

The Cardinal Hume Centre's Theory of Change

June 2021

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1. Introduction

In March 2020, we published our three year Business Plan (2020-2023), which documented our renewed commitment to working with children, young people and families to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. Previously to this, we had been working with anyone who was vulnerable to, or experiencing, homelessness or poverty in the Westminster area. However, in line with the evidence base that identifies a link between the risk of homelessness with childhood poverty and adverse childhood experiences¹, as well as our charitable objects², it was clear to us that we should be investing a greater proportion of our resources on supporting the needs of children, young people and families.

In line with our Benedictine ethos and welcome, however, we did not want to simply turn people away if they did not fit this criteria. Rather, we wanted to think hard about what our support offer should be in order to support some of the most vulnerable adults we work with.

The launch of the 2020/23 Business Plan led, therefore, to a significant period of internal reflection and consultation to ensure we carefully considered:

- 1) How our current services are meeting the needs of our renewed client base;
- 2) What our role should be in continuing to support the most vulnerable adults we work with;
- 3) If/how we need to adapt or develop our services to ensure we have the greatest impact.

To help us do this, we decided to embark on a Theory of Change (ToC) process³.

“[A theory of change process] encourages us to reflect on our aims and plans, to discuss them with others and make them explicit. The output from a theory of change process describes how we believe our activities will lead to the outcomes and impacts we want to achieve.” (NPC, 2019:3)¹

1.1 About this report

This report is the ‘narrative’ that sits behind our Theory of Change; it aims to capture the range of discussions, thinking and evidence that underpin our ToC. It also introduces a set of Service Development ideas and innovations that have emerged during this process, which we believe will support us to deliver our mission and increase our impact.

It’s important to state, however, that we see this as being the beginning of the process. As NCVO recently noted, *“a theory of change should be a living document – it should be revisited as new evidence emerges or as you develop new ways of working”* (NCVO KnowHow, 2020). We are therefore committed to returning to our ToC on a regular basis to ensure we reflect on our performance and we take into account the most up-to-date evidence and insights regarding the needs of our clients and the effectiveness of our interventions.

¹ Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018 ‘Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk?’, in Housing Studies, 33:1, 96 - 116.

² “[Our role is] to advise, assist and counsel young persons who are in need, and their families, in order to promote their mental, spiritual and physical welfare” (CHC, Charitable Object)

³ For information on the process, please see appendix one

2. Our Theory of change

Below is a diagram of our current Theory of Change. It documents the range of activities we will provide to our clients, as well as the intermediate outcomes we will contribute to, in order to both alleviate crisis as well as contribute to our clients' longer-term outcomes. The diagram also references our enablers⁴ that we believe will support us to implement our theory of change, as well as the assumptions that underpin it.

NB. For ease of reading, we have included two additional diagrams that focus in on our activities and outcomes.

Key:

Who we work with

Our activities

Intermediate outcomes

Enablers

Assumptions

⁴ I.e. The conditions and factors we believe are essential for the theory to work.

Enablers

We offer a breadth of services and specialist expertise

We welcome and listen to our clients, and take the time that is needed to bring about change

We seek to work in a Psychologically Informed way and focus on people's strength and potential

Our building is an asset that we can use for the benefit of our clients

We invest in effective partnerships to ensure we take account of clients' holistic needs

We will use our knowledge and learning to influence the wider system for the benefit of our clients

We are committed to continuous learning and delivering evidence-informed services

The Cardinal Hume Centre Theory of Change, June 2021

Breaking the cycle of Poverty and Homelessness for our clients



Longer term outcomes



Whilst there are considerable structural issues that cause poverty and homelessness that does not mean that personal improvements cannot be achieved for individuals and families.

What we do - over time



A stronger focus on particular client groups is critical to building impact and effectiveness.

Crisis prevention outcomes



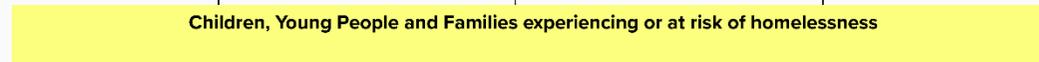
Being a stable presence in the lives of our clients builds trust, which enables us to be a stronger support

What we do - as soon as possible



There are other strong, organisations who are campaigning and influencing policy change, so our resources are best used to support them by sharing our experience and learning.

