

Call for proposals: Understanding the impact of early intervention advice and community housing resilience on preventing homelessness in Bristol

Summary

- This document invites proposals for researchers to undertake qualitative research and quantitative analysis in order to understand the impact of building community housing knowledge and early intervention advice on homelessness prevention in Bristol.
- The research should be focused on homelessness prevention initiatives in Bristol led by Caring in Bristol and CHAS.
- The research will work with on people who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness¹ and communities affected by homelessness in Bristol.
- Proposals will be accepted from applicants working in the UK with a preference for applicants based in Bristol/the South West. We welcome joint applications but ask that a lead applicant is specified.
- The project is expected to begin in Winter 2021 and to be completed by Spring 2024, with deliverables expected at agreed points.
- The maximum budget for this project is £30,000 including VAT & expenses.

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¹ See Appendixes A: 'Defining homelessness' May 2021, CHAS

Timeline

Please use the following timeline & the Outcomes section to inform your proposal.

Date	
15th November 2021	Deadline for proposals
22 nd November 2021	Shortlisted and unsuccessful applicants notified
w/c 29 th November	Interviews for shortlisted applicants (in Bristol or via Zoom)
6 th December 2021	Preferred project agreed by BHPP management committee
December 2021	Project start (or as negotiated)
March 2024	Research completion date

The Bristol Homelessness Prevention Project

The Bristol Homelessness Prevention Project (BHPP) is a new joint project by homelessness charity, Caring in Bristol and housing advice agency, CHAS Bristol (CHAS). Both organisations are proudly Bristolian and share a dedication to tackling the problems the city faces around homelessness. The BHPP brings together unique expertise from each and a wealth of combined experience working in the city.

With funding secured for 3 years, the project aims to better utilise existing measures and find new ways to prevent homelessness in the city. BHPP will be informed by research, responsive to the needs of Bristol's communities and residents. Through a combination of consultation, community outreach and 1-2-1 support the project aims to reach people early, before a potential housing crisis occurs².

We know there are significant barriers to people accessing help - people are still presenting as homeless without having sought advice. This is something that needs to be addressed urgently, as the financial strain caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed many who were 'getting by' into danger.

The BHPP plans to reach people where they already are in the community, surmounting the access barriers many face in accessing help. We plan to maximise our impact through new engagement channels, including the use of co-production groups, community ambassadors, engagement with employers and via social media channels. We intend to reach key regions and groups in the city who would not otherwise access support and advice. Young people and marginalised adults in economically deprived wards of Bristol are a particular priority.

Objectives of the homelessness prevention project:

1. Increase early demand for housing advice, ensuring racial equity is at the heart of our work, identifying and addressing the inequalities that exist between communities facing housing poverty in Bristol

² See Appendices B – BHPP homelessness prevention map



2. Promote early intervention and build community resilience by increasing awareness, accessibility and understanding of housing rights and services
3. Deliver housing advice, advocacy and support directly to people at risk of homelessness in target neighbourhoods of BS13, BS2 and BS5
4. Build and disseminate new evidence for early intervention advice to mobilise additional resources for homelessness prevention in Bristol and UK wide

The researcher/s and research outputs will help us to identify new ways to do the above and measure the effectiveness of our interventions.

About Caring in Bristol and CHAS

Caring in Bristol's vision is creating a city empowered to solve homelessness. We work in imaginative and creative ways with people experiencing or a risk of homelessness, with the public and with community partners to bring about lasting change in Bristol and beyond.

A registered charity, established by volunteers in Bristol in 1987, we have developed from an annual project, Caring at Christmas, into an organisation with particular expertise in preventing the most acute form of homelessness – rough sleeping – and supporting people who have experienced homelessness into settled, independent lives. We work with adults and young people in Bristol, and are supported by 24FTE staff and over 1,000 volunteers from across the city. In the year to March '21, we:

- helped keep 850 people accommodated through the 'Everyone In' homelessness initiative through welfare support and food provision
- together with statutory and voluntary partners supported 353 'Everyone In' participants to move from hotel to temporary accommodation and settle in with food and practical support
- supported 20 highly vulnerable, precariously housed young people to make dramatic improvements in their lives, in areas such as finance, housing, self-esteem and ability to cope with life

Our values

Collaboration

We learn, share and work with everyone in our community to create services that best meet need. Our beneficiaries inform the design, delivery, and evaluation of our work. We collect and apply evidence to build partnerships and embed our impact.

