

Work&Learning Opportunities

Managing change in education and employment

ACCOMMODATION FOR WORK PHASE 2 – 2015-2020

Year 4 - Summative evaluation

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HEADLINES

Clients

- Clients overwhelmingly positive about their AFW experience
- 135 cases of homelessness prevented so far
- Personal and social skills developed by all
- 97% into employment or training
- 90% have improved tenancy skills
- Many have benefited from access to other BHT services, especially when moving on

AFW Staff

- Strong, experienced and closely-knit team with the skills and expertise critical to the success of the project
- Successful model of client support created
- Excellent retention rates achieved
- Effective ongoing support established
- Economically efficient model developed for Brighton Housing Trust

Networks

- Impactful training and development service created in only 3 years
- Improved support for work and learning across the homeless sector
- Choice Training and Development Coordinator has helped build an effective network of 180 stakeholders
- Quality of training and development provided is greatly valued by staff working in the sector
- Getting Ready for Work events now involve 41 agencies and are highly rated by participants

Funders

- AFW reached their target audience – the single homeless
- On track to meet or exceed all targets
- 84% of 5-year target numbers already achieved
- 5-year target of 75 into training, voluntary work, internships or work placements already exceeded
- 87 residents have gained employment – 87% of 5-year target
- Offers value for money for future funders

INTRODUCTION

This evaluation of phase 2 of Accommodation for Work (AFW) was undertaken by Work & Learning Opportunities (WLO) c.i.c. It was conducted in two stages. The formative review was completed between September and November 2018 and this summative report was researched and written between February and July 2019. It covers the first four years of a five-year funding period and fulfils the undertaking given to the funders, the Big Lottery Fund (now the National Lottery Community Fund), to undertake an external evaluation of the project. These two reports follow on from an internal review of the first phase of funding completed in 2014.

WLO would like to thank the staff of the Brighton Housing Trust involved in Accommodation for Work and clients, past and present, for their contribution to this report. Their willingness to share their experience and understanding has been critical in enabling the evaluators to fully appreciate the impact of the project to date.

There are a number of different ways of judging the success of a project like Accommodation for Work. This evaluation has chosen to look at it from four perspectives. The first is that of AFW residents, who they are and their experience before, during and after their stay at AFW. The second, and often undervalued contribution, comes from the staff engaged in designing and delivering the services. Their views are important to set alongside those of clients and give a sense of how the 10-year project has evolved and changed. They provide continuity and the perspective of a small team that works closely together. Thirdly, we explore the extent to which a project like this relates to other homeless services and those supporting work and learning as this provides a measure of its reach and influence. Stakeholder engagement was an explicit part of phase 2 of the funding and it is appropriate to consider this as a measure in its own right. Finally, it is measured from the perspective of current and future funders who want to be sure that the investment they have made has delivered what it promised when the funding was agreed. This approach looks at the original objectives and reviews the progress that has been made towards meeting quantitative targets.

What follows, therefore, moves from the background of the project and the model of support, through the more qualitative data gathered from in depth interviews with current residents, past residents, AFW staff and other local agencies and organisations and finally to the quantitative data and the achievement of the formal objectives agreed with funders. It concludes by assessing where next for AFW and exploring the options for future funding.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology combined both quantitative and qualitative measures. AFW systematically collects data on residents and their progress from the time they join until they leave the project. This was analysed in the Formative Review and updated for this report. Both AFW and Choice Training and Development collect feedback on the service they offer. This is not complete because the project has a further year to run, but is of sufficient scale and depth for it to provide the basis for assessing the impact of different aspects of the service. In addition, annual reports are provided to the funders and BHT Board that review progress against four project outcomes. To provide greater insights, interviews were conducted with 7 AFW/BHT staff, 5 current residents and 6 past residents who have moved on from AFW. The case studies of interviews with residents, past and present, are contained in **appendices 1 and 2** that are attached to the main report. They have been drawn on extensively within the body of the report but do merit reading in their own right.

SECTION 1 - THE PROBLEM AND SCALE OF HOMELESSNESS

1.1 Defining and measuring homelessness

National and local researchers and organisations acknowledge that it is difficult to be accurate about the scale of homelessness. As well as those who are rough sleeping on the street or in temporary accommodation, homelessness includes statutorily homeless households seeking assistance from local authorities and hidden homeless people who are sofa surfing or sleeping rough in locations such as cars, tents, night buses or their workplace. Available statistics do not, of course, accurately reflect the latter which is by its nature hidden, nor rough sleeping on the street which relies on estimates on a single night.

Accommodation for Work (AFW) is a specific localised response to the problem of single homelessness in Brighton. For the general public in Brighton, as elsewhere, homelessness is represented by the sight of people sleeping rough and it is this visibility that drives much of both local and national policy in terms of the provision of hostels, shelters and beds for the night, particularly in times of bad weather. Whilst the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 confers new duties on Local Authorities to relieve homelessness, it can be argued that the provision of more temporary shelters simply reduces the visibility of the problem as people shift between temporary accommodation and masks the true numbers of homeless people. For example, Brighton & Hove's Rough Sleeping Initiative, launched in March 2018 and a response to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, sets out a vision for halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027. As a result of this, the official statistics show that rough sleeping in Brighton and Hove has moved from rising year by year to falling dramatically:

- Autumn 2016 - estimated figures for a single night were 144 – the highest rate per 1,000 of population outside London and the second highest in England
- Autumn 2017 - estimated figures for a single night were 178 – the highest rate per 1,000 of population outside London and the second highest in England
- Autumn 2018 - estimated figures for a single night show this number as having decreased to 64, the tenth highest in England

(Ministry of Housing Rough Sleeping Statistics 2016, 2017, 2018)

The Crisis Homeless Monitor, 2019, uses the term “core homelessness” to encompass the single homeless population, like the Accommodation for Work (AFW) clients described below, often not included in data, who are a mix of rough sleeping, in hostels, shelters and unsuitable temporary accommodation or part of the hidden homeless as described above. Crisis argue that the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has created a discontinuity in more recent official statistics relating to homelessness in England because:

“... more people (particularly single people) will be officially recorded as seeking assistance but initially most will be classified as ‘prevention’ and/or ‘relief’ cases. Only a proportion will in the end be accepted under the main local authority re-housing duty, and it is likely that this number will remain lower than in the past.” (Crisis Homeless Report Monitor, 2019, pXI).

What will become clear from this report is that the individual experience of single homelessness may incorporate all the dimensions within a core definition or just one aspect of it. For example, 22% of the residents of AFW had some experience of living on the streets albeit for a limited period of time.

Locally, homelessness takes place within a context where affordability of accommodation is a significant factor with Brighton & Hove having one of the highest average house prices outside London, high rent costs in the private rented sector and a relatively small social housing stock. It is a place of contrast, with areas of extreme

affluence and areas of deprivation where residents experience significant inequality compared to the rest of the city in terms of access to suitable housing, employment and health care. In addition, with two universities in the city, those seeking both work and single occupancy accommodation are in competition with the high student population. This has been a long-term issue for the city.

It also operates within the context of national changes to the benefits system and these have been really significant in phase 2 of AFW. The introduction of Universal Credit (UC) has created difficulties for individuals undertaking temporary work and makes some hostel providers reluctant to encourage people to work because of concerns about the complexity of the system.

SAMPLE