

# **The Mercers' Company**

## **Homelessness Deep Dive**

### ***Final report***

### ***Part 1: Understanding the Landscape - What we need to know about evaluating homelessness projects awarded grants by the Mercers' Church & Communities Programme***

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**December 2020**

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## **Part 1: Understanding the Landscape**

### **What we need to know about homelessness and evaluating projects that the Mercers' Company fund**

#### **Foreword**

This stand-alone report presents information about the background, the research and policy evidence base, and the methodology for the evaluation of homelessness projects that have been awarded grants through the Mercers' Church & Communities Programme (funded by Mercers' Charitable Foundation and the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington). This evaluation was carried out by a team of independent research and evaluation consultants in 2020.

The companion report, '**Part 2: Findings Report: What We Know Now**' can be read alone or in conjunction with this report, and presents the analysis and conclusions from the evaluation.

Both reports should be read in conjunction with our report '**Part 3: Summary Conclusions and Recommendations**'.

## 1. About this evaluation

### 1.1 Introduction, aims and objectives

The Mercers' Company commissioned an independent evaluation to capture learning from the projects relieving homelessness, which have been awarded grants through the Church and Communities Programme in order to help inform their ongoing approach to funding in this area. More specifically the key objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Evaluate the funding awarded so far (via the Company's Church and Communities Programme since January 2018) to projects that support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness;
- Understand the collective difference made by the different interventions and the lessons learnt;
- Present this in the wider context of homelessness, homelessness services and upstream preventative work funded within England.

The Mercers' Company is a livery company focused on being a philanthropic force for good. They have a rich history dating back over 700 years with philanthropy as the common thread between their past, present and future. Each year they aim to distribute £15 million to charitable causes. Their giving is focussed on 3 key programme areas:

- Young People and Education;
- Older People and Housing;
- Church and Communities.

The Church and Communities programme supports churches and other faith and secular community-based organisations to enable adults and families to lead fulfilling lives. As part of this programme the Company's Church & Communities Committee awards grants to charities and social enterprises towards community responses to supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

These grants are funded by the Mercers' Charitable Foundation and the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington, two charities of which The Mercers' Company is corporate trustee. Since 2018, 19 grants have been awarded, under the 'homelessness' priority via the Church and Communities programme. Two additional projects funded under Mercers' Church and Communities programme priority areas of 'families facing poverty and other challenges' and 'refugees' have also been included in this evaluation as they seek to address similar issues. Funding is offered in 4 specific geographic locations where the Company has links through its patronage of Church Livings and other historic associations, these areas are:

- London
- Norfolk
- Lincolnshire (N.B. no projects were funded in this area under this priority)
- North East

In awarding funding of community responses to homelessness, Mercers' are led by the demand from charities and social enterprises. They do not look for any specific approaches or for charities to be able to provide hard metrics to demonstrate the difference made. They understand the determining risk factors that can result in homelessness and therefore, appreciate that a range of approaches may be effective in tackling it.

The Mercers' Church & Community Programme has a philanthropic interest in housing and homelessness in England, and supports a number of housing-related initiatives, including as part of the Church and Communities programme which is the subject of this review. The main philanthropic aim of the programme is to encourage ***“Community responses to supporting people who are homeless”*** because ***“People thrive when communities thrive”***.

## 2. Approach & methodology

Below is a summary of our approach to this evaluation:

- A rapid research review of recent, published literature and policy relating to homelessness in England. The parameters of this rapid review are included in Appendix 1.
- Detailed conversations (via Zoom) with Mercers' Grants Programme Managers and members of the Church & Communities committee to better understand the approach to funding and aspirations for the research.
- Review of project's assessment reports, outcome frameworks, annual / progress reports and other data provided by Mercers' and the projects to provide background detail on the projects to help shape the research tools and inform an analysis framework.
- Depth interviews (via Zoom) with all project leads focussing on; project delivery (approaches and models), challenges and successes, perceived value of the funding, progress towards outcomes, impact and experiences of working with Mercers'.
- Case studies of 4 selected projects (via Zoom and phone). Based on interviews with project leads, staff / volunteers and beneficiaries, delving deeper into perceptions and experiences of those working within and accessing the projects.
- Data analysis, with a particular focus on outcomes and impacts of the projects.
- Report writing and other output production including a film and infographics to illustrate key findings. Notes on methodology and limitations can be found in the relevant sections of Part 2.

There are elements of quantitative analysis in this evaluation, but it is predominantly a qualitative one. This is primarily because numerical data was limited (for example, because Mercers' do not insist on hard metrics from projects) and in many cases not comparable even when it was available (for example, figures from a project just started cannot be compared with those from a project that has been running a year or two). A more quantitative analysis could be carried out at a later stage, if desired and if the necessary data collection arrangements were put in place.

In summary, our approach is to use a very wide variety of information to provide good insight into the commissioning and delivery environments, and then to 'deep dive' to explore outcomes, impacts and key issues for projects in more detail. This 'dual pronged' approach provides a rich picture of the difference that Mercers' investment is making to homelessness in England.

### 3. Overview of the Projects

This evaluation draws on data from 21 projects funded by Mercers' Charitable Foundation and the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington, via the Church and Communities programme. In total, 19 projects were funded under the 'homelessness' priority area and two additional projects were funded under 'families facing poverty and other challenges' and 'refugees' priority areas. Projects were awarded 12-36 months funding, between October 2018 and July 2020.

As of November 2020, the total amount of funding awarded by the Church and Communities programme was £7.7m. The amount awarded to the projects who are the subject of this evaluation is £1,338,501. This includes £1,173,501 awarded to the 19 projects under the 'homelessness' priority and £165,000 to the two projects funded under 'families facing poverty and other challenges' and 'refugees' priority areas.

