

HELP THROUGH CRISIS TOOLKIT

MESSAGES AND TACTICS FOR INFLUENCING

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About the Help through Crisis programme

Help through Crisis is a £33 million National Lottery funded programme set up by the Big Lottery Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. It supports 69 partnerships across England which help people who are experiencing or at risk of hardship crisis to overcome the difficulties they are facing to plan for their futures. The partnerships receiving National Lottery funding through the Help through Crisis programme bring together small voluntary groups and established charities to work together locally. Working together, they offer people advice, advocacy and support which matches their personal circumstances. The aim is to look at the issues people face, and the underlying causes, from their basic needs, to their physical and mental health, to skills and employment. People are supported to draw on their personal experiences to build on their skills and strengths so they are ready to seize the opportunities and challenges ahead.

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Introduction

Help through Crisis (HtC) partnerships are already working collaboratively with large and small organisations or have aspirations to do so in the future. This includes working with statutory services to improve the local services they provide (e.g. local authorities, JobCentre Plus, health providers), and collaborating with other voluntary sector organisations to capture data about what's happening in a region.

Almost one hundred people involved in running HtC projects attended regional workshops across England in January 2018. In the afternoon, discussions led by Hopkins Van Mil focused on experiences of collaborative working, including what has worked and what hasn't. This toolkit summarises the key messages and tactics shared and it has been designed to support you to take these messages forward in each region.

We'd love to hear from if you have any ideas for this toolkit or other resources you'd like to see. You can get in touch at: HelpThroughCrisis@ipsos.com

Help through Crisis support team

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DECIDING ON YOUR MESSAGE

Deciding (and agreeing) on the right message is often the hardest part in working with other organisations to bring about local change. The right approach will vary depending on who you are speaking too. However, partnerships are already using four common messages to speak to local services - emphasising their expertise and illustrating what they can do to help.

WHAT	"We know what's really going on with the people you are responsible for"
HOW	"We know how to support people in crisis – and we can prove it"
HOW	"We can help you identify small changes to make big improvements"
WHY	"We can help you do the things you don't have resources to do"



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DECIDING YOUR MESSAGE

WHAT

"We know what's really going on with the people you are responsible for"

Here, the focus is on building messages that illustrate your expertise by tapping into what you and the people you work with know (about a local area, a group, a service) to inform services and make the case for change. For example, providing intelligence to local authorities about invisible homelessness, telling housing providers about environmental health issues, or informing GPs that sick notes and letters are too expensive for some so practices should try to avoid charging for letters. You are building your credibility as an organisation to listen to and ensuring knowledge from the lived experience of beneficiaries is shared widely.

HOW

"We know how to support people in crisis – and we can prove it"

Here, you are demonstrating how support can be provided or making suggestions for better or new ways of doing so, based on real evidence from HtC projects and the lived experience of beneficiaries. This could help with potential funders, illustrating how your work has an impact, as well as organisations you might want to partner with.

Examples include:

"Showing that small system changes make a big difference to HtC beneficiaries i.e. monthly payments, improved assessment process."

"[Demonstrating] what works best to reduce the support required for those in crisis need."

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DECIDING YOUR MESSAGE

HOW

"We can help you identify small changes to make big improvements"

Similar to the message on the previous slide, this is about communicating how an organisation can make changes that would lead to significant improvements for individuals and their own services. The importance of having a credible, evidence-based voice may be crucial here, particularly if the message means changing how an organisation works. It could include, demonstrating how short term investment can lead to long term savings by showing how prevention is cheaper than crisis response or the cost savings to clinical commissioners of freeing up beds.

WHY

"We can help you do the things you don't have resources to do"

This final message focuses on why an organisation should collaborate with you, emphasising the value of creating a positive environment and the benefits that working together can bring.

For example, providing access to beneficiary groups and being a service or resource that organisations can signpost to (e.g. via social prescribing).

"HtC is a driver to change: we are an asset, we work with 'hard to reach' groups, we can access different funding streams & volunteers."