Who we work with



Longer term outcomes

Effective signposting and referrals to ensure clients' longer-term needs will be met

Knowledge of housing options supports people to make good choices and decisions

Crisis prevention outcomes

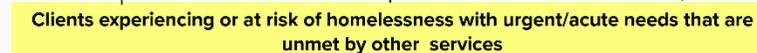


What we do - as soon as possible



If parents have hope and aspirations it is more likely their children will too

Other clients we support



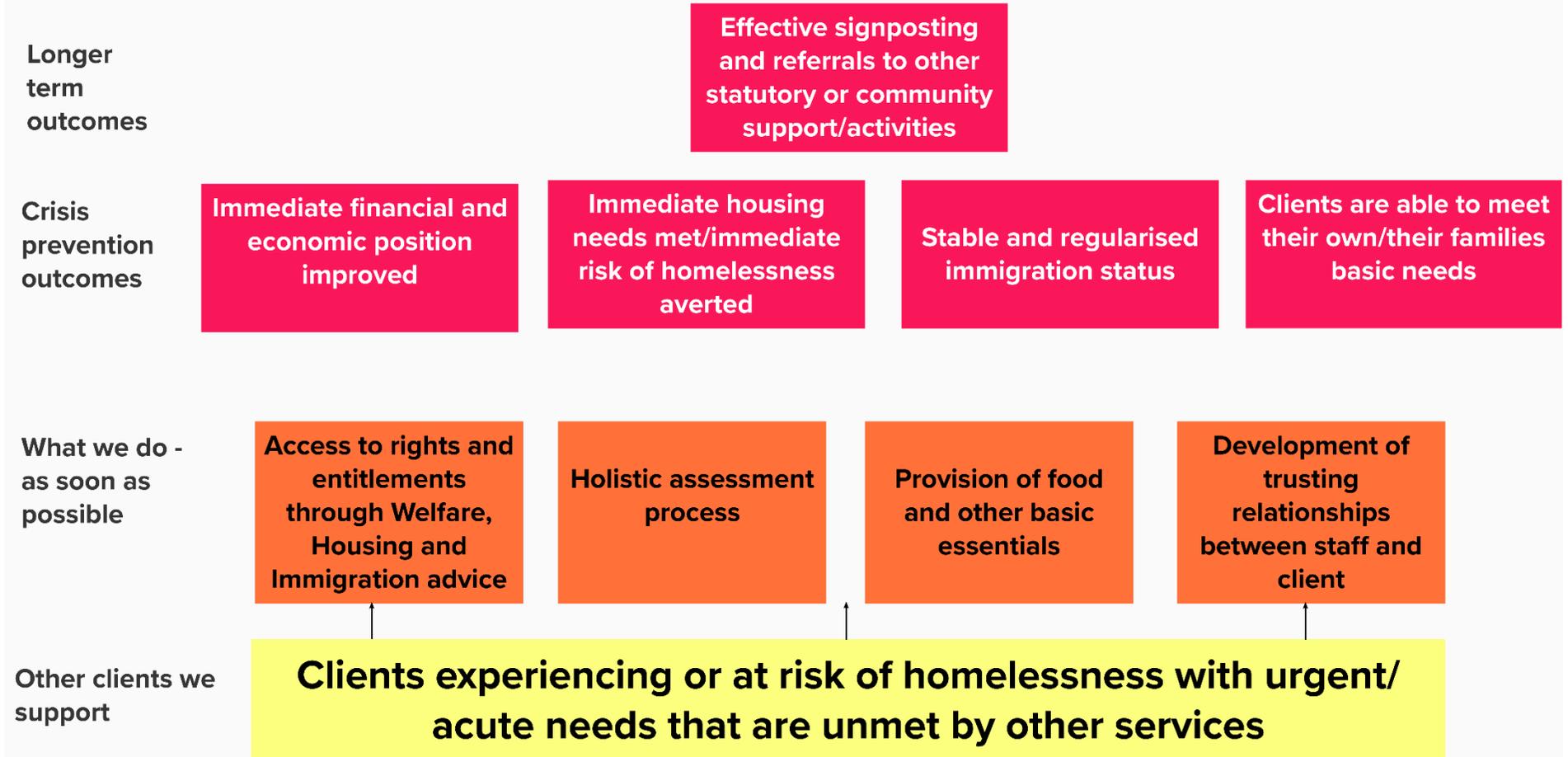
The Cardinal Hume Centre Theory of Change, June 2021

