

REACHING OUT

Insights on outreach and referrals from Help through Crisis

June 2019

Delivered by



About the Help through Crisis programme

Help through Crisis (HtC) is a £33 million National Lottery funded programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund (The Fund), the largest funder of community activity in the UK. HtC 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 HtC 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.

About the Learning, Evaluation and Support team

The HtC learning, evaluation and support (LSE) team is a consortium of organisations commissioned by The National Lottery Community Fund to help build understanding and capture learning from the HtC programme. The team is made up of people from Ipsos MORI (Lead Contractor), NEF Consulting, Revolving Doors Agency and Hopkins Van Mill. The role of the consortium is to help the 69 partnerships involved in the programme:

- Empowering them to evaluate and measure their impact, and capture learning about what works in tackling hardship crisis.
- Supporting their co-production activities, ensuring the people they support have a voice in shaping local services.
- Identifying good practice and disseminating learning to build the evidence base and help partnerships to replicate or scale up approaches from elsewhere.

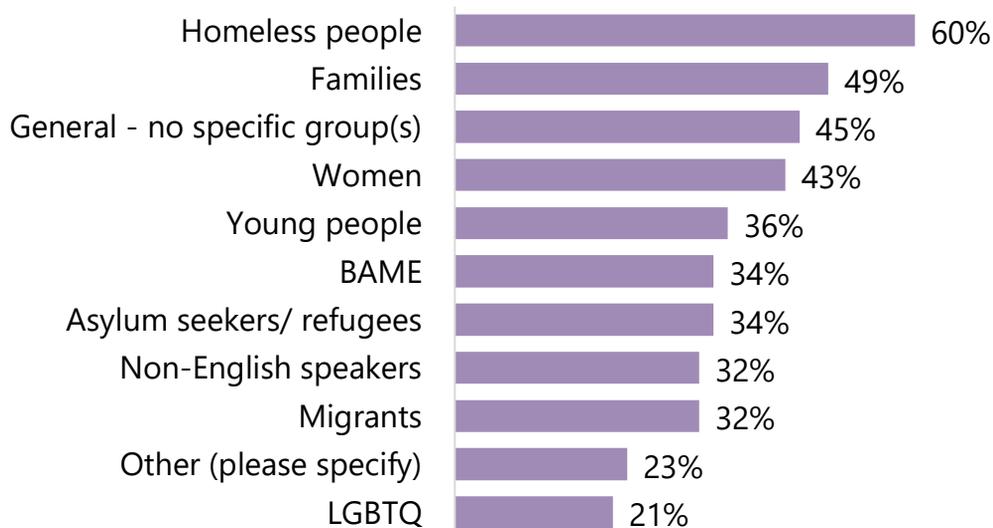
INTRODUCTION

The LSE team visited 19 HtC partnerships between October 2018 and April 2019. We explored lots of different topics during these case study visits as described in the [Emerging Findings](#) learning paper. One of the key themes which stood out was outreach and referral processes. These are explored further here.

Across the HtC programme, partnerships are working with many types of service users, who often have complex needs. In a survey last year, 72% of partnerships reported working with multiple types of service user. High levels of demand means that partnerships do not always have the capacity to engage in outreach work and can feel overwhelmed. There are also concerns about bringing more people into a service without having the time and resources to fully support them.

However, understanding local needs and making the most of referrals are important steps for ensuring partnerships reach the people their service was designed for. Outreach can help projects to reach those with needs that match the crisis support being offered – this does not need to involve supporting greater numbers of people. Likewise, projects will be more likely to provide effective support to the individuals who the service was designed for.

Q. Which of the following best describe the types of people you and your partners mostly work with as part of the HtC programme?



72%
are supporting
multiple types of
service user

Source: [Partnership Mapping Tool](#), 2018, Base: 53

This paper has been written for partnerships funded through the HtC programme. The aim is to summarise findings from the case study visits around outreach activities and referral processes. The paper hopes to provide suggestions and examples of how partnerships within the programme are reaching out to people and getting the most out of referrals.

Throughout the paper there are prompt questions which partnerships can use to reflect on their work. These questions are offered at the end of each theme in the paper.

The case study visits highlighted the importance of being able to reach people that projects find harder to engage.



