part in the research.

One key lesson from the experience of setting up Skylights was thought to centre on the careful management of relationships with existing homelessness services. In most instances Skylights had been established in towns and cities where Crisis had hitherto not had a significant presence. In this context, other service providers had sometimes been concerned that Crisis would compete for local funding. As, in fact, Skylights were not reliant on local funding sources and were

35 Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2012) *New Growth for Emmaus*, York: Centre for Housing Policy <http://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2012/Emmauspubformat.pdf>

36 www.crisis.org.uk/pages/crisis-skylight-oxford.html

37 www.oldfirestation.org.uk/

38 www.crisis.org.uk/pages/crisis-oxford-cafe.html

39 www.crisis.org.uk/pages/crisis-skylight-newcastle.html

40 www.crisis.org.uk/pages/crisis-skylight-newcastle-cafe.html

not designed to replicate or replace existing services, these concerns generally faded over time. Careful preparatory work with other homelessness service providers had been important in helping the Skylights set up and quickly form productive connections with partner agencies.

...that first term in particular was really critical, particularly in a new organisation... wasn't loads of rumblings around us coming, but there were one or two - particularly the big players in the city - you know, why Crisis were coming to the city... We did run a good first term. Lots of good outcomes including jobs and qualifications and plus a celebration event at the end and also a networking event. We also involved partners [other homelessness services] after that...in the development of our next year's business plan. Skylight staff.

The fact that all the organisations that we work with have been really supportive and we haven't had any negativity to overcome, and we haven't had any feeling, "oh, you're encroaching on our patch and we don't want you here", so everybody that we've worked with has been really keen to work with us and that means to refer people to us or they've handed out stuff, put up posters, because that's what we have to do, a lot of it is that publicity, get out there, talk to people and we've never had anything but positive response for that if we approach people. Skylight staff.

Partly just because this is how it is when a new service sets up, and partly because [] is a particularly territorial city, there was a lot of reassurance needed. There was a lot of conversations that you wouldn't necessarily have in a politer city, where

you have to reassure people that you're not coming in and taking their clients, and you're not stealing their funding... Skylight staff.

I think probably that is where credit is to [] as the head of Skylight she's worked hard to make sure that that kind of duplication doesn't happen, and we as a city continue to hold six monthly meetings with all our education, training and employment providers to sort of bring them round a table, ensure they're sharing information with each other. External agency staff.

Innovation in the Skylight Programme

The newest generation of homelessness services, including housing-led services like Housing First, are designed to improve health, well-being and improve the social and economic integration of homeless people. However, the *primary* function of these services is to sustain housing and to stop physical homelessness for occurring or reoccurring.⁴¹ While many homelessness service providers, particularly in the UK,⁴² have become much more focused on education, learning and employment, their core function centres on addressing housing need.⁴³ Skylight, by contrast, is primarily focused on positively transforming the social integration of homeless people. Skylight is not unique in ambitions and focus.⁴⁴ Examples of services aiming to socially integrate homeless people include the social enterprise led Emmaus communities in the UK⁴⁵ and Broadway's recent pilot of 'Time Banking' to try to address worklessness among single homeless people.⁴⁶ The private sector has

41 Pleace, N. (2012) *Housing First* DIHAL

42 <http://homeless.org.uk/education-training-employment#.UswsvvRdXT0>

43 Homeless Link (2013) *Survey of Needs and Provision 2013: Homelessness Services For Single People And Couples Without Dependents In England* London: Homeless Link http://homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/SNAP%202013%20Final%20180413_2.pdf

44 OSW and Inclusion (2007) op. cit.

45 Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2012) *New Growth for Emmaus*, York: Centre for Housing Policy

also tried to increase economic integration through promoting employment among single homeless people, through organisations including Business in the Community.⁴⁷

However, there are several reasons to regard Skylight as representing a significant *innovation* in homelessness service provision:

- Skylights offer an unparalleled breadth of services and activities focused on improving social integration. Skylights are designed to engage at multiple levels, in multiple ways with homeless people with differing sets of needs, using a personalisation influenced, tolerant and flexible approach.
- Skylights place a strong emphasis on social integration alongside their educational, training and other job-seeking and related activities. Higher levels of self-confidence, better social skills, access to structured activity and the development of positive emotional support which Skylights seek to achieve, may potentially enhance employment prospects and reduce risks of recurrent homelessness.
- The Skylights do not attempt to compel people to modify their behaviour and use a personalisation influenced approach to service delivery.⁴⁸ Skylight members exercise real choice and control over the direction they wish their life to take. Skylight members can set their own direction and pace, do not face sanctions for missing activities and work with Skylight staff who are intended to be non-judgemental, positive and supportive. Skylights are also flexible enough to ensure multiple options are genuinely open

to Skylight members, including an array of arts-based, educational, training and one-to-one support, coupled with help with accessing to external further education and training and direct support with self-employment. Skylight has marked operational differences to the DWP Work Programme, which effectively compels people towards restrictive, predefined patterns of job-seeking under threat of losing benefit and which is, on current evidence, ineffective in helping homeless people and other groups with low levels of social integration into paid work.⁴⁹ There is considerable evidence that homelessness services that, like Skylight, follow a personalisation model are markedly more effective than services that attempt to coerce modifications in individual behaviour.⁵⁰

- Skylights are designed to be participative, interactive services in which mechanisms are provided to enable members to voice their opinions. More generally there is a designed intention to deliver services in such a way as to enable members to feel confident and comfortable in providing feedback and making suggestions. This includes the potential for members to suggest that specific courses, activities or other services be introduced.

Responding to a complex challenge generally requires a complex response and this means that Skylights are not one service, but many. Skylights are perhaps best described as a coordinated programme of services. Skylights are one of the most systematic, comprehensive and focused attempts to improve the social integration of homeless people yet seen either within the UK or

⁴⁶ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2014) *An Evaluation of the Broadway Skills Exchange Time Bank*. London: Broadway

⁴⁷ www.bitc.org.uk/issues/community/tackling-unemployment/homelessness

⁴⁸ www.sitra.org/policy-good-practice/personalisation/

⁴⁹ Homeless Link, St Mungo's and Crisis (2013) *The Programme's Not Working: Experiences of homeless people on the Work Programme*; Crisis (2013) *Dashed Hopes, Lives on Hold: Single Homeless People's Experiences of the Work Programme* http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/WorkProgramme_FullReport_FINAL.pdf

⁵⁰ Busch-Geertsema, V. et al (2010) op. cit.; Busch-Geertsema, V. (2013) *Housing First Europe: Final Report* http://www.socialstyrelsen.dk/housingfirsteurope/copy4_of_FinalReportHousingFirstEurope.pdf

globally.⁵¹ Other services focused on the social integration of homeless people exist in the UK,⁵² alongside sheltered employment programmes for homeless people in the USA⁵³ and the Emmaus communities in France⁵⁴ and the UK⁵⁵ use a social enterprise led model to facilitate social integration. However, other services focused on social integration for homeless people generally do not have the same breadth of service provision, or the scope of ambition, shown by Crisis Skylight.

About the evaluation

This report is the first of two interim reports being produced as a part of an evaluation of the Crisis Skylight programme by the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York.⁵⁶ The report focuses on the Skylights during the calendar year 2013. The next interim report will cover 2014 and the final report, due in 2015, will review the Crisis Skylight Programme over the period 2013-2015. The Bermondsey Skylight project in London, and the recently developed Skylights in Coventry and Sheffield are not included in this research.

This report draws on the following sources:

1. Crisis administrative data;
2. interviews with Skylight directors and focus groups with members of staff working for each Skylight;
3. Crisis feedback forms;
4. first round interviews with a cohort of 135 Skylight members whose progress will be monitored during the course of 2013-2015;
5. focus groups with Skylight members who were not part of the cohort;
6. interviews and focus groups with staff from external agencies, including local authorities and other homelessness services working alongside the Skylights.

Anonymised data from Crisis's administrative systems was shared with the University of York. These data included 'first contact forms' which record basic demographic information on Skylight members, their experience of homelessness, their qualifications, work experience and health and well-being at the point of their first contact with a Skylight. Data on classes, training sessions, arts-based activities, one-to-one support sessions, examination passes, certificates awarded, referral to external providers of education and training, volunteering and securing paid work were also shared, again in anonymised form, with the University research team.

Crisis feedback forms enabled members to give their opinions on the Skylight services. The feedback data were anonymised allowing the comments that members made could be freely shared with the University. The feedback forms were completed by a self-selecting group of members, people who actively chose to give their opinions, rather than a representative sample of all members.

The University team conducted site visits to each Skylight in early 2013. These initial visits focused on explaining the evaluation to staff and answering any questions that they had. These initial site visits presented the research team with an opportunity to start to learn about how each Skylight operated.

51 Busch-Geertsema, V. et al, (2010) op. cit.; Jones and Pleace (2010), op. cit.

52 www.broadwaylondon.org/WhatWeDo/WorkandLearning.html

53 For a review of the US evidence base see Shaheen, G. and Rio, J. (2007) 'Recognizing Work as a Priority in Preventing or Ending Homelessness' *Journal of Primary Prevention* 28, pp. 341-358.

54 www.emmaus-france.org/

55 www.emmaus.org.uk/

56 www.york.ac.uk/chp/

Within each of the Skylights, the Director was interviewed face to face for approximately one hour and a focus group was conducted with a representative range of staff. Focus groups had between three and eight participants and typically lasted one hour, overall 31 Skylight staff took part in six groups. Fieldwork with staff took place in the Summer of 2013. To allow staff to speak freely, they were given anonymity and a guarantee that their comments would not be reported in such a way as to link particular sets of comments to a particular person or Skylight.

The main component of the evaluation is a large scale qualitative cohort study with 135 participants.⁵⁷ This group of 135 Skylight members, recruited and interviewed during 2013, will be tracked by the University research team through 2014 and 2015. In the Summer of 2013, the first of four cohort interviews was conducted with these 135 people, setting a baseline from which further progress could be monitored. Over the course of 2014 and 2015, it should be the case that these members will move on from Skylight, progressing into further education, training and paid work. The cohort study was designed to explore the processes through which Skylights should be positively transforming the lives of homeless people, moving them towards and into a situation of social integration.

The cohort study is qualitative, collecting opinion and experience through talking to members who are in the 135 person cohort about whether, how and to what extent Skylight had helped transform their social and economic position. Over 2014 and 2015 this will include detailed exploration of their economic position, their access to social support from friends and family, their health and well-being and their integration into

society as part of their local community. A qualitative approach has been used to enable detailed exploration of each cohort member's journey and their perceptions of the role that each Skylight plays within that journey.

Skylight members participating in the cohort received £10 for undertaking the first interview and will receive a £5 increment for each of the three subsequent interviews in 2014 and 2015. The University research team followed Social Policy Association ethical guidelines⁵⁸ in recruiting the Skylight members who were in the cohort, ensuring that participants understood what they were being asked to do, that their participation was anonymous, that they could speak freely, and that they could withdraw at any point. Each participant was asked to complete a 'permission to locate' form, giving contact details for multiple individuals and services who would be likely to be in contact with them, in case the University research team was not able to contact them directly during the 2014 and 2015 stages. First round interviews were typically 25-40 minutes in duration and fieldwork took place in the Summer of 2013.

The number of participants from each Skylight in the cohort reflected the relative size of the service. The achieved cohort in each Skylight area was as follows:

- 18 members in Birmingham
- 11 members in Edinburgh
- 40 members in London
- 16 members in Merseyside
- 31 members in Newcastle
- 19 members in Oxford

⁵⁷ The original goal was to recruit 150 participants, but after extensive work by the research team with considerable support from staff from all the Skylights, not enough members agreed for this to be possible.

⁵⁸ www.social-policy.org.uk/downloads/SPA_code_ethics_jan09.pdf

The 135 Skylight members who were in the cohort were selected on the basis that they had engaged with a Skylight over the course of at least one term (a 12 week timetable). This decision was taken to ensure that the cohort, which was intended to explore the extent to which Skylight was helping transform the social and economic position of single homeless people, included people who had actually made some use of Skylight services. Selecting the cohort at first contact with a Skylight would have almost inevitably meant including some people who did not, for various reasons, become Skylight members, which would have meant that the research would be tracking some people who had never really used Skylight (see Chapter 2).

There was the possibility of positive bias in the cohort. By selecting Skylight members who had been engaged for at least a term, there might be a risk that those people were more likely to be positively inclined towards Skylight, simply because they had opted to engage with Skylight services for 12 weeks or more. The research was therefore designed with a cross-checking methodology in place, i.e. focus groups with other members who were *not* part of the cohort. Again, the University research team followed Social Policy Association ethical guidelines⁵⁹ in recruiting the Skylight members who participants in these focus groups, ensuring that participants understood what they were being asked to do, that their participation was anonymous, that they could speak freely, and that they could withdraw at any point. Cohort members were excluded, but selection of Skylight members for these focus groups was in other respects random, with each participant receiving £10 for their participation.

In five of the Skylights, one focus group was conducted with members, typically involving between four and eight participants and lasting between 70-90 minutes. In London, reflecting

the relatively greater size of the Skylight, two focus groups with members were conducted. In total, 46 members participated in seven focus groups during the Summer of 2013.

Interviews with external agencies involved focus groups, face to face discussions and telephone interviews. Participation was again anonymous, allowing respondents from organisations cooperating with or working alongside Skylights to talk freely about their perceptions of Skylight. In total, representatives from nine agencies, including local authorities, other homelessness service providers, charities and voluntary organisations agreed to take part in this stage of the research in the Summer and Autumn of 2013. To allow these respondents to speak freely, full anonymity was given to these individuals and the organisations they represented.

About this report

The report is divided into five main chapters. Chapter 2 describes the origins of the Skylight programme and summarises the history and basic operation of the six Skylights that are the subject of this interim report. Chapter 3 draws largely on Crisis administrative data to provide statistics on characteristics of Skylight members in 2012 and 2013. Chapter 4 also draws on administrative data to explore the services that the Skylights delivered and service outcomes, including completion of accredited courses and exams and success in helping people into paid work. Chapter 5 reports the views of Skylight members, Skylight staff and representatives of external agencies on the six Skylights. Chapter 6 presents the interim findings of this first stage of the evaluation of Crisis Skylight.

2. The People Using Skylight

Introduction

This chapter examines the characteristics of Skylight members. The chapter is largely based on anonymised Crisis administrative data on people who made use of at least one Skylight service during 2012 and 2013 but also draws on the fieldwork results. The chapter begins by looking at demographic information before moving on to look at homelessness, economic status and support needs.

Characteristics of Members of Crisis Skylight

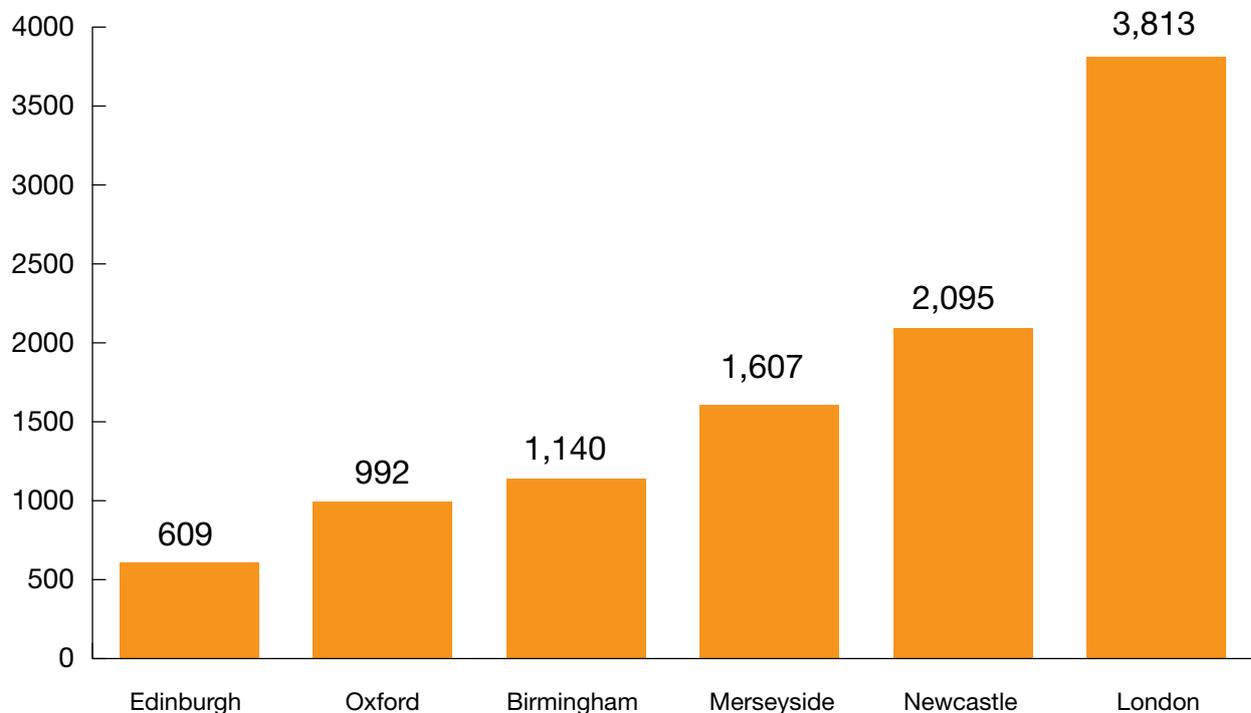
Total activity in 2012 and 2013

As noted in Chapter 1, the emphasis on

personalisation in Crisis Skylight services was reflected in an organisational decision not to use the terms ‘service users’ or ‘clients’ when describing the people using Skylight services. Instead, the people using Skylights are described as *members* of Crisis Skylight and this terminology is adopted throughout this report.

Crisis administrative data⁶⁰ record a total of 10,256 unique individuals⁶¹ made at least one use of a Skylight during the course of 2012 and 2013. As is shown in Figure 3.1, London accounted for 37%⁶² of all members (i.e. London saw 37% of all the people using a Skylight), followed by Newcastle with 20% of all members. The number of approaches

Figure 2.1: Total members of Crisis Skylight during 2012 and 2013.



Source: Crisis administrative data, Base: 10,256.

⁶⁰ Based on data collected at first contact by each Skylight and records of service use, which are entered onto a web-enabled database system that is administered in London.

⁶¹ Each individual is given a unique reference number by Crisis. Alternative, anonymised individual identification numbers were used in the data shared by Crisis with the University.

⁶² Percentages in the text are rounded down or up to the nearest 0.5%.

Table 2.1: Members of Crisis Skylight During 2012 and 2013 by Year of First Contact with a Skylight

Skylight	Year of First Contact with a Skylight				
	2010 or before	2011	2012	2013	Total
Edinburgh	2%	5%	23%	71%	100%
Birmingham	4%	12%	39%	45%	100%
London	25%	17%	30%	28%	100%
Merseyside	0%	7%	43%	50%	100%
Newcastle	19%	15%	32%	35%	100%
Oxford	0%	10%	42%	48%	100%
All Skylights	14%	13%	34%	39%	100%

Source: Crisis administrative data, Base: 10,243.⁶³

was lower for the other Skylights, led by Merseyside (16% of all members using a Skylight) followed by Birmingham (11%), Oxford (10%) and finally Edinburgh (6%) (Figure 2.1).