#### 3.1 Target Groups

The 21 projects funded provide support for a number of key target groups including; those who are currently rough sleepers, homeless or in unsuitable temporary accommodation; those at risk of being homeless; those who have previously been homeless; people who are vulnerable due to a range of reasons including addictions, involvement with the criminal justice system, mental health issues, immigration status. One project did not work directly with the end beneficiary but provided support to staff and volunteers who were delivering projects aimed at reducing homelessness in Christian faith based social action projects.

#### 3.2 Activities and Approaches taken by Projects

The projects provide a range of activities and services for target beneficiaries. These included direct provision of accommodation (i.e. emergency/shelter, short term supported and permanent) and related advice and support to access or maintain this; meeting essential and basic needs (e.g. meals, access to showers, financial help); support with health and well-being (e.g. counselling/psychological support, support with addictions, access to health care professionals); social support and opportunities to connect with others (e.g. befriending schemes, communal meals, music sessions); help with developing skills and accessing employment (e.g. training, CV development, job clubs); help with legal and welfare rights (e.g. immigration, benefits); signposting and referring to other agencies and; supporting independence and personal development (e.g. 1:1 case work, budgeting skills, coping strategies).

14 projects identified as **faith based**, 7 were not faith based but held a Christian ethos around the values of e.g. open to all, fair, non-judgemental, supporting the disadvantaged.

20 projects had volunteers working alongside paid staff, and some relied heavily on volunteer support.

**Appendix 2** provides a brief overview of the projects.

## 4. Research and Policy Review

### Understanding Homelessness in England: Context for the Mercers' Company Homelessness Projects Evaluation 2020

This section aims to give readers useful context which will help them to interpret the evaluation findings and recommendations.

#### 4.1 Describing homelessness and the scale of need

A person is legally homeless in the UK if they have nowhere to live because: they have been evicted from their home; asked to leave by friends or family; must leave due to violence; can't stay due to fire or flood; or are sleeping on the streets<sup>1</sup>.

Defining and quantifying homelessness is not straightforward. Measures of homelessness differ and much of it is invisible. However, it appears to be rising steeply: for example, the number of known rough sleepers is estimated to have increased by more than 250 percent since 2010 (an estimated 1,768 people sleeping rough on any given night in 2010; by 2017 this had increased to 4,751<sup>2</sup>).

People's experiences of homelessness vary significantly – including for example a person with complex needs such as drug use and mental illness which make it hard to keep a home; someone who 'sleeps rough' in a city or rural area; a family living in bed and breakfast accommodation; someone fleeing domestic violence; or a young person 'sofa-surfing' because they can't find accommodation in the place they need to be for work or study – and all sorts of other circumstances too.

Homelessness is often categorised and described as follows:

#### **Statutory homelessness – those whom local authorities have a legal duty to support:**

Across England in the first quarter of 2020, 75,140 households were identified as currently homeless and owed a relief duty (36,690 households) or threatened with homelessness and owed a prevention duty (38,450 households). Of these, the majority were single households without children, and just under half were identified as having one or more support needs – most commonly mental health problems<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Rough sleeping – those without accommodation and sleeping outdoors:**

According to the latest Government estimates, 4,266 people are estimated to be sleeping rough in England on a 'typical' night<sup>4</sup>. Around a quarter of these people are in London<sup>5</sup>. Some individuals sleep rough only for one night and others may be seen over several years, so that there is no reliable estimate for the number of people sleeping rough each year in England as a whole. However, reliable estimates suggest that during 2019, 10,726 individuals slept rough in London<sup>6</sup>, and the government's emergency scheme for rough sleepers during the Covid-19 pandemic temporarily accommodated 14,610 individuals across England<sup>7</sup> – 3.4 times the official count. Rough sleeping figures are difficult to estimate for many reasons:

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1 Shelter 2020:

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/homelessness/guide/homeless\\_get\\_help\\_from\\_the\\_council/who\\_qualifies\\_for\\_housing](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/guide/homeless_get_help_from_the_council/who_qualifies_for_housing)

2 <https://ourworldindata.org/homelessness-rise-england>

3 Government Quarterly homelessness statistics Jan-March 2020:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/910409/Statutory\\_homelessness\\_release\\_Jan-Mar\\_2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/910409/Statutory_homelessness_release_Jan-Mar_2020.pdf)

4 Homeless Link 2020 rough sleeping analysis: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/rough-sleeping/rough-sleeping-our-analysis>

5 Evolve 2020: <https://www.evolvehousing.org.uk/learn-and-share/10-facts-about-homelessness-london/>

6 CHAIN 2020 Greater London Bulletin 2019: <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

7 HMSO 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-rough-sleeper-accommodation-survey-data-may-2020>



numbers vary night by night; rough sleepers move around; counts depend on having workers in post and able to find individuals; and many rough sleepers including women and children feel unsafe and hide themselves<sup>8</sup>. Most homelessness support organisations agree that rough sleeping numbers are much higher than the official count – as much as 6.5 times higher (28,000) according to a BBC survey<sup>9</sup>.

#### **Hidden homelessness – those who become homeless but do not show up in official figures:**

Many people who become homeless find temporary solutions – for example by staying with family members, ‘sofa surfing’ with friends, living in squats, sleeping in vehicles or rough sleeping in hidden places. People whose homelessness is hidden are not counted in official homelessness figures, but an estimated 62% of single homeless people are ‘hidden homeless’<sup>8</sup>. ‘Temporary’ solutions may turn into ‘serial’ solutions and go on for months or years, so that some people’s homelessness remains hidden for a long time. This matters because hidden homelessness has adverse impacts, including on people’s health and wellbeing, employment, children’s education, risk of violence, and more<sup>10</sup>. A reputable survey in 2013 found that 16% of UK adults have experienced homelessness<sup>11</sup>; if this estimate is accurate, it equates to over 8 million adults, and suggests much higher levels of hidden homelessness than are generally recognised.