The people that really need the help, that don't engage with us, how do we get those people onboard? The people that really, really need the help? They get the referral, they're given our phone number, sometimes the only way to get them here is to have a support worker physically come into the office with them. How do we get those people?"

Project team member

helpthroughcrisis@ipsos.com



We hope this learning paper provides some ideas for how to reach out to people needing crisis support in your area. We'd love to hear from you to find out more about how your partnership is approaching the themes in this paper or if you have suggestions for themes the LSE team can explore in the future.

1

UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING IN YOUR CONTEXT

Delivered by



BUILDING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

For outreach activities to be effective, partnerships first need to know where to go to find people who need support. Building knowledge of a local area is therefore important because people facing crisis may not know about a service. Some groups of people may be more likely to be missed. This can result in greater difficulties or more severe crisis situations later down the line. It is worth thinking about **who is “easy to ignore” in your area and identifying ways of reaching them.**

There are lots of different ways of building local knowledge that can help plan appropriate outreach, including:

- Speaking to people who use services to find out where to go
- Talking to local stakeholders and partner organisations to share knowledge
- Looking at monitoring data on who is currently using a service and identifying gaps
- Desk research and online databases that capture national statistics at a ward level (the annex provides a number of useful sources)

Speaking to service users

Citizens Advice Haringey’s beneficiaries shared ad-hoc feedback that they would prefer to receive clothing and information in a discreet location away from the local high street. The project used this information to steer where to position their outreach activities. This helped to map the local area to identify outreach locations which were more appealing to local people who the service was designed for. Adapting the locations has also made people feel more comfortable to open up about their situation and therefore access a greater level of support.

“Clients’ feedback said they would rather receive an invite to a safe, discreet location and as a result we now carry [sessions] out from our office and circulate information in advance.”

Using research about a local area

Newcastle Law Centre conducted research of local areas to see what wider support was being offered. They used this information to plan where to have a presence so the project was based in areas of the city which typically have less support available. They are also present in schools to reach young people and families in need. This approach has helped Newcastle Law Centre to build their reputation in specific local areas while being able to manage demand. In addition, meeting with other local services has built their understanding of who is offered support and helped them to establish new referral pathways.

“It’s targeted, it’s intentional, it’s designed like that. We’re not spreading ourselves to everybody because we know we can’t handle the numbers.”

Q

How could your partnership capture or analyse more data to learn about local needs?

GETTING KNOWN IN AN AREA

Going out to different areas or working through partners can help to **build a reputation with people who might need your service – whether now or in the future**. This is key to receiving self-referrals or reaching people through word of mouth.

While some partnerships may be unable to conduct formal outreach activities, raising awareness of the project is one way to reach more of those most in need. By building this wider awareness with people who are not in crisis, projects can help people to know where to go when they experience problems. Having a strong reputation can also strengthen relationships with local organisations who will be more likely to contact or refer to a project they know something about. **Beneficiaries also emphasised the importance of projects being visible**, such as through posters and flyers.



In magazines, on books, the side of a bus maybe, because you never see anything about mental health on the side of a bus or TV. Maybe they could hand leaflets out. In the market, like on stalls, where you can find leaflets."

Beneficiary

Reaching people through word of mouth

Many of **Mancroft Advice Project's** (MAP) beneficiaries had heard of the service through word of mouth, as the project is well-known among young people in the area. MAP is located in the centre of Norwich so it is easy to access. The service has many advocates, and beneficiaries reported telling their friends about the service. This works well because young people are aware of the service from a young age meaning that if they face a crisis, they have somewhere to turn.

It is important to consider cultural, geographical and language barriers when trying to increase a project's visibility in an area. These barriers can restrict access to services. For example, **Birmingham Rathbone** described cultural differences as a barrier where communities are reluctant to acknowledge learning disabilities. In response, they have tried to have conversations with parents to increase their understanding of disabilities as well as the service, and they run training for other local services. Others, such as **Telford & Wrekin Citizens Advice**, are considering the use of translators to improve access to their service. However, they recognise that involving a third party can impact on what is shared during a session – particularly if a family member or carer is translating.



If we've got their daughter translating for them and that daughter's part of the problem, that person's problem will never be heard. If someone has dementia, having their carer there to interpret their wishes could mean they're not heard."