Breaking the cycle of Poverty and Homelessness for our clients



The Cardinal Hume Centre Theory of Change, June 2021

Breaking the cycle of Poverty and Homelessness for our clients



2.1 Who we work with

It is clear from the evidence that:

- 1) Homelessness and poverty are experienced by a significant number of people in the UK today, including children, young people and families.
- 2) The risks of homelessness and poverty are interrelated.
- 3) Childhood experiences of poverty and homelessness, as well as other adverse experiences, play a significant part in determining one's future risk of both homelessness and poverty.
- 4) Without access to immediate support, people may be at risk of experiencing extreme destitution, which is contrary to our Benedictine ethos.

As such, we will direct the majority of our resources to working with Children, Young People and Families who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. We will also continue to work with clients who are at risk of homelessness whose urgent or acute needs cannot be unmet by other services and/or who are particularly vulnerable, thus denying them access to support would increase their immediate risk of homelessness or poverty.

2.1.1 The evidence base

Recent data suggests that there are a large number of households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in the UK, and/or are living in precarious or unstable accommodation⁵; many of these are households with children⁶. In 2019/20, an estimated 121,000 young people were also experiencing homelessness⁷, although these figures did not take into account 'hidden homelessness'⁸. In addition, 14.4 million people in the UK are living in families in poverty, including 4.5 million children (33% of all children)⁹, and 2.5 million food parcels were provided by Food Banks in the Trussell Trust network across the UK in 2020/21¹⁰.

The causes and risk factors associated with experiencing homelessness and poverty are numerous and often inter-related¹¹. The risks span both structural and individual factors including:

- Limited supply of good quality housing, reduced social housing and high housing costs;
- Unemployment, low pay and fragile employment;
- Welfare reform and cuts to local services.
- Relationship breakdown and domestic violence;
- Mental health, trauma and adverse childhood experiences;
- Poor educational attainment or experiences;

⁵ MHCLG, 2020

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Centre Point, 2020

⁸ Hidden homelessness – “*people without a place to call home but are hidden from official statistics and not receiving support*” (London Assembly Housing Committee, 2017:1)

⁹ Social Metrics Commission, 2020

¹⁰ Trussell Trust, 2021

¹¹ Johnsen and Watts, 2014:ii/iii

- Leaving care and other institutions¹².

Certain groups have been found to be more at risk of homelessness. For example, an individual's childhood experiences, such as their experience of family homelessness or poverty, can have a particular impact on their future homelessness risk¹³, whilst the importance of a safe, healthy and stable home has also been noted to be a protective factor against living in poverty¹⁴. The age at which someone first experiences homelessness has also been associated with increased risk of homelessness¹⁵. Migrants have also been found to be at particular risk of poor quality, overcrowded and high turnover housing¹⁶ as well as being at higher risk of poverty¹⁷, given the restrictions that are placed upon them in terms of accessing the housing market, paid employment, access to benefits and the statutory homelessness system¹⁸, as well as reduced access to affordable, specialist immigration advice¹⁹.

2.2 Our outcomes

The evidence base shows that the impacts of homelessness and poverty are multi-faceted and wide ranging, and can have long lasting effects. As such, it is clear to us that we need to take a holistic approach, recognising the range of ways that these experiences can impact on our clients' lives. We also need to do all that we can to ensure the immediate and future risks of homelessness and poverty are averted and, where possible, lessen or alleviate the impact that these experiences may have on our clients to ensure they are able to realise their full potential.

To do this, we will strive to meet our clients' immediate needs and alleviate crisis by focusing on the following crisis prevention outcomes:

- Immediate financial and economic position improved
- Immediate housing needs are met and/or the immediate risk of homelessness is averted
- Stable and regularised immigration status secured
- Clients are able to meet their own/their family's basic needs.