A detailed analysis of homelessness at local authority level is beyond the scope of this report, but some key figures help give a flavour. Most local authorities with the highest levels of homelessness are in London. Areas outside London with the highest levels of homelessness (within the ‘top 30’) are Luton (ranked 13<sup>th</sup>), Birmingham (21<sup>st</sup>), Brighton and Hove (23<sup>rd</sup>), Manchester (29<sup>th</sup>) and Slough (30<sup>th</sup>).<sup>31</sup>

## **4.2 National legislation**

Legislation relating to housing and homelessness in England is extensive and complex, offering rights and protections and support to many, but not to all.

The right to housing and the right to an adequate standard of living are recognised under international law and specifically under Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Within England, Local Authorities (LAs, also known as ‘Councils’) have legal duties relating to housing and homelessness, which are regulated particularly by these key pieces of legislation:

- Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Localism Act 2011
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

*Note that the Covid-19 epidemic has also brought about some legislative changes which are examined separately below.*

The statutory duties relating to homelessness (i.e. things that must be done by law) are divided into *relief duties* (which applies when a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible for assistance) and *prevention duties* (applies when a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance). On the whole, local authorities are responsible for helping to prevent people from becoming homeless, and responsible for providing temporary accommodation, rather than responsible for housing them long-term. Specific duties include:

- Providing free advice

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8 Reeve 2018: <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/women-and-homelessness-putting-gender-back-on-the-agenda/>

9 BBC 2020: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-51398425>

10 Shelter : [https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/236815/the\\_hidden\\_truth\\_about\\_homelessness.pdf](https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/236815/the_hidden_truth_about_homelessness.pdf)

11 Homeless Link 2013: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/hidden-homelessness>

- Assessing needs and planning how these will be met
- Making active enquiries about need
- Taking steps to prevent homelessness
- Providing interim/emergency accommodation

Importantly, these duties only apply in relation to people in need within certain priority groups AND if certain ‘tests’ are met:

***The priority groups are:*** pregnant women; families with dependent children; looked after children and others up to age 17; care leavers aged 18-20; people assessed by councils as ‘vulnerable’; and others in temporary need of emergency housing, for example during a flood.

***The tests are (i.e. individuals must be):*** actually homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days; unintentionally homeless; eligible for local government support; with a local connection; and in priority need. Local authorities do not have any duties to individual who are not within these groups and/or who do not meet the ‘test’ conditions.

Inevitably, people ‘fall through the gaps’ of such complex legislation – either because they do not qualify or because they do not seek support. Particularly, definitions of ‘vulnerable’ are problematic and may vary by area. Some people, including some obviously vulnerable people, do not qualify because they fail other tests, including: asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds; those deemed to have become ‘intentionally homeless’; and those who move (for example to big cities for work) where they have no local connections. Homeless Link estimate that, on average each year, approximately twice as many people apply for support as are assessed as qualifying for it<sup>12</sup>, and the known issues of rough sleeping and hidden homelessness also point to very widespread unmet need.

### 4.3 The 2020 Covid-19 epidemic and government homelessness support

The government introduced new, temporary measures during the coronavirus outbreak, to help address new risks relating to rough sleeping – since people without homes clearly cannot ‘stay home’ and are at greater risk of infection. Steps included:

- Provisions within the Coronavirus Act 2020 (still in force at the time of writing) to extend notice periods for tenants and put a temporary ban on evictions;
- Update to the Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities<sup>13</sup>, to temporarily amend assessment of priority need;
- A suspension of all housing (re)possession action;
- A temporary increase on Housing Benefit and Universal Credit to increase government contributions to housing costs;
- A rough sleeping emergency scheme and a £3.2 million emergency fund;
- Establishing a new Rough Sleeping Taskforce to lead the next phase of the government’s support for rough sleepers during the pandemic.

These steps were generally recognised to have a significant and positive impact on homelessness in England<sup>14</sup>, and reduced the number of households becoming newly homeless. Nevertheless, around

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12 Homeless Link 2020 statutory homeless figures; <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/statutory-homelessness>

13 Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities, HMSO 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>

14 Crisis 2020: [https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/241941/crisis\\_covid-19\\_briefing\\_2020.pdf](https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/241941/crisis_covid-19_briefing_2020.pdf)

18,000 households are estimated to have become homeless within the pandemic period<sup>15</sup>, and there is concern among MPs and others about what will happen when the temporary measures end<sup>16</sup>.

#### 4.4 The financial costs of homelessness

It is impossible to work out the full costs of homelessness, particularly because so much of it is hidden and there are wider costs beyond accommodation and direct support, but we can identify some key information:

- Local authorities in England spent £1.1 billion specifically on temporary accommodation for homeless households in 2018-19 – an increase of 78% over the last 5 years<sup>17</sup>.
- The cost of a single person sleeping rough in the UK is estimated at £20,128 per year<sup>18</sup>.
- People who experience homelessness for three months or longer have wider needs beyond their accommodation and homelessness support; wider costs on average are estimated to include £4,298 per person to NHS services, £2,099 per person for mental health services and £11,991 per person in contact with the criminal justice system<sup>19</sup>.

Funding for homelessness support comes from a range of sources, including central government, local government, charitable trusts and grant programmes. It is not possible to calculate the total spent by all funders, because only limited information is available. Major government funds in 2020-21 include:

- **Flexible Homelessness Support Grant** – £200 million allocated by central government to the 343 local authorities in England who receive very different amounts – between £40k and £9 million – calculated according to their known homeless populations in 2017<sup>20</sup>.
- **Homelessness Reduction Grant** – £62.9 million in allocated by central government to regions to be sub-divided between local authorities, weighted for population and deprivation<sup>21</sup>.
- **Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAF)** - £266 million additional funding announced in July 2020, to accommodate and support 15,000 people reached by the rough sleepers initiatives during the pandemic.

