Three years of transition

The Homelessness Transition Fund
2011 to 2014
Evaluation summary
Over three years from 2011, Homelessness Transition Fund administered four rounds of grants plus the Future Ready Fund, awarding £20 million to 175 projects.

**Main grants**

Homelessness Transition Fund awarded £18.7m in main grants to 115 projects. In turn, those projects helped 63,826 people, exceeding targets by 4%.

**Future Ready Fund grants**

The Fund awarded £1.3m in Future Ready Fund grants to 60 projects. 52 of those projects raised an additional £3.8m as a result of this support. 88% reported increased sustainability as a result of the grant.
About the Homelessness Transition Fund

The Homelessness Transition Fund was administered by Homeless Link and ran for three years between 2011 and 2014.

Established as part of the national rough sleeping strategy, Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide, it provided £20 million from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to local homelessness projects across England.

The fund was designed to:
- Help deliver an end to rough sleeping by rolling out the No Second Night Out principles and other innovations.
- Support a smooth transition for existing services to sustainable funding arrangements.
- Support strategically critical single homelessness services, in particular those working with people who sleep rough and in areas where there is evidence of rising rough sleeping.

Two funding streams

There were two elements to the fund, the main programme and the Future Ready Fund.

The main programme funded projects to roll out No Second Night Out (NSNO) principles and develop other innovations to end rough sleeping.

The Future Ready Fund programme aimed to protect and enhance essential and strategically critical single homelessness services and support them in the transition to becoming sustainable, through supporting business development activities.
The main programme

The five No Second Night Out principles,¹ that the fund aimed to help roll out, were:

- People new to the streets should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle
- Members of the public should be able to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough
- People should be helped to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed and they can receive advice on their options
- They should be able to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed
- If people have come from another area or country and find themselves sleeping rough, the aim should be to reconnect them back to their local community unless there is a good reason why they cannot return. There, they will be able to access housing and recovery services, and have support from family and friends.

The four outcomes of funded projects reflect those principles:
1. No Second Night Out: supporting people new to the streets
2. No one should live on the streets
3. No one should return to the streets once helped
4. No one should arrive on the streets.

¹ Homeless Link 2014 No second night out across England
Health and mental health can deteriorate rapidly when someone starts to sleep rough.

It is essential that support can be offered immediately, before the problems that led to them sleeping on the streets in the first place are compounded with issues caused by rough sleeping itself.

Many of the projects we funded introduced new approaches to ensure interventions could be made as quickly as possible. These included:

- Offering immediate access to emergency accommodation via an assessment hub, including sit-up provision where necessary
- Enabling outreach teams to play a role in assertively identifying and supporting people new to sleeping rough
- Developing effective referral pathways between different organisations and services
- Engaging with and enabling the public to identify and refer people sleeping rough, for example through referral phone lines
- Offering specialist support for young people newly-arriving on the streets, in particular volunteer host based Nightstop projects
- Creating specialist services to deal with complex issues faced by migrants who have ended up sleeping rough.
No one should **live on the streets**

**While solutions can often be found quickly for someone new to the streets, working with people who have slept rough for many months or years is a specialist task with no quick fix.**

We funded many projects designed to address the multiple complex issues faced by people who have slept rough for more than six months. We supported services across England to develop targeted responses for this group, with a range of innovative approaches, including:

- The development of strong and proactive local partnerships, bringing together the skills of multiple agencies necessary to support people who have slept rough long term
- Providing a secure ‘point of origin to destination’ service in cases where reconnection is appropriate
- Enabling assertive outreach activity, to build trust and confidence with clients over time
- Building partnerships to contribute time and resources to collect and share data and intelligence about local rough sleeping
- Offering different housing models depending on individuals’ needs, from Housing First to those that prioritised stabilising health and behaviour before access to housing
- Offering personalised budgets to enable clients to receive the service they needed while building dignity, self-esteem, and control
- Recruiting people with personal experience of homelessness as mentors to people currently sleeping rough – an approach that was found to improve the willingness to engage among those living long term on the streets
- Supporting migrants with no recourse to public funds through outreach work in partnership with immigration agencies. Individuals were offered immigration advice and a full needs and referral assessment, including health needs and immigration status, and access to emergency accommodation while resolving their immigration status.
No one should return to the streets once helped

A major issue in supporting anyone who has slept rough is to ensure that they get the ongoing support necessary to stay off the streets for good.