People first

We value human relations, and the strengths people have and are committed to positive change and development in everyone. We will take positive risks with people. We hold that the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers is integral to the positive impact we can make with our beneficiaries. We are inclusive and celebrate diversity.

Focus on the end goal

We work with our beneficiaries and volunteers to achieve their ambitions. We are here to make ourselves no longer needed and want Bristol to be the first major city to end homelessness.

Established in 1965, **CHAS Bristol** provides specialist housing advice, practical support and advocacy for people in housing crisis; particularly those at risk of homelessness. Our mission is to help clients achieve lasting solutions - a safe, permanent home appropriate for their needs. Our clients are predominantly low income families, the majority living in inner city Bristol where we are based, or estates around the city boundaries. Last year, we helped almost 970 people at risk of homelessness last year, in over 420 households.

We pride ourselves in working with clients **for as long as it takes** to solve their housing issues, and going beyond simply giving advice. For example, we support clients in emotional distress, refer clients to foodbanks, and advocate on a client's behalf with different agencies. We also partner with community based organisations to help hard to reach clients.

The brief

We are seeking a skilled and experienced individual, organisation or partnership to support our learning and undertake research, analysis and support evaluation of the impact of the BHPP for people in Bristol. This research is part of a wider project to use evidence to design our work and influence others. Throughout this project, we will work openly and transparently, using a learning notes approach to publicly discuss the interventions we have trialled, our successes and what has not worked. The successful researcher/s will help hold us to account in this commitment.

The research as a whole will provide an evaluation of the impact of building community resilience/knowledge and early intervention and add to evidence showing what works to prevent homelessness in Bristol and beyond. Caring in Bristol and CHAS aim to use the learnings of the BHPP to influence local and national decision makers and to secure positive funding and policy change for our communities. The appointed individual/group will support in disseminating the findings.

The aims of this research are to:

- Explore the key barriers to people accessing and acting upon housing advice before crisis in Bristol and evaluate the impact of different approaches on different target groups. Specifically, young people, people from Black and Ethnic Minority backgrounds and people living in East and South Bristol.
- Understand if, and how best community resilience and knowledge building can prevent homelessness in Bristol.

The researcher/s will work together with the Prevention Project team to best utilise resources and skills. It is essential that the research approach builds trust with community organisations, organisers, leaders and members³.

The research should answer the following questions:

- Why do individuals within the groups identified decide to try to access and act upon advice?
 - How do the groups identified view independent advice and support agencies?
 - What are the barriers to accessing housing advice for the groups identified?
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- What are the barriers to acting upon advice for the groups identified?
- How do the attitudes, behaviour and motivation differ across the demographics of the target groups?

We also want to evaluate:

- What impact does early intervention outreach, support and advice have on homelessness prevention in Bristol?
- What is the impact of working with trusted community members to building community knowledge of advice routes on reducing homelessness?

The methodology

We invite applicants to suggest appropriate methodology that answer the research questions within the budget available. We are able to facilitate the following methods, but we are open to other methods and would welcome hearing the rationale for these.

- 1-1 interviews with appropriate sample of the people who use CHAS and Caring in Bristol's services over the course of the research, repeated at intervals to help identify the impact of our interventions and of systemic barriers.
- Focus group sessions with people who use CHAS and Caring in Bristol's services over the course of the research.
- 1-1 interviews or focus groups with people who have been trained as Community Ambassadors, repeated at intervals to help identify the impact of their training, knowledge and confidence in homelessness/housing issues.
- Support to identify and reach research participants who fit within the project target groups, but who are not CHAS or Caring in Bristol's clients
- Support to reach key voluntary and statutory partners in the City
- Analysis of client outcomes held in CHAS and Caring in Bristol's databases
- Analysis of relevant quantitative and qualitative housing and homelessness data and trends

Some work is already underway within the team to measure baselines at the start of this project. Suggestions for these are;

- Baseline levels of community knowledge of housing/homelessness advice
 - o This includes trusted people and points in communities, this might be community workers, volunteers, colleagues/line managers, teaching assistants, pub landlords or religious leaders
- Baseline levels of community trust of organisations (CHAS, advice centres, Caring in Bristol etc) who could provide advice/support
- How many people access advice when they are in crisis/at what point do people first acknowledge that they are in crisis?
- Do Caring in Bristol & CHAS currently well support people to access and act upon professional housing advice?