Although central government funding for homelessness now totals over £0.5 billion<sup>22</sup>, it is important to note firstly that local authorities' spend totals over £1.1 billion, and secondly that significantly less is available to local authorities now than 10 years ago. In 2018-19, LA funding for accommodation and homelessness-related services had fallen by £0.7 billion from £2.9 billion (in current prices) in 2008/9<sup>22</sup>. Additionally, LA funding for support services for single homeless people (including the former Supporting People Programme, prevention and support), was nearly £1 billion less in 2018/19 than in 2008/9<sup>23</sup>. The NSAF replaces £0.26 billion of £1.7 billion cut from government funding for homelessness since 2010.

Non-governmental funding and grant programmes operate in this funding environment and cannot hope to make up the shortfall. Their budgets are often not publicly available or easily found, making it impossible

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15 New Statesman 2020: <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2020/08/revealed-nearly-20000-households-made-homeless-during-pandemic>

16 BBC 2020: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-53797657>

17 Shelter 2019: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press\\_releases/articles/homelessness\\_crisis\\_costs\\_councils\\_over\\_1bn\\_in\\_just\\_one\\_year](https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_releases/articles/homelessness_crisis_costs_councils_over_1bn_in_just_one_year)

18 Crisis 2020: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/cost-of-homelessness/>

19 Crisis 2016: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/cost-of-homelessness/better-than-cure-2016/>

20 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flexible-homelessness-support-grant-2019-to-2020>

21 MHCLG 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flexible-homelessness-support-grant-and-homelessness-reduction-grant-2020-to-2021>

22 MHCLG 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jenrick-launches-266-million-housing-fund-for-vulnerable-people>

23 Oakley and Rose 2020, for Homeless Link and St. Mungo's: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Local%20authority%20homelessness%20spending%202020.pdf>

to assess the financial contribution non-governmental organisations and grant making bodies make to tackling homelessness. However, their qualitative impact is clear: a number of charities and trusts directly provide accommodation and services for homeless people, including emergency accommodation, night shelters, social housing, supported accommodation, refuges, food banks and ‘soup kitchens’, advice, benefits support, substance misuse services, day centres, and apprenticeship and training schemes. Others run grant programmes that support grassroots, community-led and peer-led projects to run. Grant funders include the National Lottery Community Fund, Nationwide Housing Emergency Grants, Crisis Homes for All Emergency Fund, the Vicars’ Relief Fund, Church Homeless Trust, and of course the Mercers’ Company.

#### 4.5 Local authorities’ planning and policy framework

The primary legal duties relating to homelessness apply to local authorities and so most planning takes place at this level. Usually, local authorities will work with district or county councils (where these exist), health commissioners, housing providers, relevant charities and other stakeholders, to plan joined-up responses to homelessness. The most common local strategies and plans that relate to homelessness are:

- **Local Area Plan (LAP)** – an overarching ‘high level’ strategic plan describing the key local aims and priorities, made by the local authority and its main strategic partners. Homelessness is sometimes a key priority in a LAP, especially in major cities.
- **Housing Strategy** – a plan focused specifically on meeting housing needs in that area, which may include specific priorities or actions relating to homelessness;
- **Homelessness Strategy** – sometimes combined with a Housing Strategy and sometimes separate, and focused specifically on homelessness. Homelessness Strategies often also include an operational Action Plan;
- **Rough Sleeping Strategy** – usually part of a Homelessness Strategy in areas with high levels of rough sleeping.

Also, because homelessness is recognised to be closely associated with health and other inequalities, the following local strategies may also include relevant actions:

- **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)** – an overarching strategic plan jointly made by the local Health and Wellbeing Board, which is led by local public health, health and social care commissioners, often involving other relevant partners. Homelessness is recognised as a major health issue in many areas.
- **Joint Strategic (Needs) Assessment (JS(N)A)** – closely linked with the JHWS, this is a collection of regularly-reviewed evidence relating to health and wellbeing in the area, which looks at local needs and (sometimes) also local assets, with a particular focus on reducing health inequalities. Homelessness leads to health inequalities, so some JSNAs include information about it.
- **Diversity & Inclusion Strategy** – an overarching strategic plan that aims to address needs relating to local population diversity and particularly to reduce inequalities.

It is beyond the scope of this review to look at all the individual plans and strategies in each individual project area, but further information is included in the area snapshots below.

#### Area snapshots

Area snapshots help us to get a flavour of the local context in the places where projects currently funded by Mercers’ are operating, and ‘set the scene’ for further information presented in Part 2 and the case studies. They do not provide detailed or comprehensive pictures, but are pulled together from information gathered in the rapid review and from the projects themselves. Please note that the evaluation team are not local practitioners, so do not have current ‘on the ground’ experience of homelessness services in these areas.

## A snapshot of homelessness in London

**Overview:** Homelessness in London presents a complex picture, because of large numbers of people, diverse populations and areas, and multi-tiered service provision - with central government, 33 different local authorities, the Greater London Authority (GLA)/Mayor's Office, hundreds of homelessness charities, and other statutory services particularly the NHS, all playing important roles. There is a strong focus on rough sleeping, particularly in more central areas.

**Planning and decision-making:** Most planning is done at the local authority (LA) level where statutory duties lie, and London LAs generally have their own homelessness and rough sleeping strategies. Charities, particularly Homeless Link consortium members, have London-wide insight and plans. The GLA/Mayor's Office also has London-wide Housing and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping<sup>24</sup> plans. Resources from CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network)<sup>5</sup> and the The London Housing Foundation's online 'Atlas'<sup>25</sup> provide key information. The Healthy London Partnership and the London Health and Care Strategic Partnership Board plan and deliver coordinated health services for homeless people<sup>26</sup>.