Project lead

Q

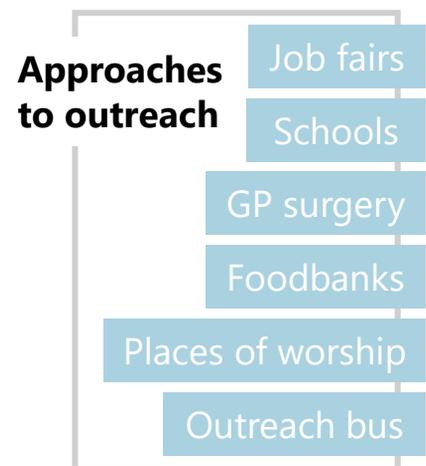
Are your partnership materials accessible to everyone in the community? Could you translate posters into relevant languages or use images?

REACHING PEOPLE THROUGH OTHERS

Outreach activities do not need to just focus on building the reputation of a project so more people will seek out your service when they need it. Instead, the aim can be to **reach those who a project was designed to support at the right time, in a more targeted way.** This has the potential to reduce demand on a service – for example if someone is reached at an earlier point in time before a crisis has developed further.

However, we know that proactively reaching out to people or learning more about a local area takes time. In turn, this can reduce time spent on delivering direct support for individuals. To help tackle this challenge, some partnerships are working with other local organisations to extend their network or using volunteers to reach out to people beyond regular service users. **This can help to provide access to places that a project may not otherwise be able to reach.** HtC partnerships are making themselves visible in local areas and engaging people at a range of locations. Some have found success reaching people in locations such as job fairs, places of worship, schools and GP surgeries.

This approach can also help beneficiaries to engage with support services in a trusted, familiar place, where volunteers or local organisations act as the link between them and support services.



The **YouTrust** connects with multiple foodbanks in and around their local area. During sessions, they ensure that representatives from the YouTrust are present, offering support. Volunteers at the foodbanks connect those asking for help with the YouTrust on the day. This approach allows the project to meet people when they are visiting the foodbank, providing advice to those who may not otherwise approach the service directly.

“Last week the volunteer there came to me and said there are two ladies who need to see you. One was running out of electric and had no money.”

Citizens Advice Haringey advocates using volunteers with lived experience to engage with communities. This approach to outreach not only enables Citizens Advice Haringey to reach communities further afield, but helps the organisation to build their reputation in the area.

“Our lived experience volunteers also act as advocates within those communities.”

Q

Who could your partnership start working with in your area to reach new groups?

2

MAKING THE MOST OF REFERRALS

Delivered by



HAVING CLEAR CRITERIA

Partnerships typically receive high numbers of referrals to their services. This is a sign of the strength of local networks and the strong reputation built by projects. However, this also contributes to the high levels of demand on services and can result in some people accessing a service who may not be the best fit for a HtC project. **Setting clear and simple referral criteria can help to manage this demand.** The criteria should be reflective of the purpose of the project and the types of people you feel you can provide the best support to.

Birmingham Rathbone has clear, concise and consistent referral criteria. These criteria are known to their partner organisations and displayed on their website. To access Birmingham Rathbone's services, a person must:

- Have a learning disability or learning difficulty (whether or not officially diagnosed)
- Be aged 16 years or over
- Live in Birmingham (UK)
- Be facing an immediate and serious crisis in their life

All referrals are made through an online form. These details are then checked by a team member before someone gets involved in the project so the organisation can support people that match the team's experience and expertise.

Setting a definition of "crisis" that is relevant to the support offered by your organisation can help to guide referral criteria. Whether your definition includes finances, housing or mental health, it is important to describe this clearly to help referral agencies send on people who match the support a project is providing.

The Bond Board use the [chaos index](#) to assess the depth of crises. This helps The Bond Board to assess beneficiaries on a range of aspects, such as risk, stress and anxiety, substance abuse, and housing. The project uses these definitions to assign beneficiaries to longer-term support services, whilst also offering crisis interventions for shorter-term support.

"We use the term crisis interventions – and it's a term that is loosely used in terms of someone having a problem to be solved, which could become a major crisis."