Without that support, many people are often drawn back to the street lifestyle, while others slip through the same gaps in provision should have prevented them sleeping rough in the first place.

We supported services to develop support for people that went far beyond securing accommodation, addressing multiple concerns from health and housing to skills and education. They included:

- The creation of continuous, open-ended support services
- Supporting people through a tailored, intensive and personalised approach, that addresses individual needs
- Integrating of health and medical support with other forms of housing and social support
- Creating opportunities for people to volunteer, helping them to build confidence and experience, and enabling them to ‘give something back’
- Offering life skills, education, training and employment opportunities
- Engaging with private rented sector landlords, and offering ongoing support to those rehoused in the private rented sector
- Designing effective, secure reconnections procedures, both within the UK and abroad.
No one should **arrive on the streets**

**Key to ending rough sleeping are initiatives to prevent it before it happens.**

Key to ending rough sleeping are initiatives to prevent it before it happens. We need to identify the points at which people could be supported by services before they ended up on the streets, or get the information they need so that when crises occur they are dealt with differently.

We supported projects that proactively engaged with people at crucial points to reduce the risk of sleeping rough. This included:

- Working in schools and colleges to de-romanticise homelessness, and prepare young people for the realities of finding accommodation. This was particularly effective when delivered by young people who had themselves experienced homelessness.
- Providing rapid and easy access to advice, assistance and information through day centres and other daytime advice hubs.
- Targeting services at young people, including Nightstops and programmes around money and tenancy management.
- Working in and with prisons and hospitals, to ensure that when people leave those institutions they have suitable accommodation to move into, and are supported to retain it.
- Developing outreach approaches to those in insecure accommodation, such as outhouses, supporting them to access more settled accommodation before they become street homeless.
The HTF main programme successfully funded a range of projects working across its four outcome areas.

Assessments from funded projects demonstrate that in a number of project areas rough sleeping has significantly reduced, sometimes to zero. Other projects reported stabilising the overall numbers of people sleeping rough, or slowed the rate of increase to below the national rate. This was seen to be a positive outcome within a context of rising rough sleeping in England (levels of rough sleeping have risen by 26% between 2011 and 2014).²

Across the programme as a whole:

- 13,904 people were supported after spending only one night on the streets.
- 15,088 people who had been sleeping rough for between two nights and six months were engaged in work to help them move off the streets.
- 5,774 people who had been sleeping rough long-term (more than 6 months on the street) engaged with work to help them move off the streets.
- 29,060 people who were at risk of homelessness received interventions to help prevent them sleeping rough.
- 4,983 people were recorded as having returned to the streets during the funding period.

Challenges faced by main programme funded projects

Funded projects identified a range of challenges they faced and areas that need to be addressed locally for projects and partnerships to be successful long term.

The funded projects described a range of challenges, including:

- A lack of emergency and move-on accommodation
- A lack of specialist support services and accommodation for people with multiple and complex needs
- Challenges engaging partners, including a lack of buy-in or support from some other agencies or local authorities
- Increasing numbers of people sleeping rough placing high demand on services
- Supporting migrants and people with no recourse to public funds
- Securing funding to continue needed work after the end of the Homelessness Transition Fund programme.

A number of projects expressed concern at the impact that further expected cuts to local authority budgets, and ongoing changes to social security, would have on people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
The Future Ready Fund programme aimed to protect and enhance essential and strategically critical single homelessness services and support them in the transition to becoming sustainable, through supporting business development activities.

We successfully supported single homelessness services to become more sustainable and adaptable, and to increase their influence and impact. Of the services responding to the evaluation survey:

- **88% reported increased sustainability as a result of their HTF funding.**
- **67% reported increased influence and impact.**
- **63% reported increased adaptability.**
- **75% reported improved financial resilience, although 25% reported that funding had not helped them to secure additional funding.**

We funded a broad range of activities, tailored to the needs of each particular organisation. The main activities the grant was used for were:

- **Business planning and organisational review:** including strategic development, development of a commercial arm, and improvements in Board capability.
- **Data gathering, IT enhancements and data analysis:** development of data collection-systems was described as leading to reduced paperwork making it possible to spend more time with clients, stronger partnerships and a stronger evidence-base for funders.
- **Leadership and staff training:** including the appointment of new staff and training for existing staff, enabling service development.
- **Fund raising:** including development of fundraising models and new relationships with funders.