**Numbers<sup>27</sup>:** Shelter estimates that in London in 2019, over 170,000 people were homeless on any given night (approx. 2% of the total population), with 163,100 in temporary housing arranged by a local authority. 8855 people were seen to be rough sleeping during 2018-19; actual numbers are higher (see above). Newham, Haringey, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster are the London areas with the highest levels of homelessness, with 1 in 30 people or more homeless. The LA areas with the highest levels of rough sleeping are Westminster, Camden, Newham and Enfield<sup>5</sup>.

**Key issues:** The GLA Housing Strategy identifies some common issues across London<sup>23</sup>. London has a quarter of all rough sleepers in England, drawing people from other parts of the country and from overseas; around half of all rough sleepers are non-UK nationals, and do not have access to welfare benefits that could meet housing costs. Lack of affordable housing is a particular problem for Londoners. Insecure tenancies are the greatest cause of official homelessness. Changes to the Welfare system (particularly Housing Benefit and Universal Credit) have affected homelessness across the country but are felt particularly strongly in London, because of higher rents and property prices. Families are often accommodated away from their own home areas, losing important social support.

**Key charity, faith and non-statutory players:** Hundreds of homelessness charities operate in London, including all the national charities. Key players include: Crisis, Shelter, St Mungo's, Centrepoint, Homeless Link, Streetlink, the Salvation Army, YMCA, Streets of London, Thames Reach, Church Homeless Trust, Housing Justice and Single Homeless Project (SHP).

<sup>23</sup> GLA 2020: [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018\\_lhs\\_london\\_housing\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018_lhs_london_housing_strategy.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> GLA 2020: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/homelessness/rough-sleeping-plan-action>

<sup>25</sup> LHF 2020: <https://lhf.org.uk/atlas/>

<sup>26</sup> Healthy London Partnership 2020: <https://www.healthylondon.org/our-work/homeless-health/>

<sup>27</sup> Shelter 2019:

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press\\_releases/articles/280,000\\_people\\_in\\_england\\_are\\_homeless,\\_with\\_thousands\\_more\\_at\\_risk](https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_releases/articles/280,000_people_in_england_are_homeless,_with_thousands_more_at_risk)

## A snapshot of homelessness in Norfolk

**Overview:** Norfolk is a predominantly rural county, with one city, Norwich, and several coastal and market towns. Rates of homelessness are lower across Norfolk as a whole than in England on average. However, there is very substantial variation across the county, with 7 or 8 times more people in temporary accommodation in Great Yarmouth than in more rural areas of the county. Across Norfolk as a whole, there are slightly more homeless people not assessed as priority need than in England on average, and in Great Yarmouth there are 6 times as many. There is relatively little rough sleeping in Norfolk. Some homelessness is likely to be hidden and uncounted. According to the National Audit Office the number of rough sleepers in Norfolk and Waveney increased by 100% between 2011/12 to 2016/17. In addition Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, and Broadlands have some of the highest numbers of people placed in temporary accommodation in the county<sup>30x</sup>.

**Planning and decision-making:** There is three-tier local government across most of Norfolk: Norfolk County Council operates alongside 7 local authorities, and within those are also several parish councils. Statutory responsibilities for homelessness lie with the local authorities, but some work in partnership, so that across the county there are separate homelessness strategies for Greater Norwich (including Broadland, Norwich City and South Norfolk councils), Great Yarmouth, North Norfolk and West Norfolk (including Kings Lynn and West Norfolk councils). All take an 'early help' approach focusing on preventing homelessness and early intervention to support homeless people, improving health and wellbeing, and job opportunities. The structural complexity within Norfolk probably leads to some avoidable challenges and potential duplication, particularly given the relatively low levels of need in most areas.

**Numbers:** 3355 people were found to be using homelessness services across Norfolk in 2018/19<sup>28</sup> (approximately 0.4% of the total population). 1.52 per 1,000 households were assessed as homeless and in priority need in 2017/18, much lower than the national rate of 2.41. Family and young people homelessness rates are also low. There is relatively little rough sleeping in Norfolk – just 69 known individuals in 2019<sup>29</sup> – but numbers appear to be rising.

**Key issues:** Needs are very different in the urban and rural areas of Norfolk, which causes challenges for planning, access and delivery. Local homelessness strategies recognise that homelessness is associated with poverty, adverse health, education, employment and social outcomes. Poor access to services, especially in rural areas, may result in increased demand for acute services<sup>28</sup>. People fleeing domestic violence, people with drug or alcohol dependency, mental health problems and prison leavers are recognised as priority groups, and there is partnership working with police and through multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC)<sup>30</sup>.

**Key charity, faith and non-statutory players:** Key local service providers include Shelter, St. Martins Housing Trust, Emmeas Norwich, The Benjamin Foundation, The Feed Foundation and Herring House Trust.

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<sup>28</sup> [https://www.norfolkinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Briefing\\_paper\\_-\\_Homelessness.pdf](https://www.norfolkinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Briefing_paper_-_Homelessness.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/politics/rough-sleeper-snapshot-numbers-in-norfolk-2019-1-6535775>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=3265&p=0>

<sup>30x</sup> Personal communication, Matthew Roche, Mercers' Grants Programme Manager, 1/12/20

## A snapshot of homelessness in the North East

**Overview:** The North East of England includes the four counties of County Durham, Tyne & Wear, Northumberland and Tees Valley, subdivided into 12 local authority areas. Collectively, they have the lowest official rate of homelessness in England, and few rough sleepers. Some homelessness is likely to be hidden and uncounted.

**Planning and decision-making:** There is no regional strategy for homelessness, but individual local authorities in the region have strategies and/or action plans for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping, including Middlesbrough, Gateshead, Durham and Sunderland (some local strategies and action plans only run to 2020 and need updating). As expected in areas with relatively low levels of official homelessness, local plans focus mostly on preventing homelessness and ensuring a supply of affordable accommodation. In Middlesbrough, and perhaps in other areas, there is a multi-agency Homelessness Forum, including voluntary sector partners.