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AGREEING WHICH TACTICS TO USE

The right mix of tactics will depend on the message and the audience, but the tips below are a useful starting point for planning an approach. They break down into three key themes:

- 1 Forming strong relationships** with local organisations, influencers and referral agencies.
- 2 Using evidence to tell a story** through evidence of hard outcomes (including social return on investment), case studies and collating data from across the HtC programme.
- 3 Adapting communications to the audience** by taking a flexible approach to the platform being used, repeating messages and involving beneficiaries.

1. FORMING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS



Coalition building with local organisations and influencers including through local forums , sharing your vision and talking to people about the bigger picture to get them involved.

Also – share your vision, talk to people about the bigger picture to get them involved.



“Build relationships with local councillors and MPs, invite them to community forums/events.”



“Reduce the number of meetings - negotiate the level of engagement to ensure that the neighbourhood business models can work. Work in consortia.”

There was also a recognition that some areas **require national conversations and collaboration.**



“Use MPs as ultimately it’s a national policy issue.”



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1. FORMING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Building relationships with referral agencies and other public services, including by providing training and job shadowing opportunities. This could help to share knowledge across frontline services and cut through some of the challenges partnerships face in working with organisations like DWP and local Job Centres.

"Invite DWP workers to come into the service/ project every week so that they meet service users and see for themselves what we do/ what is needed"

"Job shadowing to enable DWP to gain understanding on HTC benefits/ impact"

"Build networks and embed mechanisms such as training and job shadowing"

"Start from a positive offer or solutions to draw DWP staff in and engage them. Demonstrate good practice and the benefits for everyone in delivering through best practice"

"Form a reciprocal relationship where DWP is invited to observe and/ or to attend LA events (if the content is appropriate), working more closely with Job Centre Plus"

"Invite LA reps to our projects"

"Create a challenge to referrals to ensure that they understand how we work"

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1. FORMING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS



GP surgeries and health settings were also regarded as a sector where closer working relationships, **including co-location**, could have a positive effect. Partnership working with housing providers was also seen as important, with suggestions including hosting community forums and partnership work in strategic planning.

“HTC presence within a GP practice would be mutually beneficial”

“Health champions for signposting: speak to/train GP receptionists, but go in at different levels within the practice too with persuasive communication messages”

“If we get one GP surgery to work with others they can then share with others the benefits of doing so backed up with case studies/ evidence of the impact of our work”

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2. USING EVIDENCE TO TELL YOUR STORY

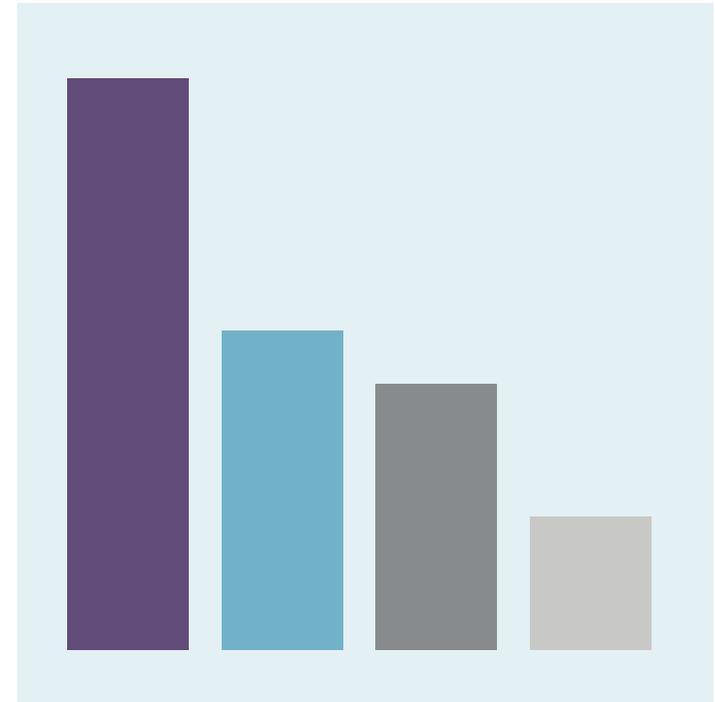
Using data to evidence the impact of work including demonstrating the outcomes that have been achieved and the potential money saved by a project. This can (and should where possible) include beneficiary voices as well as quantitative data from evaluation activities capturing outcomes measures as well as outputs.