“Within a 12 month period the HTF grant has enabled us to diversify our income sources so that we are less reliant on the public sector. We now source 25% of our income from new private and charitable sector sources.”

West Midlands project
The Homelessness Transition Fund programme successfully funded a range of projects working across its four outcome areas, with over 60,000 people being supported by the programme.

The Future Ready Fund helped the most of the homelessness projects it supported to become more sustainable and adaptable, and to have more influence and impact.

However, rough sleeping is increasing. Between 2011, when the Homelessness Transition Fund programme commenced, and 2014, the number of people sleeping rough in England increased by 26%. In London, between 2013 and 2014, the number of people sleeping rough increased by 37%.

Meanwhile, rental and house prices have become increasingly unaffordable for many; many people are struggling with insecure and low-paid employment; ongoing changes to social security are expected by many to adversely affect people experiencing or at risk of homelessness; and economic austerity continues, with substantial further cuts to local authority and service budgets planned.

Within this context of increasing need and decreasing resources, it is vital that homelessness services continue to receive funding following the end of the Homelessness Transition Fund programme.
1. **Build and promote partnerships**

Partnerships have been central to the delivery of the funded projects, with all projects working closely with at least one other agency.

However, some projects and local authorities reported that forming and developing partnerships could be difficult.

- Homelessness agencies should work in partnership with agencies across all relevant sectors, including physical and mental health, social care and criminal justice services, sharing data and multi-agency assessment and referral processes developed where appropriate.
- Homeless Link should continue to promote partnership working at appropriate levels working with national representative bodies cross sector and local government.
- Systemic barriers to partnership working should be tackled through national policy and guidance.

2. **Improve information collection and sharing**

Both main and Future Ready Fund programme projects reported the benefits of improved information collection, analysis and sharing.

- Practitioners should use robust data collection and monitoring systems and develop skills in data interpretation and presentation to demonstrate need and impact.
- Homelessness agencies should be supported and resourced by funders, commissioners and Homeless Link to demonstrate the scale, nature and impact of their work.
- Commissioners should work across related sectors to share information and align commissioning cycles and reporting requirements.

3. **Provide specialist support to people with multiple and complex needs**

Many funded projects provided support to people with multiple and complex needs, and they reported that intensive resources were often needed to achieve and sustain successful outcomes.

Over half of projects surveyed saw the absence of specialist services for those with multiple and complex needs as an issue.

- Policy and commissioning across relevant areas should be integrated to ensure that people with multiple and complex needs receive appropriate support.
- Specialist support and accommodation services for people with multiple and complex needs should be provided where appropriate.
- Adequate resources should be made available both nationally and locally so that intensive support and integrated services can be delivered effectively to those who need them.
4. Provide **support to migrants** who become homeless

Over half of projects worked specifically with migrants who sleep rough.

Some projects developed innovative methods of work, which can usefully be incorporated into homelessness practice generally.

- That homelessness agencies record and evidence the prevalence of homelessness within migrant communities and develop access to the resources required to effectively support homeless migrants.
- Commissioners should assess local need for advice and support for homeless migrants, and develop a local response to this.
- That Homeless Link continues to develop the Strategic Alliance on Migrant Destitution and provides support for members working with migrants who sleep rough.

5. Protect and enhance resources for homelessness services

Three quarters of projects funded by the main programme either achieved continuation funding or were mainstreamed within other services.

However, some of these had only achieved funding for parts of their project or for relatively short durations, and 11% of projects reported that they were closing.

- The homelessness sector should work together to evidence the value of its work, research innovative approaches to securing funding, and share learning to strengthen the sector.
- That Homeless Link continues to advocate for resources that focus on preventing and ending rough sleeping and homelessness.
- The Government should ensure that resources devoted to rough sleeping, single homelessness and the prevention of homelessness are focussed on ending rough sleeping and homelessness.