**Numbers<sup>31</sup>:** The North East has the lowest rate of homelessness in England. Shelter estimates that fewer than 1 in 2500 people are homeless, compared with 1 in 50 in London. A total of 1061 people were assessed to be homeless on any given night in 2019 (0.004%), of whom 700 were in temporary accommodation arranged by their local authority. These numbers are substantially lower than in 2012 and 2016; homelessness in the North East appears to be falling, in contrast to the rest of England. There were 66 individuals seen to be rough sleeping (out of a population of 2.66 million). More than 70% of homeless individuals and 50% of rough sleepers are in 3 urban authorities: Middlesbrough, Gateshead and Durham. Newcastle-upon-Tyne also has 15 known rough sleepers but relatively low levels of overall homelessness. Middlesbrough, which has the highest rate of homelessness in the North East, is ranked 91<sup>th</sup> nationally.

**Key issues:** There are no 'stand out' issues for the North East which appear different from homelessness issues elsewhere in England. However, there is an unusual pattern in Durham, where most people assessed as homeless are not in accommodation arranged by the local authority but by themselves.

**Key charity, faith and non-statutory players:** These include the Salvation Army, Nightstop North East, Oasis Community Housing, Crisis (Skylight Newcastle), Emmaus, Thirteen Housing, Changing Lives and Stockton Churches Mission to the Homeless.

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<sup>31</sup> Shelter 2020:

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/1883817/This\\_is\\_England\\_A\\_picture\\_of\\_homelessness\\_in\\_2019.pdf](https://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1883817/This_is_England_A_picture_of_homelessness_in_2019.pdf)

## 4.6 Current issues in homelessness

The causes of homelessness are complex. Researchers identify both ‘individual’ or ‘structural’ risk factors and protective factors, often actively seeking nuanced understandings that avoid creating any impression of blame.

We carried out a rapid review of recent, published literature on homelessness in England, in order to gain an overview of current understanding and issues. (Criteria for inclusion in the rapid review can be found in appendix 1). Note that this section is not intended to give a comprehensive summary of the research on homelessness in England, but rather to show what researchers are currently thinking and where there is new learning. This information can help Mercers’ to contextualise and evaluate their funded projects by highlighting:

- Current and new knowledge and understanding
- Identified problems and challenges that funded projects might be encouraged to address
- Evidence of good practice and ‘what works’, indicating approaches that are good to fund
- Evidence of what does *not* work, suggesting approaches that should not be funded (or should be encouraged to change)

The insight from this literature review is summarised below in themed sections.

### **Structural and policy impacts on homelessness in England**<sup>22 24 25 26 27</sup>

Homelessness has risen in England since 2010, which is widely recognised to be driven by ‘austerity’ and reductions to welfare benefits, especially Housing Benefit and Universal Credit. Housing market pressures have increased the risks of homelessness in some areas. Local authorities hold the main duties for relieving and preventing homelessness in the UK. This means that most planning is done at local level, and driven by statutory duties. Some evidence suggests that localism may have disadvantaged already-disadvantaged groups and had a ‘malign effect’, contributing to rising homelessness. Systemic changes are needed, and often understood, but still not implemented:

*“If street homelessness is to be ended then we must address: the lack of settled accommodation, funding challenges, ineffective collaboration and commissioning, the needs of different subgroups, ineligibility of some people for publicly funded support, overly bureaucratic processes, and the need for stronger political will”<sup>26</sup>.*

### **Key individual risk factors for homelessness**<sup>28 29</sup>

Poverty is a key individual risk factor for homelessness. Other factors associated with poverty also increase the risk of homelessness for individuals, including unemployment, living in rented accommodation, long-term illness and disability, mental illness, social isolation and having children young. Particularly, experience of childhood poverty is a powerful predictor of adulthood homelessness. Experiences in the teenage years also carry particular risks: *“A range of health and support needs and behavioural issues, particularly in the teenage years, do significantly contribute to the risks of homelessness in young adulthood, [though] their explanatory power is less than that of poverty”<sup>28</sup>.* For women, common triggers for homelessness are sexual abuse, domestic abuse and loss of children.

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<sup>23</sup> O’Leary & Simcock 2019: <https://research.edgehill.ac.uk/en/publications/policy-failure-or-f-up-homelessness-and-welfare-reform-in-the-uk>

<sup>25</sup> Fitzpatrick et al. 2020: <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/tpp/pap/pre-prints/content-policyold1900135>

<sup>26</sup> Fitzpatrick, Mackie & Wood 2019: <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Homelessness-Prevention-in-the-UK-Policy-Brief-July-2019-final.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Mackie, Johnsen & Wood 2019: <https://www.usf.edu/cbcs/mhlp/tac/documents/supportive-housing/ending-street-homelessness.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Bramley & Fitzpatrick 2018: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02673037.2017.1344957>

<sup>29</sup> Reeve 2018: <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/women-and-homelessness-putting-gender-back-on-the-agenda/>



### **Protective factors for homelessness<sup>27 30</sup>**

A key protective factor apparently helping most to prevent homelessness amongst people who may otherwise be at risk, is the availability of social support networks, including being in a relationship. Other protective factors for individuals include leaving full-time education later, and still living with parents at age 26. At a wider social level, geography may be a protective factor: those living in rural areas and in Scotland or the North of England are less likely to become homeless, probably because of costs of living and housing pressures. Also structurally, effective partnership working between agencies appear to make interventions to address homelessness more successful and may therefore also be protective.

### **Experiences and needs of homeless women<sup>31</sup>**

Homelessness services do not often take account of the experiences and needs of women, although these are sometimes clearly different from men's. As a result, current provision may not meet women's needs. As well as the different 'triggers' for homelessness outlined above (see 'risk factors' above), one study in our review showed some other important differences in women's experiences of homelessness, particularly:

- Rough sleeping figures significantly under-report women: two-thirds of homeless women rough sleep (compared with three quarters men) but only 1 in 6 of these have contact with rough sleeping teams, because they 'hide' to keep themselves safer
- 'Survival sex' a key part of homeless women's experiences
- Many homeless women have children but are nevertheless treated as single. Mothers who are homeless have additional complex needs relating to having children.