However, dealing with client's immediate needs won't remove all of the risk factors associated with preventing homelessness and poverty in the future; nor will it help to alleviate the impact that these experiences may have had on our clients. Therefore, for the children, young people and families we work with, we will also focus on the following longer-term outcomes:

- Secure, stable and suitable accommodation
 - Manageable rent/housing costs
 - Accommodation is suitable for family size and needs
 - Improved security of tenure

¹² See Boswell et al, 2018; Westminster City Council, 2019; Alma Economics, 2019; Social Metrics Commission, 2020; JRF, 2021; JRF, 2021a; Lewer et al, 2019.

¹³ Bramley et al, 2015:28

¹⁴ JRF, 2021; Social Metrics Commission, 2020

¹⁵ Alma Economics, 2019; Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2018; JRF 2014

¹⁶ Pemberton et al, 2014; Hughes and Kenway, 2016;

¹⁷ Social Metrics Commission, 2020; JRF, 2014; Hughes and Kenway, 2016:2

¹⁸ Crisis, 2018:129

¹⁹ Amnesty International, 2016; Hutton & Harris, 2020

- Improve educational opportunities and attainment including:
 - Improved school readiness for under 5s
 - Improved school attainment and confidence in learning
 - Enhancing employment skills
 - Increased proficiency in communicating in English
 - Improved digital literacy skills
- Improve their financial and economic stability including:
 - Improved access to sustainable employment opportunities
 - Access to skills and experience that enhance a client’s career prospects
 - Immigration status secured
- Increase their resilience and wellbeing including:
 - Strengthened family relationships
 - Improved social and cultural capital/community connections
 - Improved self-confidence and self-efficacy

We will also ensure we effectively signpost and refer our other clients to external support and services, to ensure their longer-term needs will be met.

2.2.1 The evidence base

The experience of homelessness, as well as unstable or inappropriate housing, disrupts lives and can impact on one’s psychological wellbeing, physical health, education, employment, family and community relationships, and daily life challenges²⁰. Specifically for children and young people, the experience of homelessness has been found to impact on them physically, emotionally, socially and educationally²¹. The impact of poverty is also significant and wide ranging, affecting:

- One’s ability to meet their own or their family’s basic needs;
- Physical health including birth weight, nutrition, immunity and neurodevelopment;
- Educational outcomes and attainment;
- Access to good quality, affordable housing;
- Levels of stress, uncertainty and conflict in a household;
- Mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience, and self-efficacy;
- One’s risk of social exclusion and reduced social participation²².

For example, “*persistently disadvantaged children (i.e. on free school meals for >80% of their school life were on average 22 months behind their more advantaged peers and this has not improved since 2011*”²³. The two-way relationship between poverty and mental health is also becoming increasingly clear, with studies demonstrating that prevalence of mental illnesses map closely with deprivation²⁴. For example, it has been found that the poorest fifth of the population are twice as likely to be at

²⁰ Digby and Fu, 2017; Pleace, 2019; McCallum and Rich, 2018; Leng, 2017; Reynolds, 2005; Shelter, 2017

²¹ Digby and Fu, 2017

²² Ryzin et al, 2018; Social Metrics Commission, 2020; Andrews et al, 2017; Elliott, 2016; Asmussen et al, 2020; Fell and Hewstone, 2015; Evans, 2016; Quaker Social Action, 2020; JRF, 2016.

²³ Hutchinson et al, 2020:8

²⁴ Elliott, 2016:63

risk of developing mental health problems, and young people aged 10 to 15 years with low socio-economic status have a 2.5 higher prevalence of anxiety or depressed mood compared to their peers with high socio-economic status²⁵. The reasons for this are multiple, including the impact that one's physical environment can have on wellbeing (both access to nature as well as one's built environment i.e. housing) as well as issues such as unemployment and debt²⁶. The accessibility and effectiveness of treatment for some mental illnesses has also been found to be lower in deprived areas²⁷.

Overall, irrespective of age, the impacts of homelessness and poverty can be substantial and wide-ranging, and they are often inter-related. However, when experienced as a child or young person, evidence suggests that it has the potential to impact on their physical, emotional and educational development, thus impacting on them for the rest of their lives²⁸.