The differences between the scale of the Skylights appears stark. London, for example saw over six times the number of people seen by Edinburgh and Newcastle was twice more active than Oxford. However, the Skylights had opened at different points and both London and Newcastle had been operational for longer than the other Skylights (see Chapter 1).

Table 2.1 shows that the more established Skylights, London and Newcastle were still being used by some members who had originally started using their services either during or prior to 2011. Birmingham had opened in 2010, Oxford and Merseyside in 2011 and while Edinburgh had some legacy membership from earlier operation, the service had not become truly active until 2013 (Chapter 1). Overall, 27% of the people who used a Skylight during 2012 and 2013 had first become Skylight members either during, or prior to, 2011, indicating sustained

contact by some Skylight members.

Almost one quarter of the members using London in 2012 and 2013 were people who had first been in contact with the Skylight since prior to 2011. Although Skylight London dated back to 2002, very long term contact with members was relatively unusual, only nine members during 2012 and 2013 had first become members of Skylight London before 2008 (less than 1%). The bulk of members using Skylight London during 2012 and 2013 had joined between 2011 and 2013 (75%). Skylight Newcastle, while it had some long term members using its services in 2012 and 2013, had a clear majority of current members who had joined after 2011 (67%).

Demographic Characteristics

There is evidence that the proportion of lone women experiencing homelessness has been increasing over the last three decades,⁶⁴ although lone men are still the majority.⁶⁵ A limitation with the current UK evidence base on homelessness is a relatively lack of work on women's experiences of single homelessness. Work commissioned by Crisis and others⁶⁶

⁶³ Date of first contact was missing in 13 cases.

⁶⁴ Reeve, K. with Batty, E. (2011) op. cit.; Baptista, I. (2010) 'Women and Homelessness' In E. O'Sullivan, V. Busch-Geertsema, D. Quilgars and N. Pleace (Eds) Homelessness Research in Europe. Brussels: FEANTSA. pp. 163-186.

⁶⁵ Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) op.cit.

⁶⁶ Moss, K. and Singh, P. (2012) *Women Rough Sleepers Who are the Victims of Domestic Violence* University of Wolverhampton See also: <http://womenroughsleepers.eu/>

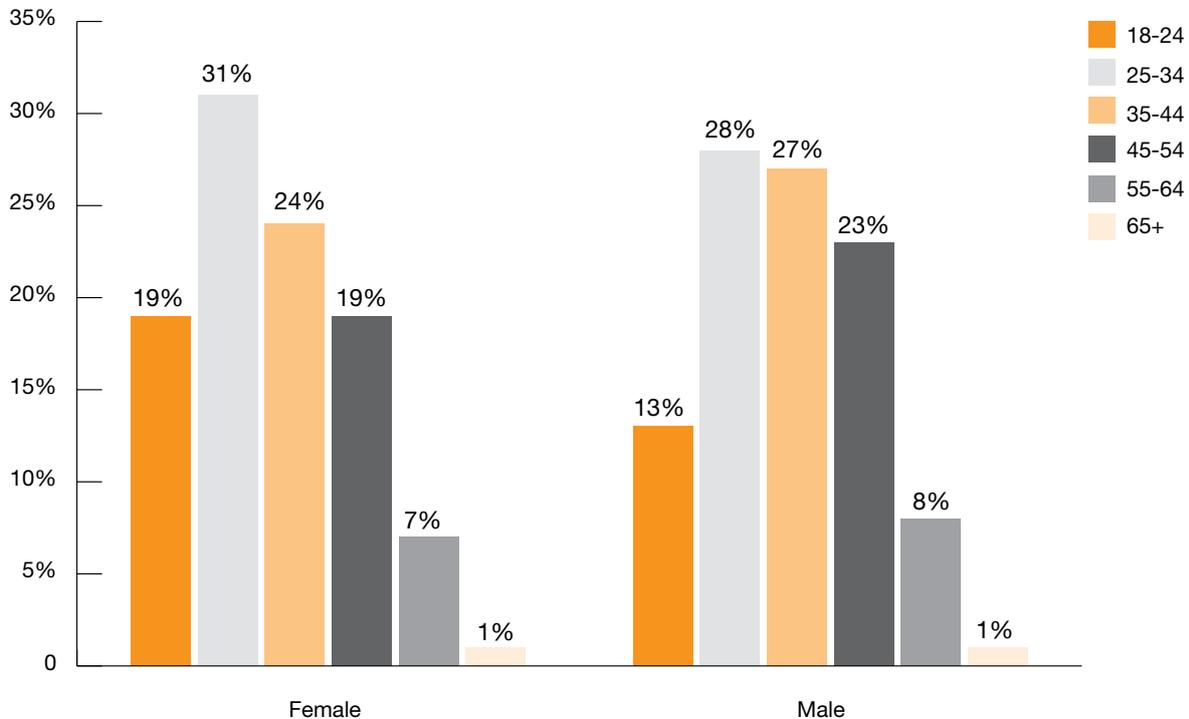
has begun to improve understanding of women’s experience of homelessness and hidden homelessness.⁶⁷ There has also begun to be a better understanding of the true scale of gender based/domestic violence and the extent of association between that domestic violence and women’s homelessness.⁶⁸

However, it is evident that the Skylights were collectively engaging with considerable numbers of homeless women during the course of 2012 and 2013. During 2012 and 2013, 33% of members of Crisis Skylight were women and 67% were men. Some differences existed between the Skylights in terms of gender balance, with Birmingham (40%) and Newcastle (41%) reporting higher levels of women, while Oxford (23%) and Merseyside (28%) reported lower levels.

Some of these differences may be explained by variations in working relationships and service provision, for example Skylight Birmingham had relatively more links with domestic violence services and women-only homelessness services.⁶⁹

Overall, the members of Skylights in 2012 and 2013 tended to be over 25, with only 15% being aged between 18-24. London’s members were older than those elsewhere (9% of members aged 18-24), while Birmingham (28%), Merseyside (20%) and Edinburgh (23%) all reported higher levels of people aged 18-24. None of the Skylights had many members aged aged 55 or over (9%). The age distribution of members reflects longstanding patterns found within single homeless populations recorded

Figure 2.2: Summary of Age Range by Gender for all Skylight Members 2012 and 2013



Source: Crisis administrative data. Base: 9,667.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Reeves, K. with Batty, E. (2011) op. cit.

⁶⁸ Moss, K. and Singh, P. (2012) op. cit.; Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (2010) *Meeting the Needs of Households at Risk of Domestic Violence in England: The Role of Accommodation and Housing Related Support Services* London: Communities and Local Government.

⁶⁹ Note: Data on gender were not always recorded in the Crisis administrative records, base: 9,711.

⁷⁰ Data on both age and gender was not available in 589 cases (members could opt not to answer questions).

since the early 1990s.⁷¹ There is evidence that experience of single homelessness is strongly associated with poor health and early age mortality. High numbers of people with experience of single homelessness die before reaching retirement age and before they reach their 50s.⁷² The age and gender of members using the Skylights during the course of 2012 and 2013 is summarised in Figure 2.2.

Data on ethnicity were not completed for everyone approaching a Skylight during 2012 and 2013,⁷³ but the available administrative data indicated that the majority of people approaching Skylights had a White European background (70%). Some variations to this pattern were notable in London (58% of members were White) and Birmingham (60% of members were White). In London, 25% of members were Black/Black British and in Birmingham the figure was 19%, with Asian/Asian British people being most prominent in Birmingham (10%) and Newcastle (9%) (Table 2.2).

Some international research has suggested links between homelessness and experience of racism.⁷⁵ In the UK, some ethnic minorities are no more likely, or even less likely, to become homeless than people with White European background, though some Black British people may be experiencing homelessness at higher rates.⁷⁶

Migration status was not directly recorded by the Skylights, but data were collected on original nationality, which while not complete, covered a high proportion of members.⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly, the majority of the people using a Skylight reported themselves to be British. In London, 39% of Skylight members were British, people from Eastern and Southern Europe represented 37% of members and a further 24% were originally from other countries. Elsewhere, members reporting British nationality predominated during 2012 and 2013 (68% in Edinburgh, 78% in Birmingham, 83% in Merseyside, 69% in Newcastle and 78% in Oxford) (Table 2.3).

Table 2.2: Members of Crisis Skylight using Each Skylight by Ethnic Background during 2012 and 2013

Skylight	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Mixed	Other	White	Total
Edinburgh	1%	4%	3%	3%	90%	100%
Birmingham	10%	19%	10%	2%	60%	100%
London	6%	25%	8%	4%	57%	100%
Merseyside	2%	3%	3%	3%	89%	100%
Newcastle	9%	7%	4%	3%	77%	100%
Oxford	5%	8%	6%	4%	78%	100%
All Skylights	6%	15%	6%	4%	70%	100%

Source: Crisis administrative data, Base: 8,858.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) op. cit.

⁷² Thomas, B. (2012) Homelessness kills: An analysis of the mortality of homeless people in early twenty-first century England London: Crisis http://sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/publications/reports/Crisis_2012.pdf; Shaw M, Dorling D, Brimblecombe N (1999) Life chances in Britain by housing wealth and for the homeless and vulnerably housed *Environment and Planning A* pp. 2239 – 2248.

⁷³ Ethnicity was stated by 4,835 people.

⁷⁴ Ethnic background was not recorded or the Member of Crisis Skylight opted not to answer the question in 1,398 cases.

⁷⁵ Henry, M., Cortes, A. and Morris, S. (2013) *The 2013 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress* HUD: Washington DC

⁷⁶ Gervais, M.C. and Rehman, H. (2005) *Causes of Homelessness amongst Ethnic Minority Households* London: ODPM.

⁷⁷ 929 people did not report their nationality. Note that nationality did not necessarily denote citizenship or ethnic background.

Table 2.3: Members of Crisis Skylight using Each Skylight by Self-Reported Nationality during 2012 and 2013

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
British	5,706	61%
EU Eastern	1,272	14%
EU Southern	674	7%
African	549	6%
EU Western and Northern	252	3%
Western Asia	204	2%
Other	670	7%
All	9,327	100%

Source: Crisis administrative data, Base: 8,858.⁷⁸

EU Eastern: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia. **EU Southern:** Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain. **EU Western and Northern:** Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom.

The experience of Skylight London reflects wider experience of homelessness in London. There is some evidence that some increases in rough sleeping can be linked to people seeking work who have come to London from elsewhere in the EU, or from other countries, and not been able to access assistance when they become homeless.⁷⁹ As Crisis Skylight is targeted on all forms of homelessness among lone adults, no barriers exist to people from other countries experiencing homelessness in the UK from accessing Skylight services. By contrast, statutory homelessness services and in some cases the welfare system is not accessible to people from elsewhere who become homeless in the UK.⁸⁰

While London is an outlier, all the Skylights were seeing some people from elsewhere in the EU and from other countries, with between 8-10% of members being from the South and East of the EU in Merseyside, Newcastle and Oxford and almost one quarter in the smaller group of members in Edinburgh (23%). Newcastle recorded that 22% of members were originally from outside the EU, with rates of 13% being recorded in Oxford and Birmingham.

The prevalence of homelessness among people from other countries had specific implications for the Skylights. The most immediate impact had been the need for English classes, although basic skills courses in English could also be suitable for people from other countries (see Chapter 3).

Homelessness

Skylight members in 2012 and 2013 were most likely to self-reported that they were in a hostel or nightshelter (27%). The next largest groups being in a social rented tenancy (17%) and experiencing hidden homelessness (14%). A further 10% were in supported housing settings and 9% were in private rented tenancies and just under one in ten members reported themselves as sleeping rough (9%).⁸¹

Skylights offered services only to people who were currently experiencing homelessness, were at risk of homelessness or who had a history of homelessness.⁸² Nineteen per cent of Skylight members who reported themselves as being in a social rented tenancy and 32% of those in a private rented tenancy, also reported themselves as being “at risk of homelessness”⁸³ (Figure 2.3).

⁷⁸ Ethnic background was not recorded or the Member of Crisis Skylight opted not to answer the question in 1,398 cases.

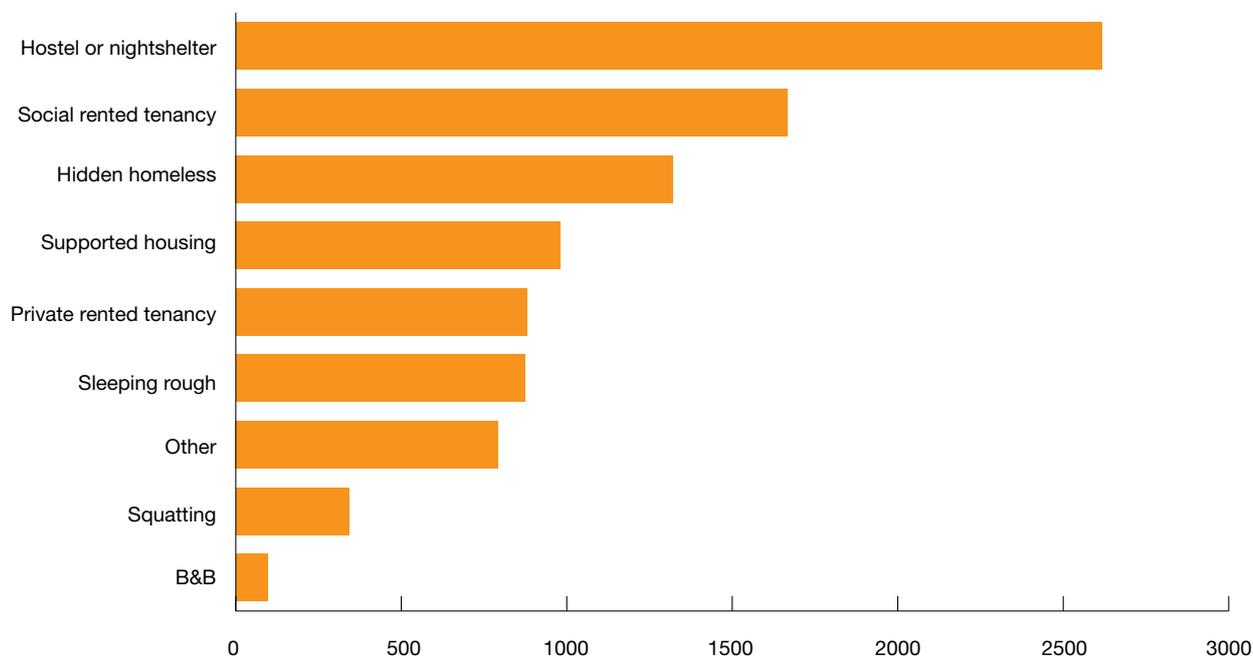
⁷⁹ Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) op. cit.

⁸⁰ Pleace, N. (2011) ‘Immigration and Homelessness’ in E. O’Sullivan (Ed) Homelessness Research in Europe Brussels: FEANTSA, pp. 143-163.

⁸¹ Reported housing status was not subject to external verification.

⁸² As at first contact with a Skylight.

⁸³ As at point of first contact with a Skylight

Figure 2.3 Housing situation at first contact, all members of Crisis Skylight in 2012 and 2013

Source: Crisis administrative data. Base: 9,567⁸⁴

Merseyside was by some distance the most likely to have members reporting they were in a hostel, or direct access scheme/nightshelter (57%), with high rates also seen in Birmingham (44%) and Edinburgh (41%). By contrast, the building-based Skylights in Oxford (26%), London (19%) and Newcastle (9%) had lower levels of members reporting they were in hostels or nightshelters.⁸⁵

All forms of homelessness are potentially damaging and it is arguable that the unique distress of lacking a settled home is the most extreme form of economic and social poverty that exists in economically developed societies. However, there is still some stratification within experiences of homelessness and considerable evidence

that sleeping rough for any length of time is potentially the most damaging of all the forms of homelessness.⁸⁶ Rates of rough sleeping were highest in London (14%) and Merseyside (10%) and lower elsewhere (3% Edinburgh, 4% Birmingham, 5% Newcastle and 7% in Oxford).⁸⁷

Looking at all homelessness broadly within UK definitions,⁸⁸ 61% of members during 2012 and 2013 were currently homeless (Table 2.4).⁸⁹ Birmingham (72%), Merseyside (71%), Oxford (66%) and London (65%) had the highest rates of current homelessness, while levels were lower in Edinburgh (52%) and in Newcastle (38%).

⁸⁴ 689 people did not report their housing status, or did not have it recorded, at first contact with a Skylight.

⁸⁵ As at point of first contact with a Skylight.

⁸⁶ Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) op. cit.; Busch-Geertsema, V. et al (2010) op. cit.

⁸⁷ As at first contact with a Skylight.

⁸⁸ i.e. no access to adequate housing that someone could be reasonably be expected to occupy and/or no access to housing with some security of tenure.

⁸⁹ As at first contact with a Skylight.

Table 2.4: Members of Crisis Skylight during 2012 and 2013 Reporting a Situation of Homelessness at First Contact with Skylight

Skylight	No homeless	Homeless	Total
Edinburgh	48%	52%	100%
Birmingham	28%	72%	100%
London	35%	65%	100%
Merseyside	29%	71%	100%
Newcastle	62%	38%	100%
Oxford	34%	66%	100%
All Skylights	39%	61%	100%

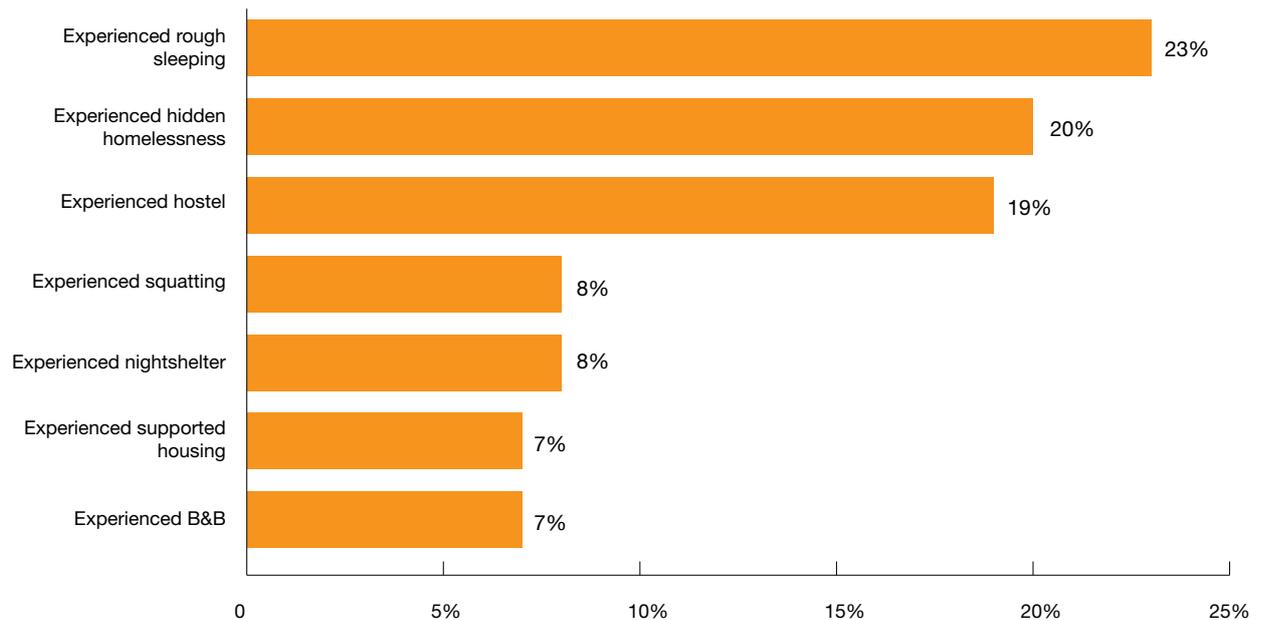
Source: Crisis administrative data, Base: 10,256.