### **Adverse health effects of homelessness on adults<sup>32 33 34</sup>**

Homelessness harms health. Most extremely, single homeless people on average die at age 47 for men and 43 for women, compared with 77 for the general population (calculated with 2001-9 data). Homeless people and especially rough sleepers are likely to have more health needs, and multiple health needs: 73% of rough sleepers in London whose health needs were assessed were found to have mental health, drug and/or alcohol dependency issues, often unaddressed. Homeless Link found that 78% of homeless people overall had some physical health problem, 41% had a long-term physical health problem (compared with 28% in the general population), 80% had some form of mental health issue and 45% had a diagnosed mental health problem (25% in the general population). Homeless people are 2.5 times more likely to have asthma than someone in the general population, 6 times more likely to have heart disease and 34 times more likely to have tuberculosis. They are also more likely to experience skin problems, unintentional injuries, violence causing injury, depression and anxiety. Despite having more health needs, homeless people are often unable to access primary healthcare (GP and community services), and consequently are more likely to attend hospital emergency departments (A&E) and four times more likely to be admitted to hospital.

### **Approaches that work when people are already homeless<sup>26 35</sup>**

Our review found a major, recent study<sup>26</sup> into the effectiveness of 'interventions' to end street homelessness, which was informed by more than 500 literature sources. The approaches found to work best overall are:

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30 World Habitat 2020: <https://world-habitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EESH-Responding-to-Covid19-case-studies-FINAL-1.pdf>

31 Reeve 2018: <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/women-and-homelessness-putting-gender-back-on-the-agenda/>

32 Healthy London Partnership 2020: <https://www.healthylondon.org/our-work/homeless-health/>

33 Fransham and Dorling 2020 (originally published in British Medical Journal): [http://www.dannydorling.org/wp-content/files/dannydorling\\_publication\\_id6364.pdf](http://www.dannydorling.org/wp-content/files/dannydorling_publication_id6364.pdf)

34 Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board 2019: [https://www.norfolkinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Briefing\\_paper\\_-\\_Homelessness.pdf](https://www.norfolkinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Briefing_paper_-_Homelessness.pdf)

35 Johnsen, Watts and Fitzpatrick 2018: <http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/39273-Homelessness-web.pdf>

*“be housing-led, offer person-centred support and choice, take swift action, employ assertive outreach leading to a suitable accommodation offer, ensure services address wider support needs, and collaborate effectively between agencies and across sectors”<sup>26</sup>.*

Another study<sup>33</sup> primarily focused on whether ‘enforcement’ measures (such as moving people on, benefits sanctions and fines) work to reduce homelessness, and found that their effectiveness is limited and conditional on meaningful support. Moreover:

*“Provision of meaningful support was pivotal in all the cases of positive behaviour change reported. Gains in relation to work preparation and acquisition were greatest when support was intensive and individually tailored. This was also true as regards reduced involvement in street culture activities, wherein flexible and ‘sticky’ support was especially beneficial”.*

A further small study<sup>36</sup> provides some evidence that prioritising access to social housing may reduce homelessness for refugees, who make up a significant percentage of rough sleepers especially in London. By comparing policy in Scotland, where refugees were prioritised for social housing, the study hypothesises that de-prioritising access in England is driving higher levels of homelessness in this group.

Finally, one study<sup>37</sup> noted that all approaches to homelessness are ‘normative’ (i.e. assume moral or ethical ‘norms’) but that those closest to the ground, including support workers and homeless people themselves, often have more ambiguous and nuanced understandings than policy-makers. This paper is highly theoretical, but usefully reminds grant-makers and practitioners of the importance of good engagement that brings workers and homeless people into decision-making, in order to help make better decisions that reflect people’s lived experience.

### **The role of homelessness charities, non-profit and faith organisations**

Charities, non-profit and faith organisations have a key role in ‘filling the gaps’ in homelessness services and support, helping those whom Local Authorities do not support. Also, increasingly, established non-profit organisations may be commissioned by Local Authorities to deliver services which help meet statutory duties, including accommodation and support. These established non-profit organisations run professionally, often through a linked Community Interest Company which holds contracts and employs staff. Some operate nationally (e.g. Shelter, Crisis), some regionally and some locally.

In each area, the work carried out by charities, non-profit and faith organisations is affected by local authorities’ partnership arrangements and key local strategies and plans – although the extent to which they are aware of this may depend on their size, level of funding, leadership, influence and local relationships. Some are fully involved in delivering joined up local homelessness plans; others find themselves excluded from decision-making and frustrated to be unable to make relationships that they believe would help everyone to tackle homelessness more effectively.

The Mercers’ Company’s financial contribution to tackling homelessness is relatively modest in the context of national expenditure in excess of £1.6 billion (see section 2.4), and so it intentionally makes the most of its investment by funding grassroots projects that make a difference in local communities. It does not deliver direct services or support, but helps others to do that. This review should help it play this role more effectively.