2.3 Our activities

In summary, the evidence tells us that:

- 1) Access to information, advice and guidance is critical to ensure people are receiving the support they are entitled to and that they can navigate what is often a complex system.
- 2) Access to sustainable employment that pays a decent wage and offers progression opportunities plays a key role in breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty.
- 3) Youth homelessness can have a long-term imprint on adulthood, however, supported accommodation can help individuals transition to more independent living.
- 4) Strengthening social networks and social capital can have a protective influence on emotional wellbeing and resilience.
- 5) Targeted prevention and early intervention activities play a crucial role in mitigating or reducing the risk factors associated with homelessness, as well as alleviating or offsetting the impact that these experiences may have on individuals' future life chances.
- 6) The way support is provided can impact on the outcomes achieved for clients.
- 7) Action at the individual level alone won't alleviate all of the risks of homelessness and poverty; system change is a necessary part of the solution.
- 8) A multi-pronged approach is necessary.

In line with this evidence base, we will provide the following activities for all of our clients as soon as possible:

- **A holistic assessment process in a safe and confidential space:** We recognise that clients' needs are often complex and multi-layered, thus, to fully understand someone's needs we need to take time to listen and not assume we know what an individual's needs may be. By investing in a holistic assessment process, it will help us to provide our clients with the best possible support (either directly or indirectly), as well as begin the

²⁵ Elliott, 2016:16/17

²⁶ Elliott, 2016:63; Mind, 2021

²⁷ Hodgson et al, 2020:15

²⁸ Elliott, 2016:25

- **Access to specialist information, advice and guidance:** This will cover welfare, housing and immigration advice to ensure our clients are supported to access all of their rights and entitlements, and have their individual needs advocated for. Through our support, advocacy, casework and legal representation, we aim to raise clients' awareness of their rights as well as increase their skills and confidence in order that they can better advocate for themselves in the future.
- **Provision of food and other basic essentials:** This will help us to eliminate the risk of extreme destitution for our clients.
- **24 hour supported accommodation for homeless 16-24 year olds:** We will provide supported accommodation for an average of 12-18 months, with the residents' needs and aspirations at the centre of everything we do.
- **Development of trusting relationships:** We will intentionally invest time in building trusting relationships with our clients by a) giving them the time they need, b) supporting them over the longer-term and c) offering a range of services under one roof.
- **Effective signposting and referrals:** We will actively signpost and refer our clients to other statutory or community support to ensure their range of needs are being met.

To help reduce children, young people and families' future risk of homelessness and poverty, we will also provide:

- **Social, cultural and educational/developmental opportunities:** This will include activities such as: homework support; after school clubs; family drop-ins/stay and play sessions; a life skills programme; English language skills; digital literacy skills; and social/cultural trips/outings.
- **A community space:** We will use our community space to help nurture family and community relationships, and support learning needs.
- **Support into sustainable employment:** We will provide support to clients across the employment pathway. This will include offering training and development opportunities, pre-entry employment support (e.g. CV and interview skills) as well as in-work support.

2.3.1 The evidence base

Access to information, advice and guidance

The provision of housing, welfare and immigration advice plays an essential role in ensuring that individuals are able to protect their rights, navigate often complex and ever-changing systems, and access the support they are entitled in line with provisions made under a range of UK housing, welfare and immigration legislation²⁹. However, it has been noted that 1) access to appropriate IAG before reaching crisis point, particularly in the housing sector, is not always easy to find³⁰ 2), access to advice for 16-25 year olds as well as BAME communities has recently been reduced³¹, and 3)

²⁹ See Advice Services Alliance, 2020: 9; Robson, 2018; Finn and Goodship, 2014; Shelter, 2016:14

³⁰ Robson, 2018:2; Centre Point 2019:6

³¹ Advice Services Alliance, 2020

access to specialist advice is in short supply in relation to immigration law (particularly OISC Level 2 and above), welfare benefits and housing³².

Employment and learning

The role of employment in reducing poverty and the risk of homelessness has been noted, helping individuals to increase their income and thus sustain an independent life³³. However, whilst employment can still be an important route out of poverty, “in-work poverty” is an increasing problem, due, in part, to rising housing costs, reductions in benefit levels and increasing numbers of people in low paid and insecure jobs³⁴. Therefore, there is stronger recognition that the nature and sustainability of employment, as well as one’s future employment/career prospects, plays a critical part. In light of this, training and upskilling individuals so that they can access, and then progress in, the employment market is essential³⁵. Access to support throughout the employment pathway, including in-work support, has also been found to be effective³⁶, as well as identifying jobs that make adequate use of people’s skill sets³⁷.