Data on past experience of homelessness were incomplete.⁹⁰ However, there was evidence of past experience of homelessness was extensive (Figure 2.4). At first contact with a Skylight, 23% of members reported

that they had experience of sleeping rough, with another 20% reporting one or more experiences of hidden homelessness and 19% having stayed in a homeless hostel. Experiences of nightshelters (direct access accommodation), squatting, supported housing and B&B hotels (without a settled home) were less common.

Combining the administrative data indicates the great extent of experience of homelessness among Skylight members. Overall, 80% of members were at risk of homelessness, currently homeless or had a history of homelessness. In Edinburgh and Newcastle these rates were lower (67% and 59% respectively), whereas elsewhere a clear majority of members were at risk of homelessness, currently homeless or had a history of homelessness (84% London, 86% Merseyside, 88% Birmingham and 92% in Oxford).⁹¹

Figure 2.4: Percentage of members with previous histories of homelessness and vulnerable housing situations at first contact in 2012/2013



Source: Crisis administrative data, Base: 7,590.

⁹⁰ 26% of members did not answer questions on past experience of homelessness.

⁹¹ As reported at first contact with a Skylight.

Members of Crisis Skylight' Experiences of Homelessness

Skylight members participating in the 135 member cohort study⁹² had a mix of experiences that tended to reflect the patterns suggested in the administrative data. There were people with long-term, recurrent experience of homelessness and sleeping rough. There were other people currently living in emergency accommodation, hostels and people experiencing hidden homelessness, 'sofa surfing' between friends or relatives. There were also people with histories of homelessness who had been housed for some time. A small number of Skylight members who were in the cohort were people who had not been homeless, but were at risk of homelessness. The experiences of the Skylight members who were in the cohort, across all the Skylights, were similar to those documented in earlier research, which reports mixed causation of homelessness.⁹³

Yeah I am homeless now. Yeah, just come out of rehab, I'm in a dry house...I was sofa surfing before that for God knows how long.

It is twice now I have faced homeless and I am just in a situation now where I am waiting to be housed. The first time I was homeless it was due to job loss...I couldn't pay my rent, got evicted, I ended up squatting with a bunch of friends. And this time round it was unsafe for me to live in my flat because someone was harassing me.

Having housing problems at the moment, I'm homeless, I'm living at me Dad's but it's just a temporary thing...I've been on people's sofas.

I was homeless about two years ago and then I was sent from a charity to my own place. I had my own business, about four or five years ago, but I lost it...I'd always had my own place, always been a worker.

I've had loads of problems with housing, homelessness, since the age of 16, I'm 33 now...I'm living with a friend at the moment.

I was homeless for a number of years, but I am housed now. I lived in hostels, sleeping rough, various first and second stage council accommodation.

Yeah I was on the streets for 23 years... I was originally from [], and I sort of travelled. In [], about five, six years and that. It's only in the last two years I got a place.

It is not ok. It is a very tiny room with a shower in the kitchen, the neighbours are just out of hostels, so I've got four blokes upstairs that are drinking and taking drugs and doing all sorts of things. It's not a home.

Employment and qualifications

Crisis administrative data indicated high rates of unemployment with 93% of members using a Skylight in 2012 and 2013 reporting they were not in paid work.⁹⁴ Lack of paid work not universal, with 5% of members having reported being in part-time work and another 2% reporting they were in full time work (Table 2.5). However, most of those who were in some form of paid work were within London, which had the lowest rate of members reporting they were not in paid work as at their first contact with the Skylight (89%).

⁹² See Chapter 1.

⁹³ Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) op. cit.; Neale, J. (1997) 'Theorising homelessness: contemporary sociological and feminist perspectives', in R. Burrows, N. Pleace & D. Quilgars (eds) *Homelessness and Social Policy*. London: Routledge.

⁹⁴ As at first contact with a Skylight.

Table 2.5: Members of Crisis Skylight during 2012 and 2013 Reporting Being in Paid Work at First Contact with a Skylight

Skylight	Not recorded	Full time work	Part time work	Total
Edinburgh	93%	3%	5%	100%
Birmingham	96%	0%	3%	100%
London	89%	3%	9%	100%
Merseyside	97%	1%	2%	100%
Newcastle	92%	3%	5%	100%
Oxford	95%	2%	3%	100%
All Skylights	92%	2%	5%	100%

Source: Crisis administrative data. Base: 10,255⁹⁵

Skylight members who did not report their nationality as British were more likely to be in paid work, with 5% of Eastern and Southern Europeans being in full time work and 13% in part-time work, compared to 2% and 3% of members who described their nationality as British. Data on employment status were not always complete and should be seen as indicative.⁹⁶

Reports of an inability to work due to limiting illness or disability were not particularly high⁹⁷ at 14% of Skylight members in 2012 and 2013. Rates of reported limiting illness or disability, preventing work, were higher in Newcastle, Oxford (each 21%) and in Merseyside (16%) than they were in London (10%), Birmingham and Edinburgh (each 12%).⁹⁸

Data on educational attainment were incomplete,⁹⁹ recording only the highest educational attainment that each member

had. These data indicated variable rates of educational achievement among members of Crisis Skylight in 2012 and 2013. One quarter of members reported they had no qualifications as at their first contact with a Skylight (Figure 2.5).

The most common, UK, qualifications were at NVQ¹⁰⁰ 2 or equivalent (GCSE grades A-C, or an O level pass¹⁰¹) which were held by 21% of members, followed by NVQ 3 or equivalent (A level pass¹⁰²) held by 11%. Ten per cent of members were educated to NVQ 5 (degree level), though higher levels of degree-level qualification were reported in London and Newcastle (each 13%) and Oxford (10%) than elsewhere (5% in Birmingham and Merseyside and 4% in Edinburgh). Members not reporting British nationality were more likely to be educated to degree level (12%) than members describing their nationality as British (9%).

⁹⁵ Responses may not always have been complete.

⁹⁶ Many responses to questions on economic status in the administrative data were 'skips', i.e. left blank, without a clear response being recorded.

⁹⁷ 11% of the working age population of the UK has a limiting illness or disability and is also economically inactive (source: NOMIS www.nomisweb.co.uk/)

⁹⁸ As at first contact with a Skylight.

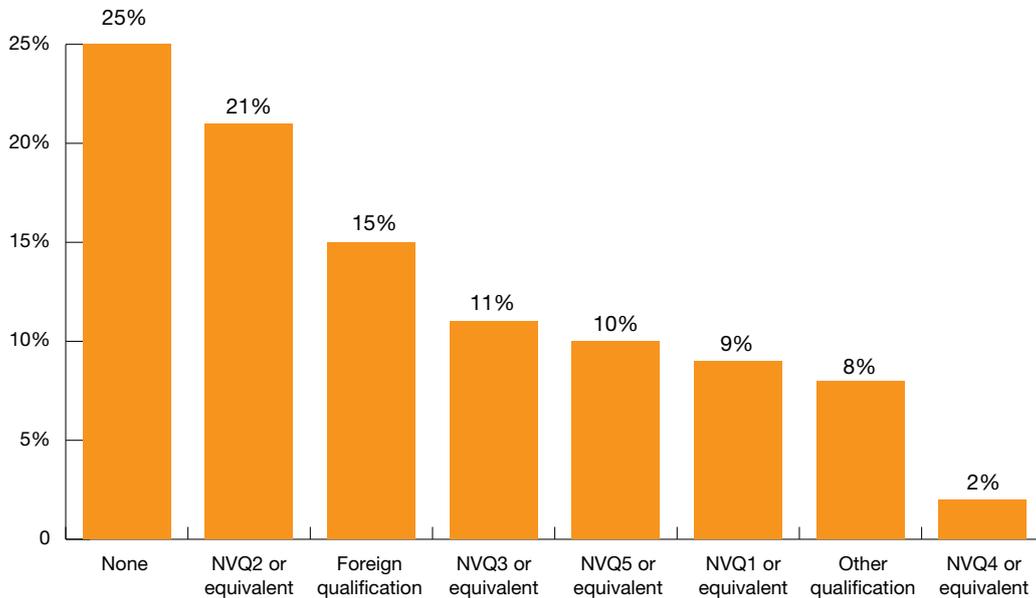
⁹⁹ 62% of members did not provide answers to the question on their highest educational attainment or did not have their answer recorded.

¹⁰⁰ www.cityandguilds.com/courses-and-qualifications/qualifications-explained/qualification-comparisons

¹⁰¹ And Scottish equivalents.

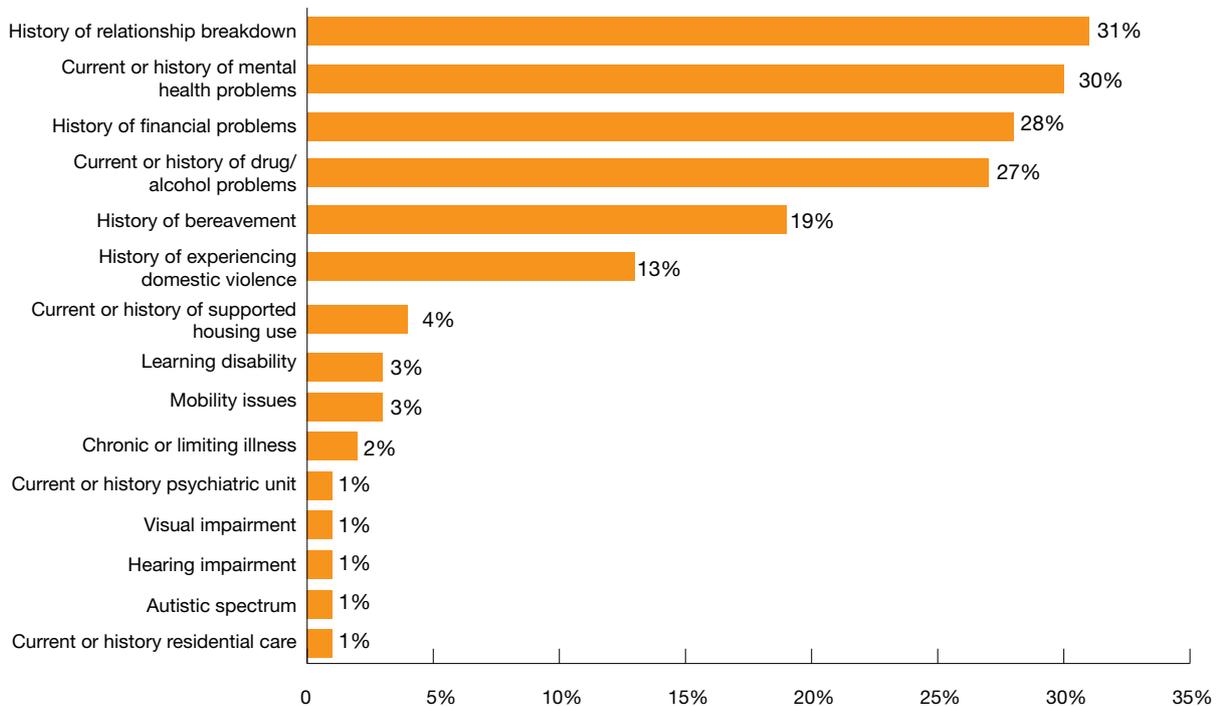
¹⁰² Or Scottish higher.

Figure 2.5: Highest qualification reported by Members of Skylight, 2012/2013 as at their First Contact with a Skylight.



Source: Crisis administrative data, Base: 3,891.

Figure 2.6: Personal History of Skylight Members 2012 and 2013 as reported at their First Contact with a Skylight.



Source: Crisis administrative data, Base: 10,256.¹⁰³

These findings are broadly what would be expected. A general association between lower educational attainment, poverty and sustained unemployment exists in the UK, comparable EU member states, Australia and North America.¹⁰⁴

Support needs

Figure 2.6 shows the personal histories and support needs, reported at first contact, by the members of Skylight in 2012 and 2013. Overall, 30% of members reported they had current or a history of mental health problems. Skylight Oxford reported almost one half of 2012 and 2013 members had current or a history of mental health problems (48%), levels elsewhere were closer to one third of members with Newcastle (35%), Birmingham (33%), Merseyside (29%), although they dropped somewhat in Edinburgh and London (26% and 23%). While three of the Skylights with a mental health coordinator also had higher reported rates of current or past mental health problems (Oxford, Newcastle and Birmingham), the fourth Skylight with an active mental health coordinator service was towards the lower end.

A history, or current problematic use, of drugs and alcohol was also widely reported (27% of members). Rates varied between the Skylights, with members during 2012 and 2013 reporting histories or current problematic use of drugs and alcohol at the at rates between 21% (London) and 43% Oxford. Edinburgh (23%) and Newcastle (25%) were closer to London, Birmingham was midway (29%) and Merseyside was towards the upper end (34%).¹⁰⁵

While the data were not sufficiently precise to determine exact levels of chronic homelessness, there were some

broad indications of the likely presence of chronically homeless people¹⁰⁶ among the members of Crisis Skylight in 2012 and 2013. Overall, 901 members (9%) reported one or more past experiences of homelessness while also reporting they were currently homeless and had a history of, or current, problematic use of drugs and alcohol and also a history of, or current, mental health problems.¹⁰⁷ Rates, on this admittedly imprecise indicator, varied with Oxford (16%), Merseyside (12%), Birmingham (10%) and Edinburgh (10%) apparently encountering higher levels of chronic homelessness, while Newcastle (7%) and London (6%) saw what may have been lower levels. Bearing in mind the caveats with this crude measure, there was nevertheless some evidence that the Skylights were reaching and working with some of the most vulnerable people in the homeless population.

Just under one quarter of women members (24%) reported they had past experience of gender based/domestic violence.¹⁰⁸ Rates were notably higher in Birmingham, reflecting the links that Skylight Birmingham had created with women's homelessness and gender based/domestic violence, with 44% of women members reporting a history of domestic violence. Rates were also relatively higher in the Skylights in Oxford (36% of women) and Merseyside at 32% of women, probably reflecting the referral and joint working relationships those Skylights had established. In Newcastle and London, rates were lower (each at 18% of women) and also in Edinburgh at 11% of women. These findings suggested that some Skylights might explore closer links with women-only services and domestic violence services, including refuges or sanctuary schemes containing women at risk of gender based/domestic

¹⁰⁴ Busch-Geertsema, V. et al (2010) op. cit.

¹⁰⁵ As at first contact with a Skylight.

¹⁰⁶ Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ As at first contact with a Skylight.

¹⁰⁸ As at first contact with a Skylight.

violence who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This finding is in line with earlier research showing strong associations between male violence and women experiencing both single and family homelessness.¹⁰⁹ Experience of domestic violence did not mean that a woman had an associated support need in all instances, but 63% of women members who had a history of experiencing gender based/domestic violence also reported a history of, or current, mental health problems. In addition, 58% of women with experience of gender based/domestic violence also reported a history of, or current, problematic use of drugs/alcohol while 72% of women in situations of possible chronic homelessness also reported a history of gender based/ domestic violence.

Recent research in Ireland has suggested the presence of a very high need group of chronically homeless women experiencing recurrent and sustained homelessness with experience of gender based/domestic violence.¹¹⁰ There is also some evidence from a recent evaluation of Housing First in London that chronic homelessness associated with very high support needs exists among lone women¹¹¹. This finding again suggests the Skylight Programme is working with some homeless women with very high support needs.

Relationship breakdowns, financial problems and bereavement, which can be associated with homelessness causation, were

widespread (Figure 2.8). However, some support needs and health problems were not particularly common. This finding may reflect the relatively young profile of the population using the Skylights, i.e. relatively few people over 50, although as a poor population, homeless people are at heightened risk of developing life limiting conditions earlier than the general population.¹¹²

The Crisis administrative data give an indication of support needs, but are incomplete in two senses. First, some members had not shared at least some information on support needs at their first contact with a Skylight. Second, and equally importantly, these data were self-reported, and there can be issues with the accuracy of such data because people are unable to properly assess their own health and wellbeing, i.e. there is no examination by a doctor. Homeless people may also, at first contact with a service, not report support needs or characteristics that they perceive as likely to bar access to that service.¹¹³ Cultural differences and language barriers may also be important in how willing someone is to report details about their experiences, health or support needs.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Baptista, I. (2010) op. cit.

¹¹⁰ Mayock, P. and Sheridan, S. (2012) *Women's 'Journeys' to Homelessness: Key Findings from a Biographical Study of Homeless Women in Ireland*. Women and Homelessness in Ireland, Research Paper 1. Dublin: School of Social Work and Social Policy and Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin.

¹¹¹ Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) *Camden Housing First: A Housing First Experiment in London* <http://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2013/Camden%20Housing%20First%20Final%20Report%20NM2.pdf>

¹¹² Dorling, D. (2012) 'Fairness and the changing fortunes of people in Britain' *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society A*, 176, 1, 97-128.

¹¹³ Shiner, M. (1995) 'Adding insult to injury: homelessness and health service use' *Sociology of Health and Illness* 17 (4), pp. 525-549; Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2006) Sharing and matching local and national data on adults of working age facing multiple barriers to employment London: DWP.

¹¹⁴ Goddard, M. and Smith, P. (2001) 'Equity of access to health care services: Theory and evidence from the UK' *Social Science and Medicine*, 53, 9, pp. 1149-1162.