Applicants should set out potential challenges in data collections and how they would ensure these are addressed.

Ethical sensitivities

We have identified the following ethical risks of this research. Please outline how you would mitigate these risks across all stages of the research process.

- Risk that the research process and discussing experiences is traumatising or retraumatising for the respondents
- Risk that respondents views are not represented or are not clearly reported
- Risk of breach of confidentiality and GDPR legislation, through disclosure of participants identity when it has been requested to be withheld.

Outputs

The key outputs will be;

- Initial work with the project team to research baseline data in the first 4 months. You should be prepared for this to form part of the BHPP public learning notes approach.
- A draft presentation and indication of findings at 30 months
- A final written report which sets out the methodology and analysis and highlights key findings and recommendations
- Presentation and discussion of research findings and recommendations at least 2 events throughout the project duration
- Lead by the BHPP team, to be involved in relevant dissemination activity throughout the project and beyond the launch to be agreed as findings emerge. These will include posts on our learning blog, sharing findings with community groups and academic or policy settings.

It's vital that the findings and any recommendations are presented in a way that they are easily understood by a wide range of audiences. Supported by the Caring in Bristol communication team, you should be willing to comment on different methods of communicating the findings.

Project management

The project will be managed and monitored by the Bristol Homelessness Prevention Project Manager, with supervision by the CHAS and Caring in Bristol management committee. The research is an integral part of the Prevention Project and we want to create a collaborative approach with regular touchpoints for discussion, sharing and testing findings and influencing the direct work of the prevention outreach and casework team as the project progresses.

The successful applicant/s will be expected to work with CHAS and Caring in Bristol on monitoring, evaluation and influencing as part of this project. They will also be expected to engage with the co-production groups that Caring in Bristol/CHAS will coordinate directly.

Budget

The maximum budget for this work is £30 000 over the course of three years. This is more heavily weighted in the first year and final year.

Year 1 - £12,000

Year 2 - £5000

Year 3 - £13,000

The budget must cover project planning, delivery, attendance at advisory & co-production group meetings, monitoring meetings, report writing and attendance at launch.

Proposal information

Proposals should lay out how your work will address the brief. Please include the following;

- Details of the proposed methodology and stakeholders you will engage with
- A timeline for completion of work
- The relevant experience of the individual or group delivering the project, including CVs of those involved.
- Reference details
- A breakdown of costs
- A summary of risks and ethical considerations and how these will be mitigated
- Quality assurance and data protection processes, including adherence to GDPR

Format:

Please do not exceed 6 pages for proposals, excluding appendixes including a workplan, CVs and references.

Documents should be sent via email to jessie.seal@caringinbristol.org.uk by 5pm on 15th November 2021. If you do not receive confirmation of receipt, please ring 0117 924 4444 to confirm.

Evaluation criteria

We will evaluate the proposals on the following criteria:

1. Extent to which the proposal meets the brief
2. The applicants' experience of similar research and analysis including;
 - a. Extensive knowledge and experience of conducting research using participatory face to face methods
 - b. Extensive experience of communicating and working with vulnerable people and stakeholder agencies
 - c. Ability to conduct robust beneficiary profiling and desk research using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies



3. The applicants' knowledge of the homelessness and housing advice sector in Bristol and in England
4. Costs and value for money
5. Ability to meet the above timeline

Contact details

We welcome approach from those interested in applying, please contact our Bristol Homelessness Prevention Project Manager, Jessie Seal by email to arrange a conversation prior to applying: jessie.seal@caringinbristol.org.uk

About CHAS

For over 50 years, CHAS Bristol has been providing specialist housing advice, practical support and advocacy for people in housing crisis; particularly those at risk of homelessness. We aim to help clients achieve lasting solutions - a safe, permanent home appropriate for their needs. Our clients are predominantly low income families living in inner city Bristol where we are based, or estates around the city boundaries.

Defining homelessness

The prevailing image of homelessness is rough sleeping, but it includes a much broader set of situations that people find themselves. Leading homelessness charities Crisis and Shelter have developed their own guidance to include what we call the 'hidden homeless'.