"Gather evidence through monitoring and evaluation, particularly lived experience stories"

"Ensure beneficiaries voice is heard directly – case studies + SROI"

"Greater understanding of beneficiaries, building relationships and making the business case for a project clear"

"Need a better understanding of our impact, for the learning from HTC to be seen and heard"



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2. USING EVIDENCE TO TELL YOUR STORY

In particular, **case studies and personal stories** are an effective way of engaging with decision makers.



"Use real people case studies showing a real issue that is being/ has been worked through. Case studies could be used to give hardship awareness training to DWP staff"

"We're experts working with people in crisis: use of case studies"

"Collate evidence/ stories and share at appropriate moment in time"

Evidence and learning from across the HtC programme could be collated and shared to maximise the evidence available across the programme.

"What has worked well across HTC nationally"

"Pull together the learning from 60 umbrella organisations, i.e. Citizens Advice, Age UK, Refugee Council, Advice UK, Women's Aid"

"Some HTC partnerships have already built excellent relationships with DWP which others could learn from"

"Regional newsletter celebrating what works well for different user groups"



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3. ADAPTING COMMUNICATIONS TO THE AUDIENCE

Taking a flexible approach to communications by using a variety of different approaches and platforms was seen as a key tactic. This includes working with and supporting beneficiaries to be involved in communicating messages to decision makers and collaborating with the Big Lottery Fund and HTC partners.

“Repeat messaging so that they hear when they are ready to engage”

“Identify media lead in each HTC partnership”

“Regular press releases/ invite press to project events & develop relationships: offer local angle on national issues (don't forget local radio)”

“Social media campaign, tag key local media in tweets, FB posts etc”

“Letter writing campaign (involve beneficiaries and send to editors, MPs)”

“Broker regular input with local newspaper i.e. offer a weekly advice column”

“Support service users to attend local council & MP surgeries”

“Demonstrate how people with lived experience of crisis can help work towards solutions: publicise success stories about beneficiary involvement”

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TAKING THIS FORWARD

We hope this toolkit helps you to think about the tactics you can use to get key messages across. In particular, we'd encourage you to reflect on the following questions:

- What tactics are you already using?
- What relationships do you need to build locally? What about regionally or nationally?
- Are you collecting the right evidence to communicate effectively?
- Are you using the data you have in the right way?
- How can the Help through Crisis programme support you in getting key messages across?

And let us know if we can help. We're planning future regional and national events, as well as further resources and toolkits so get in touch if you have ideas on what would be valuable to your partnership.

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TAKING THIS FORWARD

The Big Lottery Fund publicity team are also here to support you to tell your part in the Help through Crisis story. They have developed some guidance on Telling the story of Help through Crisis that sets out the Fund's key messages for the programme and how you can work with them to maximise your impact whether you are talking to the media, using social media or hosting events. You can also get in touch with the team at:

publicityteam@biglotteryfund.org.uk

For more guidance on publicity, visit: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/welcome



Telling the story of Help Through Crisis

We believe passionately in Help Through Crisis and the role of organisations such as your own in helping to support and empower people experiencing or at risk of experiencing hardship crisis. It is important that the funding invested in this programme is recognised as being a substantial investment only made possible by National Lottery players.

As part of your contract with the Big Lottery Fund (the Fund) you should:

- Acknowledge Big Lottery Fund's role in the initiative
- Acknowledge National Lottery funding as making the initiative possible
- Liaise and seek permissions from the programme team or communications team at the Big Lottery Fund for all engagement activity related to the initiative.

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