3. Services and Outcomes

Introduction

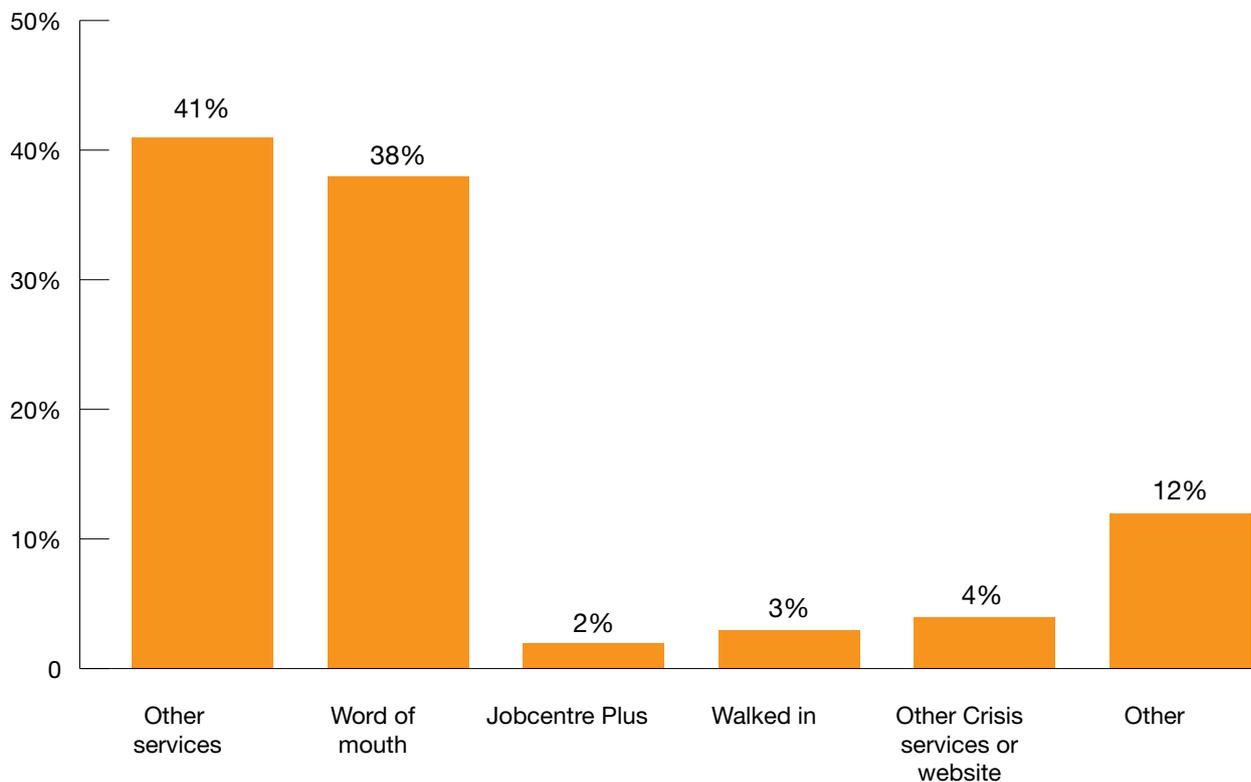
This chapter explores Skylight services and outcomes in 2012 and 2013. As with Chapter 2, this part of the report draws heavily on Crisis's own administrative data but also includes some findings from the fieldwork conducted by the University research team. The chapter begins by looking at the referral routes and the other ways in which members heard about Crisis and then moves on to why members took the decision to use a Skylight. The following sections look at classes, arts-based, support and member participation through group activities, before moving on to look at the one-to-one support sessions provided to individual members during both

2012 and 2013. The chapter concludes with a summary of the outcomes which the Skylights had achieved.

Referral routes and hearing about Skylight

Most members reported that they had either learned about Skylight through word of mouth (41%), or been referred to a Skylight by another service (38%) (see Figure 3.1). Direct referrals from Jobcentre Plus were unusual (2%) and this finding might indicate there was greater scope to develop joint working between the welfare system and Skylight,

Figure 3.1: Referral routes reported by Members of Crisis Skylight, as at first contact with a Skylight, 2012 and 2013



Source: Crisis administrative data, Base: 9,205.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Referral routes were not reported in 1,051 cases.

although any such arrangement would require the active support of Jobcentre Plus offices. As indicated by the 'other' column in Figure 3.1, other routes to engagement with a Skylight also existed.

Referral by other services was most common in Birmingham (64%), with the other Skylights reporting lower figures (Newcastle 43%, Merseyside 42%, Edinburgh 40%, Oxford 38%), while London reported the lowest figure (33%). By contrast, London (46%) and Newcastle (40%) were more likely than the other Skylights to be working with members who had heard about their services through word of mouth, perhaps reflecting the greater age of these two services and the degree to which they had become established as part of the service landscape in their areas. However, both Oxford (35%) and Merseyside (33%) also reported high rates of members first hearing about Skylight through word of mouth. For Edinburgh (25%) and Birmingham (21%) word of mouth was a less common way for members to have heard about Skylight.

Members of the 135 person cohort or participating in the focus groups¹¹⁶ had usually either been referred or encouraged to use a Skylight by another homelessness service or had heard about Skylight through a friend or acquaintance. Some members interviewed for the evaluation talked about how they recommended Skylight to other homeless people.

It has changed my life. I would recommend it, well I do recommend it, to a lot of people.

I would recommend Crisis to anyone. I would. I really would ...they actually care about your life and what you are doing with it, and they are there to help you...

Engagement with Skylight

For Skylight members who were in the cohort and participating in the focus groups the decision to use Skylight often stemmed from their first impressions. Members reported they were influenced by how they treated, what is on offer and, for the building-based Skylights, said that the physical environment offered by a Skylight also played a role. Members in London and Oxford reported the factors that had influenced them into using Skylight in the following ways.

I heard about it from a friend. We were talking about the therapy courses, that's what I initially came for the therapy, the counselling, all that kind of stuff. But then when obviously when I came, got registered, saw the place, I was told about other things they were doing like courses. And I thought, yeah I'll do a course, that will help my confidence, because last time I was in an office, computers were just coming in.

I thought it was going to be a homeless centre. So I had a bit of pre-conception that it was going to be full of smelly people and fights, you know like a daycentre, but it isn't like that all, it is a learning centre, they won't tolerate anybody arguing or anything like that, so it is a very safe place.

I took a walk, I think it was about two o'clock in the afternoon some time, came in here, didn't know what it was and then spoke to a receptionist and said, what is this place? Then she explained it to me. I said what was going on with my housing and everything and she said, why don't you come along, might be able to help you out, sort out a few problems. So, I said yes.

The view among most Skylight staff and representatives from external agencies was

that Skylights generally reach the population they are designed to reach.

...we do have good balance...good relationships, both operationally and strategically, to the right people in those organisations. Skylight staff.

They're pretty good at advertising, I must admit. The adverts and the posters are all nicely presented, friendly, simple. That bit works pretty well so we just stick the new notice in the centre of the poster, here's what's happening next, here's the updates to it. I think that works pretty well. External agency staff.

While other aspects of formal advertising were seen as important as informing potential members, staff often thought positive word of mouth was often thought to be more important in getting people to engage with Skylight.

...we've got more people coming now, with our reputation and word of mouth. Word of mouth is one of the best, from clients, is the best way to get people into the centre. Skylight staff.

Word of mouth is strong. Reputation is what guides you... Half the reason we're oversubscribed is because when we started, we did well and people were convinced. And it could have easily gone the other way. Skylight staff.

I was homeless myself for a period, there isn't a them and us attitude, it's exactly like you said homelessness can happen to anybody, and I feel that it's really reflected in how everybody works, truly. Skylight staff.

Chronically homeless people were widely thought of as less likely to approach any service which required them to go to another site, cross any sort of 'bureaucratic' threshold, or deal with rules that stopped them drinking

and taking drugs. Staff working for the outreach-based Skylights tended to view the outreach model as facilitating engagement with chronically homeless people. More generally, taking the Skylight to the homeless people was seen as overcoming barriers such as affording travel to a building that might be some distance away.

We are...we can be flexible where we deliver...it's that flexibility of going to them, really. It does break down a lot of barriers... Skylight staff.

I think despite the problems of being an outreach service, I think we work with who Crisis say they work with, by going into hostels ...basically I think we get people who wouldn't...who don't go out or who won't go out, who can't go out. Skylight staff.

Yeah, here that's a big difference so, you know, we sort of we go to the hostels but we've also got the day centre, sort of drop ins that we do, so some of the clients there are very, very chaotic but will engage in our classes. Skylight staff.

I think the fact that we go out to the members as opposed to relying on the members coming to us. I think that's very appealing, because if you look at the geography of [] if we had one central unit it's debatable how many members would actually come to us because they may not have the funds to travel. Skylight staff.

Conversely, staff within the building-based Skylights in London, Newcastle and Oxford could take the view that having an appealing, safe, space offering a wide range of services and activities under one roof was inherently appealing. Skylight buildings were sometimes thought by staff to generate a sense of community that could be a major attraction to potential members and which could also take them away from services or living situations that they found stressful.

...the beauty of the centre is that sense of social...there's that social grouping that happens naturally, because we have a building that people come to, which we don't get so much in the outreach model. Skylight staff.

I think if we solely have an outreach based service, what we would really lose would be the completely different environment that people are waiting to come into that is a world away from their hostel really. I think that's really important. Skylight staff.

A diverse range of partnerships, with services working across aspects of single homelessness, could mitigate the risk that an outreach-based Skylight was not getting to everyone who needed it. However, an outreach based Skylight was dependent on those homelessness services being in place and access to those services being consistent. Where turnover in a particular service was relatively rapid (some hostels for example had limits on length of stay of two or three months) contact with a member could be lost when then were forced to move on. A building-based Skylight was, by contrast, effectively open to anyone who could reach it.

You go into the women's hostels it's generally not always very successful. Or it will be one week, then it won't be the next. We're better off reaching them in other places sometimes I think. And they've got their own issues as well, child care, engaging with social services, children in care...Skylight staff.

For Skylight staff in building-based services, limitations to access centred on potential members being able to reach the building. While assistance with transport costs could be provided, sometimes distance was seen by staff

as being too great a hurdle for some potential members. Staff within the building-based Skylights also sometimes thought the need for rules, for example around alcohol consumption, stopped some people coming in.¹¹⁷

It's very difficult, for a number of reasons. It's cost, the travel, transport costs in the city; it's quite expensive. And natural barriers that people won't cross... So to encourage people to come, we have to market and sell the concept to support workers, and that has to be on-going. You can't stop doing that. Skylight staff.

I think we need to get out and have a bit more involvement with rough sleepers. We don't get a lot of rough sleepers in here, because they're not ready to come in here yet. They're not ready to stick by the rules. Still a lot of them are drinking. I think we need to try and target that client group a little bit more, get ourselves known out there to them. Skylight staff.

While all the Skylights had some success in engaging women and young people, it was sometimes thought by staff that more could be done. The Skylights had moved into areas liked music production and recording and podcasting to increase their appeal to younger people and a number offered women-only activities.

For single women with younger children, who form one of the largest single elements among homeless families in the UK¹¹⁸, use of Skylight was dependent on getting access to childcare, which may not have been either available or affordable. Some Skylight staff thought these homeless groups should be targeted by the Skylights.

We're short of women full stop, right, but

¹¹⁷ London had in consequence developed a specific outreach programme to try to encourage people living in hostels into the Skylight from Hackney, which was viewed as successful, but there was thought to be an underrepresentation from the borough in which the Skylight was situated, Tower Hamlets.

¹¹⁸ Pleace, N. et al (2008) *Statutory Homelessness in England: The Experience of Families and 16-17 Year Olds* London: Department for Communities and Local Government

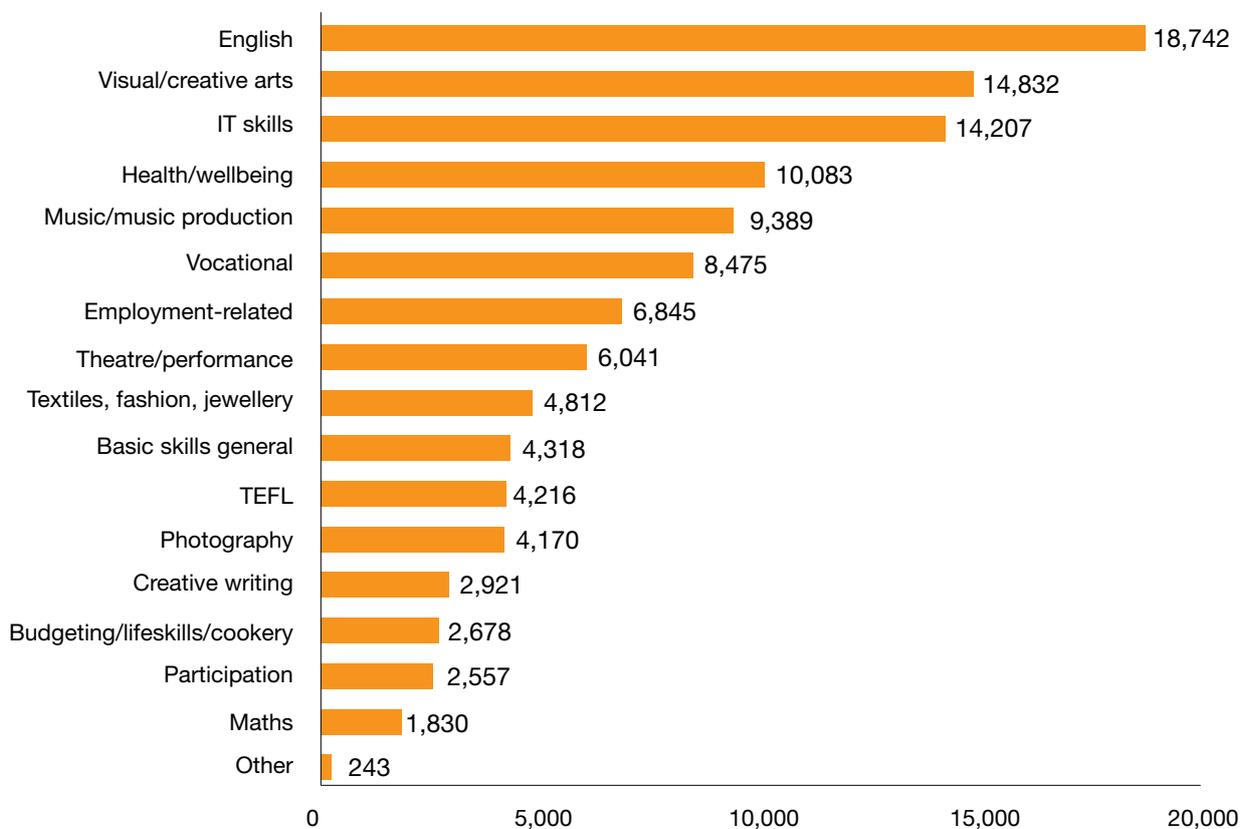
I guess what we have an issue with, we don't provide any child care, okay, single homeless, so women with children, also fall into that category. Skylight staff.

Changes to the homeless population were reported by staff as sometimes bringing new challenges to engagement. The Skylights can find themselves dealing with shifting populations of migrant homeless people, whose needs – and whose languages – changed over time, particularly in the case of London (see Chapter 2). In the view of some staff, Skylights have to keep adapting.

...we just have to recognise that the people that we are serving, our members, are different from what they were maybe ten years ago... people who may not be born in the UK, maybe from Columbia, they've come from Spain, they've come to here, or from Gambia... Skylight staff.

Because, in the 1960s it was men in their forties, who were White, who had alcohol problems, and quite often had a mental illness. And, ever since then there've been more women, there've been more young people, there's been more diversity, we've had more migration and so on. Skylight staff.

Figure 3.2: Classes and Sessions attended by Members of Crisis Skylight in 2012 and 2013



Source: Crisis administrative data on classes and sessions attended.¹¹⁹ *Teaching English as Foreign Language.

Services

Classes, Arts-Based, Support and Feedback Groups

Summary of Overall Activity in 2012 and 2013

It is not possible to fully represent the wide range of activities, education and services which each Skylight provided without producing a great many detailed tables. In order to keep the report to a manageable length for the reader, detailed tables are not provided in this chapter, which instead seeks only to summarise the extent and range of Skylight services.

Figure 3.2 summarises the classes, arts-based groups and group-based support that the Skylights delivered for members in 2012 and 2013. As can be seen, basic skills education in English (16% of sessions/classes) and IT (12%), alongside visual/creative arts-based activities (13%) were the most frequently attended sessions and classes. Sessions centred on health and well-being were also popular (9%), as were those on music and music production (8%), vocational training (7%) and employment related sessions (6%).

The classifications used in Figure 3.2 are broad and approximate and were derived from the Crisis administrative data by the University of York research team. The categories are broad in the sense that a considerable range of activities can fall under each heading, so for example visual and creative art could include ceramics, jewellery making, sculpture, carving, painting, drawing and mixed media creative art. Similarly, vocational training could include catering and food safety, health and safety at work, gardening skills, bicycle building

and maintenance, driving skills, fork lift truck driving and qualifying for CSCS cards¹²⁰ to work as a builder.

Education could also occur at different levels, so for example while there was an emphasis on basic skills, it was possible to undertake intermediate level courses in English (ESOL¹²¹) and IT (CLAiT and ECDL¹²²) in some Skylights. The line between activities offered by Skylights was also not always a clear one, for example creative writing (3% of sessions attended, Figure 3.2) could be seen as both an arts-based activity, but also as educational and employment related, because classes in creative writing should enhance general communication skills. Theatre and performance related activity, while arts-based, might also enhance communication skills and self-confidence, which again could both be important in securing paid work. Similarly, being taught household budgeting is both a life skill that can enhance well-being but also an education in the basics of mathematics. Some courses and sessions also covered a range of subjects, for example basic skills general courses (4% of sessions attended) could cover maths, English and also basic study skills.

The Skylights also had the capacity to stage 'one off' educational classes, by bringing in sessional tutors, or sometimes volunteers,¹²³ for one or two sessions. For example, three workshops on fossils and dinosaurs had been delivered and another two sessions on geology as well as sessions on local history. Some classes and activities were also delivered to women-only (3% of sessions) and men-only groups (less than 1% of sessions).

A broad *estimate* of the hours of education, arts-based activity and session based support

¹²⁰ Construction Skills Certification Scheme <http://www.cscs.uk.com/>

¹²¹ www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-qualifications/skills-for-life/

¹²² <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/courses/typesoflearning/Pages/computerskills.aspx>

¹²³ Volunteer tutors were not widely used, see Chapter 1.

provided can be made. Collectively, the Skylights delivered 116,359 classes and group session based activities during the course of 2012 and 2013, assuming each session was an hour, which is an underestimate¹²⁴ the equivalent of some 4,848 days of group based sessions and education were delivered by the Skylights during that period.

Comparing the Skylights

One way to get a sense of the wide range of activities offered by the Skylights is to consider how each Skylight describes its own services. Taking Skylight Oxford as one example, the following classifications of education, arts-based activities and health and well-being related group based activities were listed for one term:

- **Get Skills** activities that included open learning sessions focused on computing and the members' newsletter group.
- **Functional Skills – English and Maths** which included introductory literacy and numeracy classes, functional skills English and functional skills maths.
- **ESOL** classes for people without English as a first language.
- **Learning Support** groups which included introductory sessions on general study skills.
- **Vocational** activities that included English for food safety, tuition centred on the CSCS,¹²⁵ three week courses on food safety, first aid and fire safety and sessions designed to introduce members to volunteering (at the Skylight and elsewhere) and opportunities to learn gardening and bicycle maintenance.
- **Computer skills** including 'computing beginner' classes and intermediate classes on computing.
- **Visual Arts** groups that included the open art studio, where members could come and paint or undertake other visual arts work, and the women (only) art group. There were also sessions on how to exhibit art work, an arts and crafts drop-in sessions and courses on photography and using mixed media for the visual arts.
- **Performing and Creative Arts** which included sessions on music production, guitar lessons, a drama group and sessions on creative writing.
- **Employment and housing services** which included a job club (meeting several times a week) and a drop-in service for those needing help with housing problems.
- **Health and well-being** activities that include Zumba classes, a football club, Karate, Yoga and Meditation sessions and a mental health group.

Edinburgh was a rather smaller service than Oxford during 2013, with less one-to-one support services, but had a similar range of education and arts-based activities on offer. There were sessions on music, photography, film making and art and courses on computing, as well as basic skills in maths and English. Like Oxford, Edinburgh also had its own newsletter/magazine run by a group of members.