**End of Part 1**

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36 Shang et al. 2020: <https://ideas.repec.org/p/osf/socarx/tey4d.html>

37 Johnsen, Watts and Fitzpatrick 2020: [https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0042098019898369#\\_i3](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0042098019898369#_i3)

## Appendix 1: Rapid Review – Sources and inclusion criteria

Note: a rapid review is a systematic but pragmatic way of looking at relevant research and policy evidence. It is by nature limited in scope, carried out relatively quickly, and it may therefore have some omissions. However, clear inclusion criteria mean that it is robust, transparent and can be replicated.

| Source category                   | Review Inclusion Criteria   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Legislative context               | All relevant  |
| Funding and commissioning         | Consider overviews of:<br>Government funding streams;<br>Major charitable funding streams;<br>Common commissioning arrangements in England.   |
| Academic                          | Meets all 8 of these criteria:<br>1) Includes keyword 'homeless', 'homelessness' and/or 'rough sleep+';<br>2) Published since 2018*;<br>3) Within top 40 Google Scholar results in date range;<br>4) English context;<br>5) Focus on social policy;<br>6) Predominantly social not fiscal focus;<br>7) Retrospective not prospective study;<br>8) Full text available online.                           |
| Local context - all               | Framework only: overview of options and common arrangements.  |
| Local context - case studies only | All relevant from list below.. NB: will result in separate descriptions of local context for the 4 case studies.<br>Local Area Plan; Housing Strategy; Homelessness Strategy; Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS); Joint Strategic (Needs) Assessment; Diversity & Inclusion Strategy; Local Commissioning Arrangements (tbc); Local Partnership Arrangements including VCSO relationships (tbc) |

## Appendix 2: Overview of the funded projects

| Grantee Name                               | Grant Amount | Date of Award | faith based | Area Served              | Term Months | Activity and target group.  |
|--|--------------|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|---|
| <b>Manna Society</b>                       | 20,000       | 02/07/2020    | Yes         | Southwark                | 24          | Housing and welfare advice (phone and in person at the Manna Day Centre) Homeless and those at risk of being homeless   |
| <b>Upper Room</b>                          | 90,000       | 29/04/2020    | No          | Hammersmith and Fulham   | 36          | Advice on health and wellbeing and housing and employment Homeless and those at risk of homelessness.   |
| <b>999 Club and Lady Florence Trust</b>    | 90,000       | 29/01/2020    | No          | Lewisham \Greenwich      | 24          | Night shelter and day centre for homeless and those at risk of homelessness. Help and advice offered around benefits, employment, education.                                  |
| <b>The Cinnamon Network</b>                | 49,660       | 29/01/2020    | Yes         | City of London – UK Wide | 18          | Identifying and supporting those delivering faith based social action projects aimed at reducing homelessness with the ability to be replicated through church social action. |
| <b>Hope into Action</b>                    | 97,590       | 29/01/2020    | Yes         | National                 | 36          | Funding partners (churches) to house the homeless – for Homeless and those at risk of homelessness; rough sleepers, those with addictions, refugees etc                       |
| <b>Impact Hub Kings Cross Ltd</b>          | 25,000       | 29/01/2020    | No          | Camden                   | 12          | Mentoring programme for homeless and those at risk of being homeless to develop business and entrepreneurial skills   |
| <b>South Tyneside Churches KEY Project</b> | 90,000       | 29/01/2020    | Yes         | Tyne & Wear              | 36          | Advice and support for vulnerable young people (16-24) and their families.  |
| <b>Hope4barkingdagenham</b>                | 30,000       | 08/10/2019    | Yes         | Barking and Dagenham     | 24          | Shelter for the homeless  |
| <b>King's Lynn Winter Night Shelter</b>    | 75,000       | 08/10/2019    | Yes         | Norfolk                  | 36          | Night-time shelter in winter months. Offer help and support with mental health and addiction to homeless and rough sleepers.  |
| <b>Nehemiah Project</b>                    | 60,000       | 04/07/2019    | Yes         | Lambeth \Croydon         | 36          | Sheltered housing and support and advice for vulnerable men with a history of addiction and crime who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.                              |
| <b>Oasis Community Housing</b>             | 92,051       | 04/07/2019    | Yes         | Tyne & Wear              | 36          | Supported accommodation for those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.  |
| <b>Shelter From The Storm</b>              | 73,200       | 04/07/2019    | No          | Islington                | 36          | Support for a night shelter, providing support, advice and guidance to homeless guests to ultimately help them move out of the shelter  |

|  |         |            |     |                         |    |  |
|--|---------|------------|-----|-------------------------|----|--|
| <b>Passage</b>                             | 100,000 | 28/03/2019 | Yes | Across London           | 36 | Befriending project - those with lived experience volunteer to support those at risk of being homeless from returning to the streets   |
| <b>Beyond Food Foundation</b>              | 45,000  | 30/01/2019 | No  | Across London           | 36 | Cookery apprenticeship scheme, with support and mentoring programme for people who have previously been homeless or at risk of being homeless  |
| <b>The Great Yarmouth Pathway</b>          | 22,000  | 30/01/2019 | Yes | Norfolk                 | 24 | Volunteer run café to support homeless and vulnerable (including families), a range of services / activities are offered at the café including, food vouchers, clothes music sessions etc. |
| <b>700 Club</b>                            | 85,000  | 17/10/2018 | No  | Durham                  | 24 | Supported B&B style accommodation for homeless. Offering help and support with mental health issues, addiction etc...  |
| <b>CARIS Camden: C4WS Homeless Project</b> | 30,000  | 17/10/2018 | Yes | Camden                  | 24 | Funding for a project manager to work in the homeless charity to support guests into job club sessions to ultimately, support their transition out of the shelter                          |
| <b>Caritas - Anchor House</b>              | 75,000  | 17/10/2018 | Yes | Newham                  | 36 | A holistic programme to support homeless people into independent living and ultimately into employment   |
| <b>The Living Room Great Yarmouth</b>      | 24,000  | 17/10/2018 | Yes | Norfolk                 | 24 | A Winter Night Shelter for the homeless  |
| <b>Project 17*</b>                         | 75,000  | 30/05/2019 | No  | London/<br>England wide | 36 | Advice and advocacy around section 17 of the children's act for families with no recourse to public funds.   |
| <b>Open DOOR**</b>                         | 90,000  | 30/05/2020 | Yes | North East              | 36 | Provides support and housing to asylum seekers at risk of/currently experiencing destitution as a result of cessation of Home Office support.  |

*\*Funded under the 'families facing poverty and other challenges' priority area*

*\*\*Funded under the 'refugees' priority area*