Q

What is your partnership's definition of crisis? Does everyone within the organisation or partnership understand this definition?

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH REFERRAL ORGANISATIONS

Strong relationships with referral organisations will also help to improve the referral process **so the people referred to your project match the support you can provide**. Frequent communication and clarifying the specific criteria for a project can make this easier. Encouraging organisations to pick up the phone and discuss a case in advance before making a referral can also save time, as well as hassle or confusion for the person being referred.

Strong networks and good relationships with local organisations also mean that if someone's needs are not appropriate for a service, you can recommend other providers that might be better placed to give support.

Access Dorset found that establishing effective networks and relationships with partners led to more appropriate referrals. This is because partners know and understand what the service offers and what the limitations are. Access Dorset is also able to connect with people prior to the referral stage to establish their needs.

The project is linked to Bournemouth Hospital which refers patients who have financial problems or are homeless. It connects with prospective service users while they are in hospital to understand their needs and to see whether appropriate support can be provided by the organisation.

Access Dorset also works closely with other local teams and refers beneficiaries when support is needed which they cannot provide, such as working with Shelter for legal support or homelessness outreach teams for housing support.

Telford and Wrekin Citizens Advice are well known in their area and continue to build connections with other local services such as Mind (who are a member of the partnership), Age UK, Wolverhampton Citizens Advice, and SSAFA. Having a range of project partners and wider connections each with a specific focus, can be beneficial when supporting those with complex needs by providing a range of referral pathways.

"All of [our] services have criteria which we slightly struggled with for the Helping Hands [project], but we're now getting there. . . Because the front door is open to everybody, but the Helping Hands [project] is for people in this situation. So, either by circumstance or demographic, people kind of filter."



What conversations does your partnership need to have with partners so that they clearly understand your referrals criteria?

3

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PARTNERSHIPS?

Delivered by



HOW TO TAKE THIS FORWARD

What did we find?

Partnerships are concerned about reaching people who may need support, and are aware of the challenges in engaging with certain groups. Reaching out to people beyond those currently engaged in a project is an important step for providing effective support to those with needs the service was designed for.

While each partnership needs to think through what this means in practice in their context, it is likely to involve:

1) Building understanding

- Understanding more about who you are currently supporting and comparing this against evidence about local needs to identify whether any groups are being missed.
- Thinking about who is “easy to ignore” in your area and identifying ways of reaching them, including working to remove barriers that prevent them accessing support.

2) Increasing visibility

- Equipped with this knowledge, steps can be taken to build a reputation with people who might need your service – whether now or in the future.
- Increasing the visibility of your project means that people know where to go to get support, at an earlier point in a crisis.

3) Working with others

- Collaborating with other organisations and volunteers can help to provide access to places that a project may not otherwise be able to reach.
- Setting clear, concise and consistent referral criteria and building strong relationships with referral organisations can also help to make this process effective.

What does this mean for HtC partnerships?

Thinking about outreach and referrals as a way of connecting to people who a project was designed for can help **make the case for focusing on outreach activities**. Outreach does not need to involve increasing the numbers of people using a service, instead, it can be a way of **reducing demand by targeting support** towards those with needs that match the skills and expertise of a service.

Understanding the local context in an area and assessing the level of need can also help **provide evidence** of why a service is required. This can help to strengthen funding applications or explain the importance of your work to commissioners.

Applying some of the learning described above can help to reach those people who may not engage with a service but who need the support HtC projects are providing.

THANK YOU!

We'd like to thank all the partnerships who welcomed us to learn from them in this year of the Help through Crisis programme.