In Birmingham, the range of activities on offer was very similar to Oxford, but there was some variation in the detail of what was offered. Birmingham, for example had a singing class and band, there were also jewellery making classes and printing. Within health and well-being, Birmingham

¹²⁴ Some arts-based sessions, training sessions and classes were two hours or more in duration.

¹²⁵ Construction site safety card.

also offered specific support on family relationships and mediation and there were also cookery classes (also offered in Oxford but for younger members). IT courses also included sessions on podcasting.

London offered basic and intermediate level learning on computing and also offered additional, dedicated, classes focused specifically on word-processing, spreadsheets and presentation software. There were also specific sessions focused on ballroom dancing, fashion and dressmaking, Shakespeare, life drawing, separate Kung Fu and Karate classes and puppetry. London worked extensively with external arts-based projects working with homeless people including Cardboard Citizens,¹²⁶ Streetwise Opera¹²⁷ and Squeaky Gate.¹²⁸

Newcastle also closely reflected the other Skylights. However, Skylight Newcastle offered group sessions specifically focused on use computers for job-seeking, courses on driving theory for members seeking to gain or regain a driving licence and arts-

based sessions focused on cinema. Drama, guitar lessons and sessions devoted to singing were also part of the timetable.

Skylight Merseyside, along with a core of service provision that mirrored the other Skylights, also offered sessions on the History of Art, photography, drama, music and creative writing. Merseyside also had vocational training focused on plastering, renovation and decorating, alongside opportunities to learn gardening. Specific activities for women included sessions on fashion, floristry, nails and makeup and photography.

Table 3.1 summarises the different types of classroom based learning, arts-based group activities and group sessions focused on health and well-being by Skylight for 2012 and 2013. The data are summarised using the following criteria:

- **Education, training and job-seeking** includes all basic skills education and groups centred on employability, personal development and vocational activity. This

Table 3.1: Types of classes, vocational training and other group based sessions by Skylight 2012 and 2013 (percentages of all sessions).

Skylight	Education training and job seeking	Arts based activities	Health and well being	Participation and involvement	Other	Total
Edinburgh	40%	48%	5%	6%	0%	100%
Birmingham	53%	36%	10%	2%	0%	100%
London	47%	36%	14%	3%	0%	100%
Merseyside	48%	47%	<1%	4%	<1%	100%
Newcastle	44%	25%	18%	12%	1%	100%
Oxford	55%	32%	9%	4%	<1%	100%
All Skylights	48%	34%	12%	6%	0%	100%

Source: Crisis administrative data on classes and sessions attended.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ www.cardboardcitizens.org.uk

¹²⁷ www.streetwiseopera.org

¹²⁸ www.squeakygate.org.uk/

¹²⁹ Data may not be entirely complete.

Table 3.2: Frequency of attendance at classes, vocational training and other group based sessions by Skylight 2012 and 2013 (percentages of all sessions).

Type of activity	One session	Two to four sessions	Five or more sessions	Total
Education, training and job seeking	39%	33%	28%	100%
Arts based activities	38%	37%	26%	100%
Health and well being	43%	35%	22%	100%
Participation and involvement	89%	9%	3%	100%
Other	40%	42%	18%	100%
All activities	42%	33%	25%	100%

Source: Crisis administrative data on classes and sessions attended.¹³⁰

includes courses on English, maths and computing, job-clubs and any activity resulting in practical experience and/or a qualification which would enhance chances of paid employment.

- **Arts-based activities** includes all creative, visual and performing arts.
- **Health and well-being** includes all sporting and sport related activities, meditation and yoga and the specific support for people with mental health problems provided by the mental health forums.¹³¹
- **Participation and involvement** included all group-based feedback undertaken by members.

As can be seen, Birmingham (53% of sessions) and Oxford (55%) had a heavier emphasis on education and job seeking during 2012 and 2013. Edinburgh and Merseyside (48% and 47% of sessions respectively) were delivering the most arts-based sessions, although in the case of Merseyside this was matched by education, training and job seeking (48% of sessions). Newcastle (18%) and London (14%) focused

proportionately more attention on health and well-being. All the Skylights were concentrating on their core roles of providing arts-based, educational, vocational and employment related activities (see Chapter 1).

Patterns of use for classes, arts-based activity, support groups and participation

Table 3.2 summarises the ways in which members engaged with classes, arts-based groups and support and feedback. In considering these figures, it needs to be remembered that courses and activities were often designed to be short, with the intention that certification or examination passes would be awarded after a few weeks. Sessions could also include introductory or 'taster' classes and activities.

It is apparent that there is a tendency for some members to attend just one session. In some cases, for example sessions on participation and involvement, sessions were more likely to be a 'one-off' event, hence the high rate of single attendances (89% of attendances were for one session). One attendance at a class or session might be because it did not suit someone, or they were unable to attend further sessions because another commitment arose, or they could no longer attend.

¹³⁰ Data may not be entirely complete.

¹³¹ During 2012/13 mental health coordinators who ran these forums were located in the Birmingham, London, Newcastle and Oxford Skylights only (see Chapter 2).

These findings suggest at least some attrition, i.e. disengagement after one group-based session. Research in other areas of service provision for homeless people shows there can be difficulties in sustaining service engagement with some groups such as chronically homeless people.¹³² However, the majority of engagement with group-based education, training and job seeking (61%) and in arts-based activities (63%) was for two or more sessions (Table 3.2).

There was considerable variation in engagement levels for all the Skylights. However, London (average 19 sessions attended and median of 8 sessions) and Oxford (average 23 sessions, median 6 sessions), both of which were building based services, appeared to have more sustained engagement than the other Skylights.

Other administrative data suggest that contact with Skylight members could be sustained for at some time, although there was also considerable variation.¹³³ A breakdown of typical contact time for group based sessions (based on dates of first and last attendance) during 2012 and 2013 is presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Mean Duration of Contact for all Group Based Sessions Provided by the Skylights in 2012 and 2013.

Skylight Location	Mean (average)
Edinburgh	21 days
Birmingham	24 days
London	25 days
Merseyside	16 days
Newcastle	20 days
Oxford	20 days
All Skylights	22 days

Source: Crisis administrative data on classes and sessions attended.¹³⁴

One-to-one Support

As described earlier, each Skylight offered a range of one-to-one support.¹³⁵ This support included help with issues ranging from job-seeking, through to housing, health and well-being and the provision of one-to-one education.

As is shown in Table 3.4, 20,200 sessions of one-to-one support were provided by the six Skylights over the course of 2012 and 2013. Employment related one-to-one support predominated (50% of all sessions recorded), though many sessions of one-to-one support focused on education, mental health and housing issues were also provided. It is also apparent that a range of support was on offer, including help with personal budgeting, drug and alcohol issues, alongside benefits/welfare rights advice. The other forms of support on offer were diverse, including help with issues such as asylum and immigration, alongside specific support with particular issues. It should be noted (see Chapter 1) that one-to-one support may involve referral to external services, so for example the lower rates of one-to-one support focused on drugs and alcohol may have reflected staff meeting up with a member and then referring them on to external services. Again, the clear focus of the Skylights on employment, education and well-being is evident from the types of one-to-one support provided.

¹³² Pleace, N. (2008) *Effective Services for Substance Misuse and Homelessness in Scotland: Evidence from an International Review* Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

¹³³ Average (mean) duration between attendance at first and attendance at last session was 22 days, as shown in Table 3.3, but median duration of contact was 7 days with a standard deviation of 28.21. This pattern was broadly reflected for each individual Skylight.

¹³⁴ Data may not be entirely complete.

¹³⁵ i.e. one member of staff directly supporting one member of Skylight, rather than working with a group of members.

Table 3.4: One-to-One Support Sessions provided by the Skylights in 2012 and 2013

Type of support	One-to-one sessions	Percentage
Employment related	10,019	50%
Education related	2,849	14%
Mental health related	2,593	13%
Housing related	2,570	13%
Benefit related	603	3%
Volunteering related	513	3%
Finance/personal budgeting related	378	2%
Social support related	211	1%
Drug alcohol related	68	0%
Offending related	66	0%
Other	330	2%
All	20,200	100%

Source: Crisis administrative data on one-to-one support sessions provided.¹³⁶

Comparing Skylights

Table 3.5 provides a comparison of the Skylights provision of one-to-one support during 2012 and 2013.

With the exception of Newcastle, the majority of one-to-one support was focused on employment, but there were some other differences between the Skylights. There was a greater use of one-to-one sessions focused on education in Merseyside and Birmingham reflecting the presence of Smartskills tutors. London, which during 2012 and 2013 was the only Skylight with a dedicated housing support service was providing proportionately more support with housing issues (see Chapter 1). Again, the focus of each Skylight - allowing for somewhat different balances within each individual Skylight - on employment, education and well-being is evident.

There were significant differences in scale which reflected the size and range of services that each Skylight was able to offer. Edinburgh, as effectively the newest and also as the smallest service provided the smallest

Table 3.5: One-to-One Support by Skylight 2012 and 2013

Type	Edinburgh	Birmingham	London	Merseyside	Newcastle	Oxford
Employment	96%	59%	57%	57%	24%	39%
Education	2%	30%	5%	43%	6%	29%
Mental health	0%	10%	8%	0%	36%	10%
Housing	<1%	<1%	20%	<1%	13%	6%
Benefits related	0%	<1%	3%	<1%	9%	2%
Volunteering	1%	<1%	2%	<1%	4%	7%
Personal budgeting	0%	0%	2%	<1%	6%	1%
Social support	<1%	0%	1%	<1%	2%	4%
Drugs/alcohol	0%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%
Offending	0%	0%	<1%	0%	0%	2%
Other	0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	1%

Source: Crisis administrative data on one-to-one support sessions provided.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Data may not be entirely complete.

¹³⁷ Data may not be entirely complete.

element of one-to-one support across the six (2% of all one-to-one support). The next largest was Merseyside (6% of one-to-one support), followed by Birmingham (13%), Oxford (16%) and Newcastle (17%) with Skylight London operating on a much larger scale (47%).

The Skylight Cafes

Administrative data were not available on one aspect of Skylight service delivery at the time of writing, the Skylight cafés run by London, Newcastle and Oxford. Each Skylight café was a social enterprise model designed to part fund itself and angled towards catering for the general public. Managers and chefs oversaw the delivery of café services, employing members as volunteers and training them in different aspects of catering as they went along. Skylight Cafés awarded certificates in food safety and other aspects of catering. While only a small group within the cohort and among the members who took part in the focus groups were active in a café, views of the cafés and the training and work experience

they offered were generally positive. Members in London and Oxford spoke about the value of the Skylight cafés to them:

They had to do quite a lot of work with me, because I had quite a few gaps in my CV and that's one of the reasons I am in the café...so if I was talking to an employer now, they ask what are you doing now, I can say I am training in the café.

Just training in the Café at the moment. When I finish the course I will try to tell the key worker to find out about a café job for me.

Outcomes

Table 3.6 summarises the successful outcomes achieved by the Skylights in 2012 and 2013. The scale of educational and vocational attainment is notable, with 3,904 examination passes and certificates awarded over the course of 2012 and 2013 and 1,191 training and education places, provided by external agencies, outside Skylight,

Table 3.6: Positive Outcomes Recorded by Skylights 2012 and 2013

Skylight	Area of Improvement						
	Housing	Mental health	Took up external education/training	Got paid work	Volunteered	Exam passes and certifications	All positive outcomes
Edinburgh	20	0	5	30	12	41	108
Birmingham	26	8	267	105	90	893	1,341
London	379	113	507	439	315	1,410	3,163
Merseyside	23	1	119	65	77	175	460
Newcastle	115	41	113	98	51	1,038	1,456
Oxford	117	75	180	115	158	347	992
All Skylights	680	238	1,191	852	703	3,904	7,520

Source: Crisis administrative data.¹³⁸

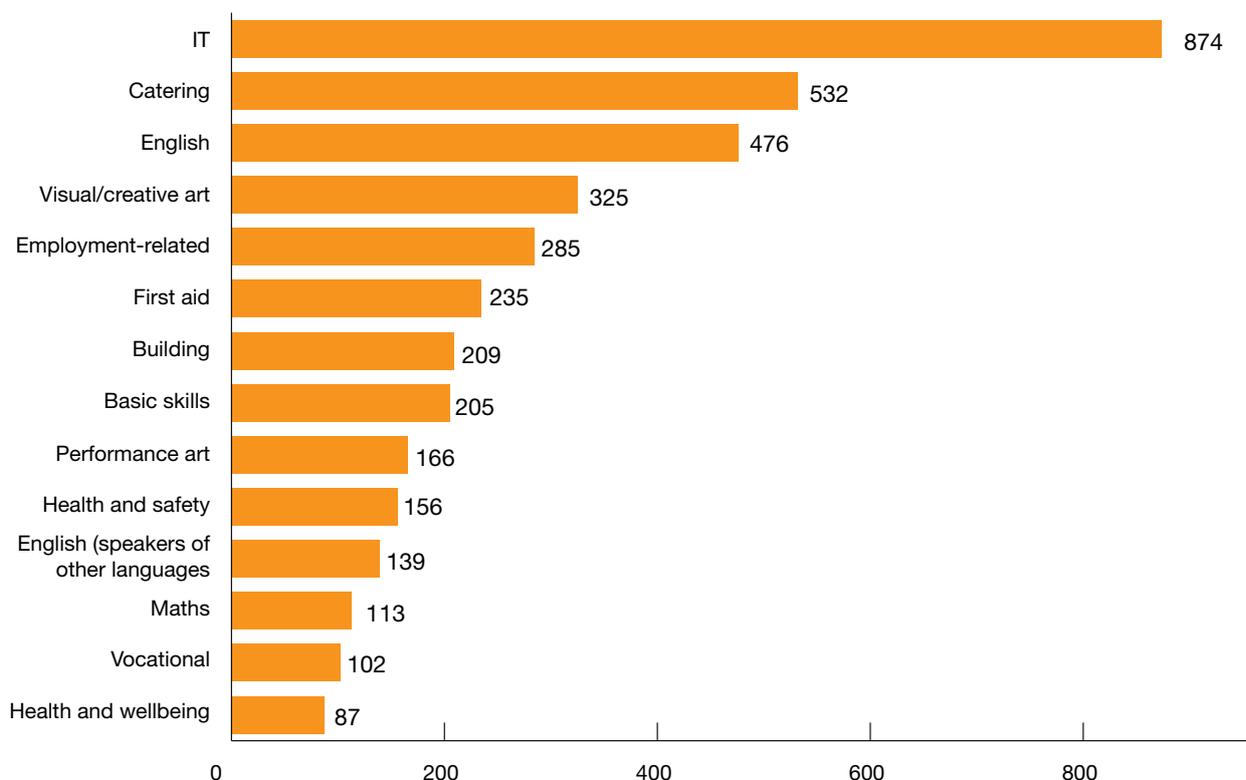
being taken up by Skylight members. The securing of 852 paid jobs during the course of 2012 and 2013 is also a quite striking finding, given a context in which earlier service interventions seeking to find paid employment for homeless people have often effectively failed to have any tangible impact.¹³⁹ The extent of improvements recorded in housing (680 positive results recorded), mental health (238 improvements in mental health recorded) and taking up of volunteering were also noteworthy.

Beyond the structural barriers to paid work for homeless people in depressed and changing labour markets, negative employer

attitudes towards homeless people, unmet support needs and very low self-confidence have proven to be major obstacles to paid work.¹⁴⁰ Again, given the recent failure of Work Programme to either mitigate general unemployment or in any way to meet the specific needs of homeless people seeking work,¹⁴¹ the achievements of the Skylights in securing paid work for their members appear impressive.

Overall, of the 852 jobs secured, 491 (58%) were full-time and 361 (42%) were part-time. London and Merseyside (each 62%) secured the highest proportions of full-time work and Newcastle and Edinburgh the lowest

Figure 3.3: Examination Passes and Certifications Achieved by Broad Subject Crisis Skylights in 2012 and 2013



Source: Crisis administrative data on examination passes and certifications awarded.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010); Crisis (2013) op. cit.

¹⁴⁰ McDonagh, T. (2011) *Tackling homelessness and exclusion: Understanding complex lives* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation;

¹⁴¹ Crisis (2013) op. cit.; Public Accounts Committee (2013) *Thirty-Third Report Department for Work and Pensions: Work Programme outcome statistics* www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmpublic-acc/936/93601.htm

¹⁴² Data may not be entirely complete.

proportions (49% and 43%). In Birmingham and Oxford, over half of the jobs secured were full time (56% and 52%). London and Oxford secured rate at the highest rate (9% of members), followed by Birmingham (8%), with lower rates in Edinburgh (5%), Merseyside (4%) and Newcastle (4%). Some members secured more than one paid job during the course of 2012 and 2013, this could be because they secured more than one part time position or also because some work was for time-limited contracts only, meaning they needed to secure another job some weeks or months after their first job.

London secured the most jobs (49% of the total), followed by Birmingham and Oxford (each 13%) and Newcastle (12%), with

Merseyside securing 9% of the total and Edinburgh 4%. Edinburgh was the smallest and newest Skylight and London the largest and most established (see Chapter 1) and this was reflected in the amount of employment they were able to help secure.

Figure 3.3 summarises the examination passes and certifications that had been achieved across the Skylights as a whole during 2012 and 2013. Exam passes and certification in IT (computing) courses predominated (22% of all accreditations), but was closely followed by catering (14%) and English (12%). Exam passes and other accreditation in visual and creative arts were also quite widespread (8%), as were qualifications in employment related subjects,

Table 3.7: Examination Passes and Other Accreditation by Broad Subject, Crisis Skylights 2012 and 2013.

Subjects	Edinburgh	Birmingham	London	Merseyside	Newcastle	Oxford	Total
IT	17%	2%	19%	10%	37%	52%	22%
Catering	10%	7%	9%	2%	28%	11%	14%
English	37%	11%	22%	4%	<1%	14%	12%
Visual Creative Art	0%	18%	0%	6%	13%	6%	8%
First Aid	0%	<1%	11%	0%	5%	7%	6%
Basic Skills	0%	8%	5%	21%	2%	3%	5%
Employment Related	0%	22%	3%	0%	4%	0%	7%
Vocational	0%	<1%	4%	11%	2%	3%	3%
Performance Art	0%	14%	2%	0%	1%	0%	4%
Health and Safety	0%	0%	7%	<1%	6%	0%	4%
ESFL*	37%	<1%	9%	0%	<1%	0%	4%
Maths	0%	5%	1%	7%	2%	4%	3%
Health/Well Being	0%	9%	<1%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Building	0%	2%	9%	38%	0%	<1%	5%
All	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Crisis administrative data.¹⁴³ *English for speakers of a foreign language.

including courses in volunteering for work experience (7%), vocational qualifications in the building trade (5%). Accreditation was less widespread in other subject areas, though even in less popular areas such as basic skills (maths, English, study skills), health and safety or maths, dozens of Skylight members had secured one or more qualifications.

Oxford, Newcastle and London focused most heavily on IT (Table 3.7), perhaps reflecting their fixed sites and access to dedicated PC classrooms (see Chapter 4). Merseyside and Birmingham, which had Smartskills tutors, secured more basic skills accreditations. Merseyside was also by some distance the most active provider of vocational qualifications in building and construction, while Birmingham recorded a higher proportion of employment related qualifications, such as training to be a volunteer.