Crisis have the following definition:

*"An applicant is to be considered homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be **reasonable for them to continue to live in**. An applicant would be considered to be 'threatened with homelessness' if this were to occur in the next 56 days [from the point of application to a relevant agency]."*

Shelter UK puts this much more simply:

*"You may be homeless if you're sleeping rough, don't have rights to stay where you are or if **you live in unsuitable housing; you can be homeless even if you have a roof over your head.**"*

[Shelter UK](#) and [Crisis](#) recognise that there are a variety of situations that may fit into these definitions, including those who are:

- > sofa surfing or staying with friends or family;
- > staying in a hostel, night shelter or B&B, women's refuge or temporary private and social housing;
- > squatting (because you have no legal right to stay);
- > living in unsuitable accommodation such as 'beds in sheds' or vehicles without a parking right;
- > at risk of violence or abuse in their home;
- > **living in poor conditions that affect their mental and/or physical health; and / or**
- > **living apart from their family because they don't have a place to live together.**

Some people can be more vulnerable to homelessness including anyone: *"leaving home for the first time, or leaving care or prison; pregnant with nowhere to stay when the baby comes; struggling to live on benefits or a low income; from abroad without the right to claim benefits; an asylum seeker or refugee.* Sometimes, despite severe overcrowding or disrepair, families are in a better position if they do not go down the homelessness route, as if the council accept a homelessness duty, they will be on a lower priority for rehousing.

At CHAS Bristol we aim to support people early on in their situation to ensure people spend as little time as possible in a housing or homelessness crisis.

Sometimes this means supporting people out of unsuitable housing, whether it be overcrowded or in disrepair; they may even be living in their cars. In other instances, it involves supporting those facing eviction, this could be a 'section 21 no fault' eviction, an illegal eviction or a lodger eviction. We also work to support those in financial hardship: some may have accumulated rent arrears from unemployment, while others, particularly migrants and asylum seekers, may be unable to claim benefits because of their 'no recourse to public funds' immigration status.

We call these people the 'hidden homeless' or otherwise they may face homelessness in the imminent future.

Below are some examples of recent people we have worked with, experiencing severe overcrowding or disrepair:

Case Study: Farah- homeless due to housing conditions

Farah, her partner, two children and newborn baby were living in a one-bed, privately rented flat which was poorly heated and infested with mice and rats. Working with the midwife, CHAS organised a council inspection to recognise the accommodation as overcrowded and unsafe for habitation. After visiting, the council increased the family's rehousing band, increasing their chance of being rehoused. The waiting list however was over a year..

CHAS completed a homelessness application for the family and they were offered two-bedroom temporary accommodation. We also inked Farah into local partners Missing Link, a mental health service. Following multiple moving-in delays, further adding to the pressure on Farah's mental health, the family finally were temporarily rehoused, with more room, warmth, and a home safe for their children.

*Throughout the situation, Farah and **her family were classed as homeless despite always having a roof over their head.** Their house was overcrowded, infested with rats and mice and poorly heated; all of these factors make the home **unsafe and unsuitable.** While the family are safer now, they **continue to be classed as homeless as their housing is temporary** and we continue to help them look for a home providing a more permanent and secure base.*

Case Study: Cawo- Overcrowded but no options via the homelessness pathways

Cawo, her partner and 10 children are living in a 2-bed flat with a council tenancy. Despite the severity of the situation, they have been stuck in the cramped flat for several years. Although they have been bidding on property with the highest priority banding, Band 1, since July 2017, they have been unable to move because there are few properties large enough for their family.

The family are likely eligible for a property of at least 6 bedrooms, but such a size is very rare. Even a 4-bed property would be a marked improvement, but these are reserved for families who would not be overcrowded; Cawo and her family are therefore kept on hold and as a result are never offered larger properties.

*Cawo and her family are **legally classified as homeless** because although they have a tenancy, it is not 'reasonable for them to continue to occupy', because of the severe and statutory overcrowding. The council have a duty to rehouse those who are homeless, yet if Cawo makes a homelessness application, it would only further delay their move.*

Their 2017 effective date (which supports their rehousing) would be lost, replaced with the 2021 date of their homelessness application; whilst their priority for rehousing would drop from Band 1 (the highest) to Band 3 (the homeless priority). Throughout these delays they would continue to remain in the same flat, as the council doesn't have any suitable temporary accommodation for a household their size. This family are stuck; they had fallen through the gaps in service provision, and CHAS are the agency who is trying to link them in to services to move them forwards.

These are just two examples of people who might not be considered 'homeless' through a narrower definition. At CHAS, many of our clients are the 'hidden homeless', for whom barriers into housing (language, post-traumatic stress, mental health issues, physical health issues, financial issues) are often as complex and intractable as those rough sleeping.