Mancroft Advice Project

Telford & Wrekin Citizens Advice

The Bond Board

Avon and Bristol Law Centre

Bevan Healthcare CIC

Gipton Supported Independent Living

Hackney Migrants Centre

Praxis Community Projects and St Mungos

Birmingham Rathbone

No Limits

North East Law Centre Ltd

Wai Yin Society

Access Dorset

Haringey Citizens Advice

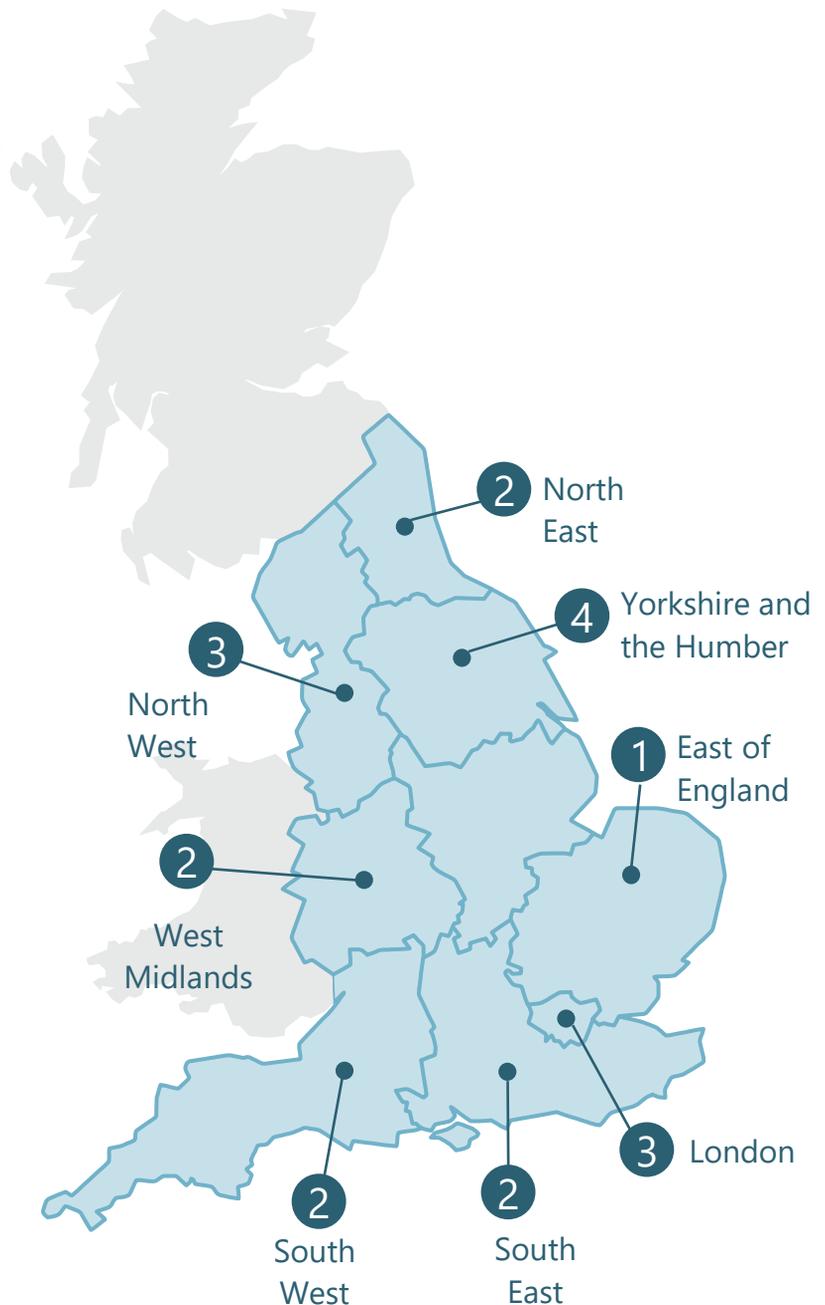
Fiscus North Ltd

Mind in Furness

Hull and East Riding Citizens Advice Bureau Ltd

Ravenscliffe Community Association

The YOU Trust



ANNEX: RESOURCES FOR DESK

RESEARCH

Below is a list of sources which you may be able to use to build up contextual knowledge and statistics of your local area. Please do let us know if there are any additional resources you use which may be useful to others!

Nomis

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

- Local authority information
- Population statistics
- Labour market statistics

Government open data

<https://data.gov.uk/>

- Crime and justice statistics
- Societal statistics
- Health statistics

Office for National Statistics

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

- Population statistics
- Census data
- Employment statistics

Indices of deprivation 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>

- Statistics on the levels of deprivation in an area

If you have any comments or questions about any of the issues discussed in this paper, please get in touch with the Learning, Support and Evaluation team using the email address below, or via the Slack platform.



helpthroughcrisis@ipsos.com