Birmingham achieved the highest rate of qualifications on a per capita measure, securing 7.8 qualifications for every 100 members who used Skylight Birmingham during the course of 2012 and 2013. Newcastle (4.9 qualifications per 100 members) and London (3.7 qualifications per 100 members) were the next highest, with Oxford (3.5), Merseyside (1.1) and the only recently operational Edinburgh (0.7) lower down. While two of the most successful Skylights on this measure, London and Newcastle, were also the two most established with the largest user bases (number of active Skylight members), the third, Skylight Birmingham, was relatively recent (see Chapter 1).

Wide ranging and large scale success was being achieved by the Skylights. Thousands of examination passes and certificates were awarded to people who had previously quite often lacked any formal qualifications or had low levels of educational attainment. Large numbers of members, from a population characterised by sustained worklessness and a lack of skills, were also moving successfully into further education, training and into paid work.

4. Views of Skylight

Introduction

This chapter explores members' views of Skylight and also looks at the views of Skylight staff and external agencies. The main sources of information drawn on by this chapter are the first round interviews. These included the 135 person cohort of Skylight members¹⁴⁴ and a series of focus groups with other members, interviews with the Skylight Directors, focus groups with staff and focus groups and one-to-one interviews with representatives of external agencies (see Chapter 1).

The chapter begins with the overall views that members had of Skylight, before moving on to look at some other key areas, starting with the role of respect and understanding in Skylight services and then exploring the role of structured activity offered by Skylights in the lives of members. The chapter then moves on to discuss members' views of education, arts-based activities, practical support, help with health and well-being and support with job-seeking in sequence.

These sections are followed by a description of how members' experiences with a Skylight had influenced their view of their future prospects. Criticisms that the members had of Skylight are in the following section. The chapter concludes by looking at member's feedback provided directly to Crisis.

Overall Views

Views of Skylight were almost overwhelmingly positive. While levels and duration of contact with the Skylights varied among the Skylight members who took part in the cohort study or focus groups¹⁴⁵ this pattern was almost uniform. Members had been using their Skylight for months or even in a few cases

more than a year, while others were already moving away into further education, training or towards paid work after a few weeks of using Skylight services, all appeared equally likely to be very positive about their experiences of Skylight.

Crisis have been fantastic in my life. I probably could not have done it without them because I probably would have wasted another year feeling sorry for myself, thinking I wasn't going to get into college.

Yeah, I mean I've got positive experiences. I did an IT course here...the tutor's very good, very patient...it was a good course, I did learn, a good chance to brush up on the existing skills I did have. What else? On the job search front...be very helpful, a lady called [] a Job Coach, she helped to re-do my CV, update it a little bit more, helped with the job search. I think with Crisis it's really good, gives you a chance to try things that you've never tried before.

I found it very enjoyable. We did a bit of gardening, we did a bit of painting as well and I found it very uplifting, it gave me that bit more incentive in life, to start thinking more positive, about where I wanted to go...it's helped me getting me own place.

Negative views of Skylight as a whole were very uncommon among the members interviewed. There were a few individuals in the cohort and the focus groups who made negative comments about the different Skylights (see below), but these comments were for the most part specific criticisms of one or more aspects of the service. It was unusual to hear comments that were critical of a Skylight as a whole.

¹⁴⁴ A group of Crisis Skylight members whose progression will be monitored during the course of 2013 to 2015 (see Chapter 1).

¹⁴⁵ See Chapter 1.

Staff within the Skylights and staff from other external homelessness agencies and local authorities also tended to see considerable strengths and only some limitations in Crisis Skylight. Skylights were widely seen as a holistic and flexible approach that promoted social integration and helped meet support needs.

So Skylight is about learning, but actually here they can access the mental health support, they've also got a progression route, they can volunteer with us as a teaching assistant as well. They can access Changing Lives grants. Alongside having an art course, if they want to set up their own business, you know, it's all that, kind of, add on stuff which is unique and gives them that opportunity to move on. Skylight staff.

I think before that [arrival of Skylight], there wasn't really very much on offer, in terms of meaningful activities for people who were homeless or vulnerably housed, I mean, there were little patches of things, but that's really taken off and I think, in my view, quite a lot of the services in were a bit stuck in a rut and, kind of, focussing on getting people accommodation...so I think that Crisis filled a real gap. External agency staff.

It's things that we would love to have done but we don't have the finances or the resources or the skills on our existing teams to do. So, to have somebody come along and say, we've got trained staff, we'll support them, we'll provide them, we just need a venue and people that can promote what we're doing, is ideal and it solves lots of issues that we've always found difficult to find an answer to. External agency staff.

Yes, I do, because it [Skylight] understood the clients' [sic] needs so it's putting the clients [sic] first, really, and then working around, okay, this is what is needed, okay, we have College, I think there's a College as well, but it didn't reach that target

group, and especially when you're looking at independence. To be independent, you really need employment, so they're meeting that at very grassroots level, and having other services... a counselling service as well, so when you're looking at the whole person, often that's also a part of the package of what's needed, and being creative about it. External agency staff.

Respect and Understanding

Skylight members placed considerable emphasis on feeling both respected and understood by the staff in the Skylights. It was common for members to talk in terms of feeling that they were 'listened to' by Skylight staff and that the Skylights were not judgemental or patronising, something which encouraged service engagement, as these members in Birmingham, London and Newcastle reported:

The people are friendly...they are not hostile towards you, they'll help you any which way they can, yeah they are very friendly and helpful.

You can come here, knowing that you can speak about having voices in your head, having bad days, not being able to get out of bed, having panic attacks and people are not going to throw up their hands in horror and go running from the room. Instead they go "Yeah, I know".

I like the way they don't treat you like a little kid or something, they treat you like an adult. And you can have like a decent conversation. They don't treat you any different. Like some people treat people who've been like homeless, like different, they look down and Crisis don't.

They are so respectful. They are not condescending, I find that irritating and they are not. They are real. They've all got a lot of life experience, but they're very professional with it. They're great. They're

friendly as well, but the boundaries are set. Can't fault them.

Structured Activity

The role of structured activities provided by Skylights in countering isolation, boredom, and as counteracting a previous sense of lacking a clear purpose or direction, was often spoken about by Skylight members, as in these two examples from London and Newcastle:

Yeah I think it has, for me it has, yeah. You see I was in a hostel. It wasn't like I wasn't doing nothing, I was doing bits when I feel like it, until I started to move around here. And now my day is more positive, you know what I mean, it's like every day I've got something different. It's not like I've got the same thing every day. I wake up today, I might do job searching, probably the next day I'll come here, work in the café, every day for me is a different day.

It is something to do as well. Something to get up out of bed in the morning for. Look forward too. Instead of just lazing about, oh I'll go to the pub, have a couple of beers kind of thing, you come in here, you learn something...I can brush up on me maths skills, there's plenty of computer qualifications I can get.

The building-based Skylights in London, Newcastle and Oxford were sometimes seen by members as a place of safety that removed them from sometimes stressful lives and living environments. The convenience of having 'everything under one roof' was praised by some members:

A lot of them are in hostels or they're in really difficult living situations and I know from my experience of living in the hostel, it's really intense and it can be really difficult sometimes. And so, I think, coming here on a weekly basis, it is something to look forward to as well, to get away from all that chaos, all that heavy stuff that you

have to face on a daily basis. Not only that, I think also it is useful in the sense that it helps people to have a routine...

Crisis is like a one-stop shop, there's information you can access and many services or activities in one building, rather than going all around the houses.

For some of the members using outreach-based Skylights, a key strength of the outreach approach was that the Skylight came to them. For these members, this was seen as making the services Skylights offer accessible, because they did not need to travel, or travel far and there was no threshold to cross in an unfamiliar building, as one member put it:

The flexibility of the courses, they're in places, you know, they are held in hostels, daycentres, it is not in a college, so I really like the accessibility of it.

Good management was generally seen as overcoming most of the challenges involved in delivering structured, outreach-based, Skylight services to multiple sites by staff, but there were limits around storage and transportation of equipment and staff were quite frequently working alone. There could be challenges in delivering multiple interlinked sessions and services in the way that building-based Skylights could. Issues such as moving equipment and coping with staff sickness could also sometimes be challenges in the outreach based Skylights.

So I think logistically it's taking the equipment, storing and all that sort of stuff. In photography we've got, you know, expensive cameras that we're lugging around and all that sort of stuff. But we've not – touch wood – had an issue with that sort of stuff, it's just a bit of a pain sometimes. Skylight staff.

We struggle for things like if your tutor is sick. We almost never can backfill

that session. Whereas, if you were in a building, those clients could turn up and you could let them get on with what they were getting on with, you could almost substitute teach it. We can't ever do that, because whoever the tutor, whatever tutor might be able to do it, either has got a clash themselves or have got to be in a location that's the wrong side of town, straight after. So we find that difficult. Skylight staff.

There's some limitations to the model. Outreach is much more difficult from a health and safety type point of view. It's much more difficult from a communication and everybody being on the same page, and making sure that consistent messages are going out. It can be very difficult, for the team working really well together and making sure that everybody knows exactly what everybody's role is. And some of the limitations, because we don't have our own building, it's that flexibility. So, if actually, God, if we just put a second session of this, on this week, all these people would be ready to take their test. You can't do it, because you've not got a room, you haven't got this...there's a lot of that goes on. Skylight staff.

Building-based services were generally seen as less problematic by staff. However, staff in both outreach and building-based Skylights highlighted the time, resources and money it took to set up and manage building-based services compared to outreach based Skylights. The building-based Skylights had taken much longer to set up than the outreach-based Skylights, with Skylight Birmingham, for example, being up and running within around three months.

The difficulty with a building, and I know this from personal experience, is you've got to manage it. Buildings take time. Skylight staff.

Education Provided by the Skylights

Education offered by the Skylights was again widely praised by members and staff. There were four key findings here:

- Skylight members often reported that they did not feel pressured when learning and that being allowed to set their own pace was important in building up their self-confidence and successfully completing courses.
- Education was often reported to be pitched at an appropriate level, with courses not being reported as too difficult or as too basic for most members.
- Great emphasis was placed on the importance of having tangible achievements at the end of a course or activity. Alongside demonstrating achievements, both members and staff talked about the importance of having a sense of achievement, which was linked to a sense of progression, i.e. moving in a positive direction towards greater social integration.
- A capacity to adapt, specifically to modify the education on offer, for example in introducing more accredited, shorter term vocational courses to better suit members' needs, was seen as a particular strength by some staff. Linked to this was the capacity to refer members to further education and training which, where needed, could sometimes be paid for using *Crisis Changing Lives* grants.

Crisis Skylight Members in London, Birmingham and Oxford expressed their views of education provided by the Skylights in the following terms:

There wasn't the pressure, I know I'm the kind of person, the pressure you put on me, the more I'm going to bolt from the stable and go the other way. And here, I didn't have that pressure so I wanted to progress and I wanted to learn.

It was really good, because if it had been anything more intense or difficult I might just have lost my confidence and not stuck with it. So it was just the right level for me. Then I got really confident, I got good with the computer, as good as one can get at that level. And then they said I could do the next level...which I've just finished now and my confidence has increased, not only with computers but in myself as well.

I got used to proper English and proper maths, because I failed all my exams when I was at school, but I've done it all here and passed everything.

I've come a long way. Because I didn't think I'd do this, learn to use a computer and all that, I always thought I am too old for that stuff.

If you go to a potential employer and say well, I'm going to Crisis. So what? But if you can say look, this is what I've done with Crisis and I've got accreditations for this, that and everything else, then yeah.

You don't feel like you are being rushed out the door, you don't feel like there's a like ticking boxes thing going on, 'it's been ten weeks can you f-off now', but also there's a sense that - with a lot of organisations that you're a service user, you're a victim, that's your role, I find that if you become stronger and more confident, some organisations actually become more hostile towards you - and with this [Skylight], there is every sense that there is no judgement...and you are expected to progress.

Staff shared this view of what education could accomplish in terms of promoting self-confidence and self-esteem.

Yeah, I think that can be just as big as getting somebody to engage in something and then get them through a qualification, I think if someone hasn't been in any kind

of structured environment for a very long time just getting them to engage maybe a few times or for a term that's a huge thing. Skylight staff.

It's also giving them some social skills, because within sessions they're actually starting to actually mix now with people who they probably wouldn't have normally talked to that they wouldn't have actually had a conversation with. And we know that those now are actually going also outside our sessions. There are also now some social rules because when they initially come in they might literally just expect the teacher, the tutor to immediately deal with their issue and by the time they've...a number of sessions they'll wait their turn, they'll be told that, yeah, I'll be with you in a moment but I'm just dealing with such and such first, and so you can see that it isn't just purely an educational progression around the topic, there's a whole host of other things that are sort of running alongside it. Skylight staff.

The education provided by the Skylights was also generally regarded by staff as engaging and effective. Flexibility and a capacity to deal with diverse needs, including working at a pace someone could cope well with, were both praised.

And that non-traditional environment as well. It's not completely tutor led, and you're not just sitting and following the curriculum necessarily. Everyone's seen as at different stages. Everyone's of mixed abilities, but that works. Especially having volunteers in there as classroom assistants is a big benefit, because it means people get individualised support, which means if you miss three weeks you need help to catch up, or if you've got learning difficulties or other issues. Skylight staff.

The diversity is really good, and in terms of the people we work with, someone can be on an IT course and perhaps have a

change of medication, you know, and then not be able to concentrate that well. They'll have a tutorial with the tutor and then be signposted maybe to a Yoga class, I think we have that holistic support here for our members that they don't have anywhere else. So, it's academic, and yet it can also be engaging and fun. Skylight staff.

Staff reported that engagement with education and delivering successful education outcomes in terms of certificates, exam passes and vocational training that helped members into further education and paid work had not always been achieved immediately. After some less successful results when they first began operation, some of the Skylights had quickly modified the education and qualifications they offered, making a strategic shift towards offering more accredited courses that were directly work-related and also to courses that could be completed relatively quickly.

So we were doing basic numeracy and literacy. Basic...We weren't really getting the numbers or qualifications what members want, and what they tell me, it was...because of feedback, members, they want qualifications in basic skills, therefore we really had to make a move on that... We're doing CSCS¹⁴⁶ stuff, so we're doing that sort of stuff, but what we're really doing is...it really is what members really, really want...they really want their, you know, numeracy and literacy so they can then move on into employment or into further qualifications... Skylight staff.

Short courses. At the beginning there was an offer of various qualifications, and what we learnt quite quickly was that they were too long and people couldn't retain or were too chaotic. I mean difficult for anyone really, just coming and doing quite long courses. So we kind of had a big

shift with that and looked at credit based learning a lot more, and we offer that to quite a few. Skylight staff.

Where a Skylight could not provide the education or training needed, for example because a member had moved beyond a basic or intermediate level, the capacity to refer members on to external education and training was seen positively by members and staff. The potential to use *Crisis Changing Lives* grants to pay for courses when necessary had been useful to a few members.

Arts-Based Activities

Art-based activities were widely reported by Skylight members and staff to be beneficial on six main levels:

- Visual and performing arts could be a way in which to encourage members to engage with a Skylight.
- Art was often described as increasing self-confidence, which then had positive effects in terms of willingness to engage with other services and opportunities. Some members who defined themselves as having been reclusive also talked about how arts-based activity had increased their social confidence and sometimes generated friendships.
- Art could help provide meaning to individual lives in two particular ways, either allowing articulation of negative experiences, which could be cathartic, or absorbing time in a way that created a temporary distancing between someone and their negative experiences.
- Arts-based activity was often described as enjoyable, important to members whose lives had often not contained much pleasure.

- For staff, the arts were often seen as a catalyst by which to engage members with employment related services, training and education.
- The potential for Skylights to encourage arts-based careers, when someone had a level of talent that could wholly or partly support them, was praised, although the challenges of having a successful career in the arts were recognised.

Members in Birmingham, Merseyside, Oxford and London reported their views on how arts-based activity had helped them in the following ways:

Yeah I think so, it's given me more self-confidence, that's the most important thing, I was pretty reclusive when I first come here, I wouldn't sort of mix with many people, but it's given me more self-confidence and it gives me a sense of achievement, especially the drama.

It has yeah, a lot more positive, a lot more positive. I was stuck in a rut. It has made me appreciate music a lot more, being able to understand how it is structured, a different insight.

it just hadn't even crossed my mind to even consider the drama class so I... I thought oh well let's give it a go. So I went along that week and it was just, it's, it's interactive and it's more like drama therapy so it's, that's, it's mind-blowingly hard work, when I first started it I used to get out of the two hour session feeling completely exhausted but in a really, really good way. It just made me feel so, I felt so much, it's so cathartic somehow. It's incredibly, incredibly cathartic

Some people come to Crisis and they just want to chill out, they want to do some art, painting and they're not at the stage in their recovery from maybe addiction, maybe mental illness, or maybe traumas

that have taken place in their life, to do much more than that. But the thing is, that's helpful for them in itself, because there's a lot of creativity with Crisis and creativity brings healing for people that have been through a lot of trauma.

Staff shared these views, the arts were seen as increasing self-confidence, as enhancing social skills and in some cases as providing an outlet for self-expression which could be cathartic or create a space away from other negative aspects of their lives.

...it seems that the art space courses, and things like Yoga are incredibly important for the first stage in getting people engaged, because of the flexibility that's inherent within something like that. And, the expression I suppose, people being able to express themselves, maybe again for the first time in a long time... Skylight staff.

...guys with very little confidence, just tasting something, to some of the art groups and things like that, and music groups, where it's just folk that have never really been part of a group activity before or never felt they were worth anything, I suppose, just getting involved in stuff and really thriving on it. External agency staff.

In one respect, staff views of arts-based activity differed from that of members. Art was often seen as a tool for further engagement, a way of recruiting members who could, when ready and as appropriate, be diverted into education, training and job-seeking activities.

I think one of the things that strikes me about this is that the arts element is incredibly flexible of course, and unlike some of the accredited courses people can come in...and I've had people say this in other cases, not just here yesterday, people can come in and if they don't feel well a few days later it doesn't matter,

they can come again. And, that is around building the confidence and the self-esteem, and the motivation that will lead onto something like maybe a slightly more advanced IT course. Skylight staff.

I mean the change here is massive in as much as we have accredited learning within our less formal workshops... So we're getting away from seeing the arts as being simply an engagement process and never about learning. And we'd made assumptions that our members would never take to that, but actually it couldn't be more different. They love the structure... we're introducing more structure which seems to be very well received by tutors and members. Skylight staff.

Where art could be accredited, with certificates and exam passes that might help secure arts-related employment, this was being pursued. However, there was a recognition that participation in art was often not going to actually result in a career in the arts.

And, we're quite clear with the café, people get trained for the catering industry, whereas with the arts we're not training them purely for the arts industry, there's not enough jobs out there, it's a difficult market. Skylight staff.

London was seen as offering a wide range of arts-based opportunities, due to links and opportunities that existed at the centre of the UK's artistic and cultural life, and also through via the Skylight Bermondsey project.¹⁴⁷

Oxford was also seen by Skylight staff and external agencies as offering a unique model of Skylight because of the integration of the Skylight with an Old Fire Station arts centre (see Chapter 1).

I think one of the strong points has

been the success of basically sharing a building with the arts company, which is a completely new thing for Skylight [Oxford], not being done anywhere else, which was always going to be risky and difficult. Actually I think that's been really successful in terms of getting our members or client group involved with the arts and actually creating much more opportunity for them to do stuff, like the arts training schemes and everything. Rotational staff and classes and volunteer placements we've got going. Skylight staff.

Health and Well-Being

The Skylights were seen as benefitting health and well-being by members and staff on two main levels:

- By providing structure and meaning to their lives, Skylights had helped some members in managing mental health problems and, in some instances, problematic use of drugs and alcohol.
- Direct support with health and well-being was praised by staff and members as being both personalised and flexible.

The role of arts-based activity for some members, in providing respite from, or a way of engaging with, negative experiences has already been discussed. However, the education and activities which could keep someone busy on absorbing and productive activities were also sometimes viewed as conducive to improving mental well-being by some members with a history of depression or severe mental illness. Skylights were also seen by some members as helping them manage problematic use of alcohol and drugs. Members expressed these benefits in the following terms:

It helps you, all the classes you do, with your illness. Keeps your mind occupied...

They will fight every concern for you, to help you back on your feet...Crisis will go all the way for you.

Oh absolutely. It's kind of like my NA [Narcotics Anonymous¹⁴⁸] in a way. I don't do Narcotic Anonymous but I can find fellowship with people here and also learn something along the way. I mean, yeah, definitely, definitely I've learned practical skills and I've met a lot of really nice people here.

I enrolled on the Friday and started on the Monday. Which was great for me, because it has given me something to do, instead of just sitting in a room all day, climbing up the walls, I can come down here. I spend a lot of time here and it's great...if I didn't, I would have climbed the walls, I would be back to square one, I would have relapsed, as simple as that.

Support from mental health coordinators¹⁴⁹ and other progression and work and learning staff with accessing health and personal care services, or housing-related support, was widely prized by members:

I think maybe at first I wondered if I should really be here, like I'm not homeless now, I was homeless years ago and should I really be here, but they kept saying that it was fine...because I'd been vulnerably housed in the past and I'd been unwell, they said yes, we don't want you to go back to that, and it's important that you're here and we support you to move on from it.

I find the one-to-one help really beneficial, because if I phone places myself, because I'm on benefits, sometimes people don't take any notice. You've got to have a support worker who'll phone.

For Skylight staff, the personalisation led

approach, which allowed members to shape their own one-to-one support around progression, job-seeking, health and well-being was seen as a particular strength. Flexibility of response could also be seen as crucial to allowing this model to work (see Chapter 1).

Really looking at problem solving and client-centred case work issues in a sort of group dynamic situation, so that people would bring their particular problems and we would see collectively if we could sort them out or discuss the issues that were raised by them. And I found that a very useful way of getting into the nature of the varied membership we have here but also it was possible to get a handle on the sort of problems that people were facing from their varied situations of homelessness. Skylight staff.

I've just met with a guy, [] who I worked with in the beginning intensely when he was street homeless for a long time, and he got housed, he got a job, and now he's come back with different problems. So he's going to show back up as being a member for four years, but I haven't had any contact for 18 months, 2 years, because he progressed... He still has his house. He's still working. But he's now got another issue. Skylight staff.

Job Seeking

The Skylights were seen as helping members secure paid work in five main ways:

- The capacity to directly generate self-employment in a wide range of careers through access to the *Crisis Changing Lives* grants.
- Support offered with job seeking was widely seen as comprehensive and effective. There was assistance with

¹⁴⁸ <http://ukna.org/>

¹⁴⁹ Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2014) op. cit.

developing a CV, interview techniques and in effective job seeking which could be personalised to suit specific needs.

- The personalisation and flexibility of employment related support was prized by members and seen as a strength of the Skylight approach by staff.
- Volunteering was seen as a key route to employment by staff.
- Staff took the view that some members of Skylight faced major barriers to securing paid work, these could be centred on the local context and also on the needs, characteristics and experiences of some individual members. The capacity to personalise and work flexibly and patiently with this group, including chronically homeless people, was seen as a strength.

Some members particularly prized the capacity of Skylights to facilitate self-employment. Individual successes in terms of fashion, art or music are too particular to specific members to be discussed in detail as the people concerned would be identifiable. However, while the scale of *direct* generation of employment and self-employment through arts-based activities was not large, it had occurred and had provided members with paid work. One member described their experience in moving towards a self-employed arts-based career these terms:

I've done a series of lots of creative things. What I do at home at the moment is I make jewellery and I also do portraits, as well, so I want to kind of combine the two and sort of build up a website where I can start selling my things.

Only a minority of members who were interviewed were pursuing self-employment, but among those who were going down this route, views of Skylight again tended to be positive. The *Crisis Changing Lives* grants were viewed particularly positively.

Self-employment could be a route to paid work for those with a longstanding history of worklessness. Criminal records, histories of severe mental illness, problematic drug and alcohol use, or even just experience of homelessness, might make many employers reluctant to offer work to Skylight members. Members in London and Merseyside gave the following views about the Changing Lives grants:

So basically, it's got everything I need, and the possibility of a grant for my business. So that's what I'm working towards.

It's the best thing that ever happened to me, because I've got those skills, how to be a good painter... what I'm going for is like painting and gardening. With painting, it's good money, so is gardening... with the grant, I'll get some working clothes, steel cap boots, working tools and my name on my van, get cards, business cards.

I volunteer for Crisis, I have done more or less since they first opened and I've done training through them, I've done some courses, hair dressing, and things like that, and I'm just about to start my own business.

Skylight members were helped with all elements of job-seeking, from the initial searches through to securing the right qualifications or certificates, designing and writing a CV, mock interviews and help with actual interviews (such as meeting travel costs to attend an interview or help with getting appropriate clothing). This kind of support with seeking work was often highly praised:

Very helpful because before I didn't get any interviews. I looked lazy because I had nothing to do, not a good look. It has helped with my confidence, it has sharpened my research skills, now I know what I want to do for me, I am doing it now because I want to.

I decided to go for my CSCS card, get back into plumbing, and they've bent over backwards to help me since then, I've sat three mock exams, passed them three, and they're paying for me to go into for my official one. [staff member] is working on getting me a loan for my tools, it has been very good.

And employment as well, because I mean they do put a lot of people, they've got a job club, and that is very, very good... So I mean I know quite a few people coming here who actually have got jobs, be it casual labour or whatever, they've got jobs for them.

Skylight members also sometimes drew attention to the flexibility and willingness to listen that they thought was a feature of employment related services in the Skylights. These comments were centred on the ways in which Skylights were thought to allow for and support the ambitions of members to develop careers in the areas they were interested in, rather than simply pursue any sort of work, regardless of whether it bore any relationship to what they wished to do.

...it's about your own personal development, so they're quite happy to help with the research regardless of if you want to work as a chef in a top restaurant or you want to have your own business they're quite happy to help you go through that information to sieve out stuff, which again you wouldn't get in any other learning centre.

Staff highlighted the role of volunteering as a route towards paid work.¹⁵⁰ There was thought to be a direct connection between experience as a volunteer and the possibility of securing paid work.

Yeah, because one of the big barriers to

people that I work with for employment is that they don't have the experience and if we can help give them that experience as well as the qualifications then because it's all very well doing qualifications but if they haven't got the experience. But I think our volunteer programme is really, like I said still quite new and it's been fantastic and, you know, member volunteers, so many of them and that's been a great route to be able to kind of give people that extra experience and, you know, using that to give them lots of admin experience, things like that, the list is endless, really, for volunteering, in terms of the projects we could do. Skylight staff.

...you have to have more structure...on a volunteer basis, you can do three months, people have to be coming in for the right reasons, it has to be progression focused, and that's what we're trying to do. Skylight staff.

Context was seen as influencing employment opportunities by staff. Edinburgh, London and Oxford, for example had relatively buoyant labour markets, although the work available might be often be short term, part-time and at low wages. Whereas economic depression in the Midlands and the North created challenges when job seeking in Birmingham, Merseyside and Newcastle. There were also perceived to be welfare system 'traps', e.g. high hostel rents would cease to be paid if any work was secured, which could limit the employment opportunities for some homeless people at least on a short-term basis. Staff saw some members were also seen as very 'distant' from being able to secure paid work, and the process of progressing them towards jobs was viewed as something that could be time consuming.

...employment is hard. The employment set up situation, here at the moment, is dire. So I think we're doing pretty damn

well, considering. But it's tough, it's really tough. And our clients are competing against people that they would not usually have been competing against, because the redundancies have been high. So that is difficult. People are progressing. People are moving into further education, in training. Skylight staff.

I think it depends on people's backgrounds and where they've come from, and how long they've been out of the job market, and how long they've been homeless. You know, how long have they been homeless, what's going on in their lives? So there's no one factor that you could say, oh, you're going to be able to fast-track, and you're not going to be able to fast-track. You know, everybody's journey depends on all of those other things, because the people who...I think most of the people who are homeless, anyway, have got more than one thing that has happened, but it depends on the length of time and the severity of it, what support networks they've got already, what their prospects for housing are first. So for example, we might have somebody who is job-ready who is in a hostel, but it's so cost-prohibitive to get a job because they can't afford the rent. Skylight staff.

Transforming Lives

The strategic goal of Crisis Skylight is to transform the lives of homeless people by moving them into a positive situation of social integration. A sense that a future existed, and that this future was positive, was widely reported by members. This was linked to a sense of progress, that they were moving forward in a social and economic sense, towards being part of mainstream society, through their contact with a Skylight. Members from every area talked about the positive effects they thought their Skylight had on their lives:

I can't praise them enough, what they've done for me...they've made me feel

different, made me more confident in myself, they brought me out of my shell, like I say before I was a recluse I wouldn't speak to no-one, but they gave me confidence to do things.

Before coming here, I couldn't see anything in life, you know what I mean, just dark...but coming here, I mean I can reason with people, chat to anyone...it is not like you would get from a Jobcentre, places like that, you feel depressed man, you come here, you ain't gonna feel depressed...There is a good vibe, peoples want to do something, be something.

I suppose I've had a voice. When you've been homeless and addicted and things like that, you sort of lose your voice. And, I believe Crisis has given me that voice back to feel like I'm worthy, I'm not just a 'homeless drug addict', you know 'cos that is what a lot of people label me as, I'm actually a person in my own right.

Since this has opened, it's the best thing that ever happened to me...if you saw me 18 months ago, man, I was a different person, it's made me want to achieve my goals because I want to be an art teacher.

It's free, there's qualifications at the end of it, I mean for me it's fantastic. I mean end of last year I was a mess, now I'm a changed person, I've got something to live for, I'm getting qualifications.

Yeah it has because when I first started using Crisis I was coming 3 days a week... If I hadn't been coming those three days I would have just been sitting behind a closed door... because there was nothing for me to do, I wouldn't know what to do, I wasn't well enough to return to work yet, I didn't have the confidence to even think about putting a CV together... so if I didn't have Crisis... I don't think I would be anywhere near where I am now.

The willingness to respect members' preferences using a personalised approach, to jointly build a path to progression and eventual transformation, into a position of social integration, was seen as a particular strength by staff. This was sometimes contrasted with the strict, inflexible, and, on current evidence, unsuccessful approach of the Work Programme.¹⁵¹

I think with the progression team side of that, the model that Crisis uses, the coaching model, is really positive, because it doesn't define what the goal is, the person brings a goal in themselves actually. So, we're not really expecting anything of them until they sort of tell us what they are hoping for themselves. Really you can work with someone in quite a similar model if their goal is just to be able to come into our classes and some of it is to get a job. I think people appreciate that flexibility, because normally if it's a support worker in supported housing, or if it's an advisor from the work programme or something like that, the expectations are put on them. Skylight staff.

They come in here and it's their choice of what they're progressing towards. There's no fixed thing they're coming here for. They're coming for whatever they want. It's individual. It's person centred. Unless they're coming to a class and they know they're coming to an art class. But for their progression it is focused on them and what they want. Skylight staff.

This way of working was seen as successful because it could be adaptable. Skylights could, in the view of some staff, reach groups like chronically homeless people who had hitherto given up any ambition to secure paid work or improve their social position and life.

I have a few people, who, mainly they're men, mainly they're 45 upwards and often

they think they're on the scrap heap. They think, I've had alcohol issues, I've had drug issues, I've been homeless, who's gonna want me? So I start off with, well, let's get you into a routine, let's get you doing a class. What about a class? What do you like doing? Generally they will want to do a class and then mention at that time about volunteering as well...If somebody can go along to a volunteering position in whatever they fancy doing and generally you can do it in most areas, then it gets them into a routine. Then it gets their motivation up, their self-esteem, their confidence and then quite soon, they're upping their hours in the volunteer role. Then they're starting to look for paid stuff because they think, then I can get back into the job market. It doesn't happen with everyone, but that is a way that I do work with people who say that 'I'm unemployable'. Skylight staff.

The importance of recognising and celebrating achievement was also emphasised by Skylight staff and members. Alongside getting certificates that showed achievements were being earned and awarded, mutual recognition and support of each other's achievements by other Skylight members was seen as an important part of reinforcing a sense of progression.

...we have a celebration event at the end of every term. We've tried to do them in really, really great locations. And we've done them in the brand new []. We've done them in really...we've done them in... we're doing the next one at the [] actually, but we've done them in huge warehouse spaces. So we had an art exhibition in... and people come. And people know each other, and you think, how do...and it's because they...oh you do an art class as well, oh did you do that theme that week? And they're talking about it. And there is a real sense of community. Skylight staff.

I think it's been a life saver because I was, when I came here the first day, when I turned up, I was so depressed and I just thought my life wasn't worth living...the progression coach that I'd met, sort of gave me some hope that I could change things... and that things could get better and they, sort of helped me along the way by making small goals to achieve...all the stuff that I've done here like, you know, speaking at the celebration event in front of like 120 people about my experiences for someone who'd had therapy for social anxiety, its massively huge.

Challenges for Skylight

Criticism of Skylights was not widespread among the Skylight members. Many were very positive about all the aspects of the Skylights that they had experienced. When asked about the limits of Skylight or whether there was anything they disliked about the service, having first been reassured their responses were confidential, members often responded by saying there was little or nothing that they wished to criticise:

I've only got positive things to say, I can't find fault with it at the moment. For me it's been a really positive experience...

I don't think there's anything that's not good about Skylight, probably the only thing I can think of is that it is not open on a Sunday.

Focus groups with members were held to counterbalance the risk that there might be a positive bias in the cohort selection (see Chapter 1). As noted, results were consistent between the focus groups and the cohort interviews. A clear majority of members, though not all, were positive about each Skylight.

However, a few members reported feeling they were not listened to, not respected or that their needs were not being recognised or

met. Such negative views, even if they were grounded in a genuinely negative experience of poor quality service when using a Skylight, were not representative of general opinion among members.

The main challenges identified for Skylight by members, staff and external agencies were as follows:

- Engagement issues in some classes and activities.
- Challenges for building-based and outreach based Skylights.
- Challenges in delivering progression for some chronically homeless people and other people with very high support needs.
- Operational issues arising from cuts to other services.
- Possible issues in relation to future risk management.

Engagement in some classes and group activities

A few members reported that there was occasional disruption to group-based activities from other members. There were also some members who felt uncomfortable around some of the other participants, because they viewed their behaviour as difficult or outside the norm. This was not a widely reported problem, but there were a few members who felt that a lack of respect for others and disruption had occasionally occurred. Generally, safety and regulation within the building based Skylights tended to be praised, and although the outreach Skylights might sometimes have had less direct control over potential disruption, most members found classes and activities to be well run and regulated:

There are some people here who are quite strange personalities, I wouldn't really want to hang out with them...I'm getting a lot out of it, my confidence is a lot better...

it took me a few weeks to get confident to come to things.

In a few cases, members had found it difficult to join what they felt were well-established classes or arts-based groups. For example, when someone joined a group that had already been running for several weeks with a fairly stable membership, there could be a sense of exclusion from not being up to speed with the rest of a group. In one example, someone had joined a group entering its second term as a new member, and felt left out and uncomfortable, to the point where they decided to leave. Again, while these problems had occurred, the issue was not widely reported.

It was the first lesson in a new term, so everyone from the term before was there... they're all chatting away, everyone knows each other, the guy's come in, he's sat down and he started talking, he sees it is my first time, but no-one spoke to me.

Two specific criticisms were made of computing and IT classes. The first was access to computers outside class time, which was difficult for some members as they could not afford their own machine and could not always access other machines, such as through a public library, very easily or for very long. Practising for tests and exams was difficult when their only time with a computer was during lessons. Second, there were some complaints that software and computers were sometimes rather out of date. Again, these criticisms were not widespread.

Having access to computers, because we're doing this coursework, but there's nowhere for us to have access to the computers outside the time...people have said we have to use libraries and stuff, but its having the same programmes as the ones we use here...so just more facilities to practice our work.

there is things like all the operating systems they've got upstairs for doing CLAIT level 1, 2 is on office 2003... 10 years out of date. You know, we need at least 2010, to move forward in the future, 2013 is very similar to 2010. In fact most people learn on 2010 because 2013 everything is cloud based, not very different... So there kind of little things like that, like software and little things like that, but I think... but it's really picky to say, it just feels really picky because I'm so grateful for what they've done for me.

A slightly more common criticism of courses and arts-based activities was simply that there was not enough of a given activity and that a member wanted more of it. In relation to arts-based activities, several members commented that what were often two-hour sessions were not as long as they would like, for example if they were painting or composing music. Sometimes members also wanted courses and arts-based activity to go on for longer and explore subjects in greater depth.

...because it's doing it what? Twelve weeks, and it's like we'd love to see that a little bit longer to be honest.

A few members reported boredom and frustration because courses were not advanced enough, but boredom and a lack of things to do in the gaps between terms was something mentioned by more members. Where Skylight had become an integral part of their lives, and, despite several Skylights running at least some activities in the gaps between terms, there could be a sense of frustration when what had sometimes been a busy schedule of activities came, albeit temporarily, to a halt.

Challenges relating to building-based and outreach models of Skylight

All three buildings were managed so that members who were present on site should only be people who were engaged in activities

or receiving support. For example a building might restrict waiting times before classes or activities started to 10 minutes and expect members to leave the building once an activity was complete. When travelling some distance on public transport, the only available option might mean that someone arrived two hours in advance of their activity starting.

The absence of a waiting area – specifically one in which they could wait for some time – was highlighted by some members. London had some facilities that enabled people to remain in the building between classes, although not for several hours at a time, but there was not the same capacity in Newcastle and Oxford. The Skylight cafés were also reported to be too expensive for many members to use.

We must come and time in the class, English class or IT class, but start ten o'clock. People come in at ten minutes to ten, they in the winter must stay on the street, it's snowing or it's raining, can't come in, that is very bad.

I think it's bloody expensive in the café, but then they need to cover their overheads, it's a charity.

Within the building-based Skylights, a small number of members reported initially feeling awkward and in one or two cases intimidated by the reception area. This did not appear to be an issue in Oxford, which had an open reception area that was shared with the arts centre that was within the same building (see Chapter 1), but in Newcastle and London the presence of administrative staff behind desks was sometimes seen as reminiscent of the kinds of bureaucracy members encountered in services like Jobcentre Plus.¹⁵² Ultimately, however, this had not proven to be a barrier to using a Skylight.

For some members of the outreach-based Skylights there could be frustration at the sometimes restricted facilities available for teaching, training and arts-based activities. This was expressed in terms of a wish for dedicated classroom/arts room space which the Skylight had exclusive use of. Another issue with outreach-based Skylights, for some members, was a relative absence of privacy when receiving one-to-one support. For example, they might only have the option of meeting a member of staff in a café or daycentre, or other public place, where a discussion they would prefer to be entirely confidential might be overheard.

Challenges in delivering progression for some Skylight members

Staff raised questions about the point at which a Skylight should start to disengage with someone who had reached the furthest extent of social integration that they were likely to achieve. In London and Newcastle, which have been operational the longest, there are small groups of members who had been attending for several years. The transformative orientation of Skylight meant it was designed to move people on in a social and economic sense, and when, as in these cases, progression could only advance to a certain point, a dilemma arose as to how best to proceed.

...someone has mental health issues... dependent on who or what activity they get engaged in, it's questionable the progression of that individual. Because they might love coming to art, but it's questionable will they then move on to any other aspect. Skylight staff.

...you know, there will be people who won't come here. And the other bit about the people who will never get into work; there are a very, very small number of people who have been here since we

¹⁵² Over the course of 2013 the reception area in London was remodelled creating a slightly larger waiting area.

came, and we know who they are, and we can identify them, and they...they aren't employable; they are people who couldn't hold down a job because they have borderline learning difficulties, or mental health is so severe...but they've progressed. Skylight staff.

I think the biggest challenge as well is moving people on when they've picked the highest level with us, because sometimes it's having that fear of moving on to college or whatever. We try to do that, but again with the support, and you go to college visits and that kind of thing. But some people are comfortable with coming here, which obviously is what we need to try to avoid in some ways. It's a lovely place to be, so they want to continue to come. But really we want to move them on and move them to the next place. So that's something that's tricky. Skylight staff.

I mean we've actually got a strategy for working with longstanding members here, but it's proving problematic. I mean it's a bold step and a necessary one, but we've started it this year with a handful of members, and we are beginning to see some signs of having an end date and getting people outside of the organisation, but it's very painful. And the amount of investment for what is a very small number of people is frustrating really. But we are serious about it and we are working quite robustly to have an end date for some people. Skylight staff.

The impact of cuts to other homelessness services

Staff in Birmingham, Merseyside and Newcastle, identified ongoing cuts to other homelessness services as a challenge for Skylight. Spending cuts affecting homelessness services, reflecting wider

trends across England¹⁵³ are set to deepen through the course of 2014/15:

...if every project that you're working in, is running on skeleton staff, that everybody that had a keyworker, their keyworker now, is working with 35 clients, 45 clients. They haven't got that one-on-one support...So what we're finding is that actually, some things are becoming more difficult, the longer we're operating, because of the knock on effect of the cuts. The cuts in [] have been huge. People are losing fifty per cent of their funding to run their projects, and they were not massively well funded projects in the first place. So we're finding that difficult. Skylight staff.

These cuts to other homelessness services were reported to affect the Skylights in two ways:

- Pressure on other services, particularly an absence of key-worker or one-to-one support, led members to bring more of their problems and questions to Skylight staff, for example in relation to the planned restrictions to welfare benefits for single people. This increased pressure on those elements of the Skylight providing one-to-one support, but might also lead to members seeking help with other issues when they were supposed to be undertaking arts-based activities, or were meant to be learning and training or job-seeking.
- Cuts to other homelessness services might restrict the range of locations and level of support from other agencies available to Skylights that were using an outreach model. Essentially if homeless hostels or daycentres were being used as classrooms and locations for arts-based activities and these services were closed, new venues

would have to be found and members would need to be connected to those venues to continue to receive Skylight services.

Possible issues in risk management

As at the end of 2013, all the Skylights had operated without a serious incident occurring in the delivery of their services. Risk was managed in various ways, within the three building-based services, policies prohibited the use of drugs and alcohol (and attending services in an intoxicated state) and also made clear that violent or threatening behaviour was unacceptable. For the outreach services, which were delivering services in partner homelessness services, additional risk management processes were in place within each of those services, be it a hostel, emergency accommodation or a daycentre.

I know the names of the probation hostels around here, we've also got a lot of staff who've worked here for a long time and know people. So, they come and fill out a beautiful glowing contact form, and you're thinking, that doesn't quite ring true, so we've introduced something whereby an awful lot of people come in here and we know nothing about them. But, for those people who put something on that first contact form, which is something that could potentially risky, we do sit down with them and do an assessment with them. It's not in any way to say that they won't be able to come here. Skylight staff.

Some staff were concerned that risk management processes were not always as formalised as they could be and – again bearing in mind that no serious issue had not occurred as at the end of 2013 – there was perhaps scope to review how the Skylights assessed and managed risk.

New Directions for Skylight

Among staff in both outreach-based and building-based models of Skylight there was

considerable support for the idea of a hybrid Skylight that combined a central core or hub, in which courses and activities requiring lots of equipment, such as IT lessons, could be delivered and in which one-to-one support could be delivered in privacy, with extensive outreach services.

Some staff in building-based Skylights were perhaps more in favour of adding outreach to an extensive central core of services in the Skylight building, whereas some staff in outreach-based Skylights foresaw Skylight services that were still largely delivered using outreach, with perhaps a third of services being delivered in a central core or hub. Among some staff in outreach-based services there was a sense that a significant group of members wanted a dedicated building, although fieldwork with members suggested the accessibility of outreach services could also be prized.

For specific subjects, then we could do things like woodwork, bike maintenance, art. Stuff that's resources heavy, or you need a big space, like drama. Skylight staff.

Clients are on the whole quite pro-building. We don't ask them anything about the building. We don't mention it. But they sometimes say if they want a space... Skylight staff.

I'm still nervous about having a building, but I can see...what I want, what I think the ideal solution would be a hybrid service... Skylight staff.

I think a hybrid version where we had some building where we could do maybe like a partnership where we had two rooms or something, or three time...do you know, an established...a base, where we could do things, but still do outreach, but not an entire building...I think hybrid. Skylight staff.

...the idea is to not have a centre, and I think the words we've used is hub, slightly more advanced than this with slightly more facilities, so it will have a room that's capable of delivering IT sessions so the tutor doesn't have to take these laptops, here there and everywhere... But the intention I don't think is ever to actually do an extensive amount of training there, it's still to do the majority outreach, but as the coaching team and the number of one-to-one's increases, to have slightly more meeting rooms. Skylight staff.

They're talking as well about hybrid centres, which are a mixture of outreach and centre, and I think that's a good idea, because I think we do need our own space to call our own and to have our own ethos and brand and everything, and I really think that's important in communities to do that. I think just pure outreach is tricky. I think to mix them both together would be the best approach for the organisation to do that, and the most effective as well. Skylight staff.

In Birmingham, Merseyside and Newcastle, movements towards this hybrid form of Skylight were underway. The changes were not very large, but Newcastle is starting to develop outreach, and both Birmingham and Merseyside are moving towards having hub-like structures, although most service delivery will continue to be outreach-based.

Skylight staff also suggested further innovations that they thought might enhance effectiveness. In two outreach-based Skylights the following two suggestions were made by staff: Develop and run a mobile coffee stall, using a social enterprise and

training approach along the same lines as the Skylight Cafés and consider providing a classroom by using a converted bus, taking IT lessons or more equipment intensive arts-based activities (for example) to members at different sites.

Skylight Members' Views Expressed in Feedback Forms

Crisis has designed an array of self-completion forms which members can opt to use to anonymously provide feedback on Skylight services.¹⁵⁴ The level of detail collected through these feedback forms prohibits their entire contents being discussed in this report, but it is possible to give an overview of the feedback received. Note that the design of the feedback forms altered during the course of 2013, changing the phrasing of some questions and adding some additional questions.

Classes, Arts-Based, Support and Feedback Groups

The questions asked in the feedback forms included the following (positive) statements that members were asked to agree or disagree¹⁵⁵ with:

- I want to continue taking part in Crisis activities
- I want to do volunteering (outside of Crisis)
- I want to find a job/find a job
- I want to go onto further education/college
- Improved communication skills

¹⁵⁴ The feedback forms were a self-selecting sample of members who chose to provide feedback and for that reason may not have been representative of members as a whole. As noted in relation to administrative data shared by Crisis, the feedback data were not designed, collected or validated by the University. As the data were already anonymous, they were shared directly with the University.

¹⁵⁵ In the first feedback form, members could opt between strongly agree, agree, not applicable, disagree and strongly agree. In the subsequent feedback form, members were asked to if they agreed by using the terms 'yes' and 'yes, a lot' and 'yes, very helpful', with more negative responses covered by 'yes, a little', 'no', 'not much' and 'not at all'. The ways in which questions were asked also sometimes changed, with more direct and simple statements being used in the second feedback form. The University provided some advice on the redesign of the feedback form, but was as noted, not involved in the process of data collection or validation.

- Improved time management skills
- Increased confidence and self esteem
- Increased motivation
- Increased trust in other people
- [Increased wish to] Meet people
- [Increased wish to] Widen my horizons
- Have you benefited from meeting other people?
- Have you found your Skylight course useful?
- Have your relationships with other people improved?
- I have learnt new skills from this course
- I would recommend the course to others in a similar situation/Friend
- The resources and course materials were suitable
- The room was suitable for the course
- The teaching was clear
- The tutor was helpful and supportive
- There was sufficient information about the course
- This course has helped me towards achieving my long term goals

Table 4.1 summarises the extent to which

Table 4.1: Positive and Negative Statements Made in Feedback about Classes, Arts-Based, Support and Feedback Groups, Summary for 2012 and 2013.

Courses	2012		2013	
	Negative statements	Positive statements	Negative statements	Positive statements
Basic Skills	3%	97%	9%	91%
Creative and Visual Arts	5%	95%	12%	88%
Employability	5%	95%	11%	89%
Health & Well Being	5%	95%	12%	88%
Member Involvement	4%	96%	5%	95%
Men only	2%	98%	11%	89%
Mental Health	6%	94%	8%	92%
Performing Arts	4%	96%	11%	89%
Personal Development	5%	95%	18%	82%
Vocational	5%	95%	16%	84%
Women Only	2%	98%	11%	89%
All	4%	96%	11%	89%

Source: Crisis administrative data.

feedback about classes, arts-based, support and feedback groups was positive in 2012 and 2013. For the purposes of this table, positive statements were defined as 'yes', 'yes, a lot', 'yes, very helpful', 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. Less affirmative statements, such as 'yes, a little' and any level of negative response were defined as not positive. The percentages in Table 5.1 are based on *statements*, i.e. the total number of positive and more negative statements made by members. For example, the 97% of 'positive statements' made about basic skills courses refers to the total number of times members gave a positive response to the different questions asked about a basic skills course.

It is evident from Table 5.1 that feedback from members collected by Crisis on classes, arts-based, support and feedback groups was overwhelmingly positive. There was a small decline in satisfaction levels during 2013, which may reflect the modifications to how questions were asked when the feedback form was redesigned. However, in 2012 and 2013 either more than, or close to, nine out of ten statements made by members were positive. These results were in line with the results of the first round of cohort interviews and with the results of the focus groups.

Edinburgh was not a fully active service in 2012, but in the other Skylights positive statements about these activities and services outweighed less positive ones by a ratio of nine to one.¹⁵⁶ Levels continued to be effectively uniform between the Skylights during 2013. In most instances, the Skylights saw nine positive statements about classes, arts-based, support and feedback groups for every less positive one.¹⁵⁷

Feedback on other services was more restricted, focusing on specific services and

specific services. However, available data were similarly positive about employment services, progression services, Smartskills tutors and housing coaches.

While this feedback was provided by a self-selecting group, the results of this Crisis's own feedback were consistent with the findings from interviews and focus groups with members. The people using Skylights often had very positive image of Skylight services.

¹⁵⁶ Positive statements: 96% Birmingham; 96% London; 97% Merseyside; 95% Newcastle, 96% Oxford.

¹⁵⁷ Edinburgh had the lowest rate of positive responses, but this was still 83% (17% less positive). Rates elsewhere were either 89% or 90% positive.

5. Interim Results

Introduction

This first interim report only marks the initial phase in an ongoing evaluation that will continue to deliver research findings through the course of 2014 and 2015. As noted in Chapter 1, the core of the ongoing evaluation will be the tracking of the social and economic integration of the 135 member cohort, exploring the changes in their lives and recording the role that Skylights have played in positively transforming the position of their members. This initial report has set a benchmark, a point of departure against which the changing situation of the 135 member cohort and any broader changes to the Skylights, their members, or the contexts in which they are working can be documented and assessed.

Emerging Results

Six main findings can be drawn from this first interim report of the ongoing evaluation of Crisis Skylight:

- Crisis Skylight represents a major innovation in service provision focusing on the social integration of homeless people.
- Crisis Skylight offers a range of services that many homeless people want, evidenced by their willingness to engage with Skylights and their high levels of enthusiasm about the Skylight services they are using. Other homelessness service providers regard Skylight as filling a significant gap in existing service provision.
- Skylight possesses strategic coherence and has a clear set of goals. There are clear indications that Skylight delivers extensive and tangible outcomes in education, training and paid work. Skylight services are often reported to be enhancing the self-confidence, social supports and well-being of Skylight members.
- This evaluation has generated evidence that many homeless people want paid work, access to education, training and support with job searching that will help them secure paid work, help with addressing their support needs, structured and meaningful activity in their lives and to be a part of mainstream UK society. Skylight was perceived by many of the homeless people using it, the staff and representatives of external agencies as means by which reconnection with ordinary life could realistically be pursued.
- Access to suitable, adequate, affordable housing with a reasonable degree of security of tenure remains an essential part of what it means to be socially and economically integrated in UK society. Skylight's role in promoting economic integration, access to social supports and promoting health and well-being will always need to be combined with adequate welfare safety nets, preventative and housing-led service interventions, including the housing related support directly provided by Skylights themselves, to bring a lasting end to homelessness.
- There may be scope to consider the development of hybrid models of Skylight that combine and expand upon the strengths of both the building-based and outreach models.

Skylight is, on the evidence available at the time of writing, a significant innovation that is achieving major successes. These successes are relative, the members of Skylight in 2012 and 2013 were still disproportionately in positions where they were not socially integrated and the vast majority were not in paid work. Many people who were members of Skylight still had mental health problems, issues with drugs and alcohol, poor physical health, were isolated and lacked social and emotional supports. In addition, of course, a

considerable number of members remained homeless or in precarious living situations. The Skylights were also experiencing attrition, losing what may have been quite large numbers of members after one or two contacts and questions were being raised about how best to deal with people who could only progress to a certain level of social integration after which a Skylight might not be able to help them. Other issues also potentially existed around focus, Newcastle was seemingly less concentrated on currently homeless people than the other Skylights and London was working with large numbers of homeless migrants.

Yet starting from a base in which almost everyone presenting at a Skylight had experience of homelessness or was homeless, was more often than not someone with relatively little formal education, was unemployed and had been for some time and often had support needs such as mental health problems, it is also entirely clear that the Skylights were having a range of significant and positive effects. The Skylights were bolstering self-esteem, securing significant numbers of qualifications, movements into further education and training, building self confidence, helping people into jobs and giving the people who had sometimes little sense that things might move in a positive direction a sense that they had a future.

Both in the UK and globally, service interventions had, until comparatively recently, tended to focus on the assumed need to 'correct' the behaviour of homeless people. As poor choices and support needs had, it was assumed, often placed people in the position of being homeless, meeting support needs and modification of individual behaviour was thought to be at the core of what would make an 'effective service'.

In the field of chronic homelessness, for example, this had meant making people compliant with medical and psychiatric treatment, stopping any use of drugs and alcohol and 'training' them to live independently. As incorrect choices were assumed to have played the central role in the causation of their homelessness, the choices of chronically homeless people were constrained, their opinions were not listened to, and the path they should take was prescribed to them, with a combination of sometimes strict regimes and sanctions being employed to stop them drifting off course.¹⁵⁸

Such services did not always fail and there were clear successes. However, these service models were not effective for the majority of chronically homeless people using them. Chronically homeless people often became 'stuck' in services, unable to meet the criteria required to enable them to move on to their own housing or, in many cases, were evicted or simply left, often because they broke or could not cope with the constrictions and rules governing their behaviour.¹⁵⁹ When innovations, including Housing First in the US and the personalisation agenda in the UK, began to challenge these ideas, it was found, that service models that emphasised respect, tolerance and, above all, ensured chronically homeless people were given choices and control over what happened to them, were far more effective in preventing and reducing chronic homelessness. The global evidence base in favour of personalisation, choice and control for homeless people as the key to effective service interventions is becoming overwhelming and previous sanction-based behavioural modification models are starting to be eclipsed.¹⁶⁰

158 O'Sullivan, E. (2008) 'Pathways through Homelessness: Theoretical and Policy Implications', in: J. Doherty and B. Edgar (Eds.) *'In My Caravan, I Feel Like Superman': Essays in Honour of Henk Meert, 1963–2006*, pp.71–100 (FEANTSA: Brussels); Jones, A. and Pleace, N. (2010) op. cit.; Busch-Geertsema, V. et al (2010) op. cit.

159 Pleace, N. (2008) op. cit.

160 Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) op. cit.

Skylight essentially follows this line of thinking. The Skylights only provide a framework, a general environment in which social and economic integration is supported and encouraged, but in which their own views about the direction they want their lives to take are taken into account. Individual behaviour may change, but it is intended to be a consensual, tolerant process, Skylight members are not forced down a single, narrow pathway. A crucial point raised by this evaluation is that nothing is making homeless people engage with a Skylight. Instead, homeless people are actively deciding to become members of Skylights which, as is made clear to them, are specifically designed to bring them back into the social and economic mainstream. Although it is not the focus of the evaluation, this research raises further questions about the idea that choice is in any sense a causal or contributory factor to homelessness, because so many homeless people are seeking help from Skylights that exist to connect them with education, training, job seeking and paid work. The same homeless people who are still often characterised as deliberately shunning social integration are instead actively seeking it, using Skylight.

When a service is as successful and as universally well regarded as Skylight it is important to remain balanced and cautious about what has been achieved and particularly around understanding what has made those achievements possible. Skylights are relatively resource intensive services, flexible in what they can provide, adaptable and, at the time of writing, to some degree also able to expand. A thinning of resources might generate quite different results, i.e. it may be important to ensure that resource levels are at least maintained and perhaps also consider the need for expanding resources as and when need increases.

Skylights are also not in control of their operating environment. In the last chapter, there was discussion of concerns that constriction and closing of some other homelessness services might increase pressures on the Skylights. Looking forward, there may be major threats to the funding base of the entire homelessness sector in the UK, dependent on the decisions of the next government. There are other potential environmental changes too, for example, Scottish independence could raise serious questions about the future of Skylight Edinburgh. Economic factors are also important. However effective the six Skylights were, or how efficient a new Skylight in another location might be, counteracting the effects of a depressed labour market will be challenging.

Finally, there is the issue of housing accessibility and sustainment. Homelessness is, in itself, a stigmatising condition and can form multiple barriers between someone experiencing homelessness and normal social and economic life. Sustainable, affordable and adequate housing solutions will continue to be needed by the people using Skylight.

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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ISBN 978-1-899257-94-2

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

Homelessness ends here