Youth homelessness

Recent research undertaken by Centre Point demonstrates the vulnerability and risks faced by many homeless young people, including sexual assault, violence and crime, and loneliness and social isolation³⁸. One of the main causes of youth homelessness was found to be family breakdown, therefore it is noted that “*young people often enter homelessness from living situations where they were economically dependent on an adult*”³⁹; however, access to affordable housing options is increasingly difficult for young people, particularly with under 25s receiving a reduced universal credit standard allowance⁴⁰. Adolescence is recognised to be a very formative time therefore the experiences of homelessness at this time are “*likely to leave a long-term imprint on their adulthood*”⁴¹. As such, interventions that prevent the occurrence of youth homelessness, such as an increase in mental health support, family mediation services, and better partnership working between key agencies involved in young peoples’ lives, are strongly supported⁴².

Current evidence recognises the important role that supported accommodation can play for young homelessness people⁴³, helping young people to build on their strengths and resilience in order to “*move out of homelessness, address their immediate needs and develop their capacity to live independently*”⁴⁴. Lessons learned about the effectiveness of supported accommodation by Homeless Link demonstrates the importance of:

- Building trusting, positive and consistent relationships between staff and clients;
- Strong, multi-agency partnerships leading to the integration of external services into hostel provision;

³² Hutton and Harris, 2020:13; Advice Services Alliance, 2020:5 & 89

³³ See Judge and Slaughter, 2020:5; Gray, 2020.

³⁴ See Innes, 2020; JRF, 2018; Crisis, 2018

³⁵ Luchinskaya and Green, 2016

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Luchinskaya and Green, 2016:4; Centre for Mental Health, 2021

³⁸ Centre Point 2019:10; Homeless Link Research Team, 2020:25

³⁹ Centre Point 2019:13

⁴⁰ Centre Point, 2019:15; Homeless Link, Research Team, 2020:22; Harding, 2018:4

⁴¹ Homeless Link Research Team, 2020:13

⁴² Homeless Link Research Team, 2020:11; Centre Point, 2016

⁴³ See St Basils, 2020:35; Homeless Link, 2018a

⁴⁴ Homeless Link, 2018a:4; Homeless Link Research Team, 2020

- Access to specialist mental health services and emotional support “*where their experience of adversity is recognised*”;
- Access to other advisory services;
- Access to education, training and employment; and
- Opportunities to participate in hobbies and interests⁴⁵.

Increasing social connections and social capital

Evidence suggests that access to different forms of capital – be they financial, physical, human, public or social – can help to alleviate the impacts of poverty⁴⁶. In fact, research into levels of destitution in the UK found that certain groups, particularly migrants, were often “*seriously disadvantaged with regard to accessing both cash and in-kind forms of support*”⁴⁷. Increasing access to social networks, and increasing one’s social capital, has also been found to have a protective influence on emotional wellbeing and resilience into later life⁴⁸ and it can increase one’s access to a range of material, social, psychological and economic resources⁴⁹.

Early intervention and prevention

For many years, the moral and economic imperative to focus on prevention and early intervention has been building, given both the human and economic costs associated with a range of social problems⁵⁰. In relation to homelessness, preventative approaches have been found to be effective “*even in the face of unfavourable structural trends*”⁵¹ and “*small efficiencies in keeping people housed yield disproportionately large reductions in homelessness*”⁵². Prevention can include universal prevention, targeted prevention, crisis prevention, emergency prevention and recovery prevention⁵³; in other words, preventative measures can be provided both to reduce upstream risk as well as prevent further or repeat crisis.

Early intervention has also been shown to be effective at reducing one’s risk, as well as the impact, of adverse experiences, particularly when the support is “*sufficiently intensive and reaches the families who need it the most*”⁵⁴. It is known that “*during the first five years of a child’s life, the brain is at its most flexible, making this a critical period for learning and growth*”⁵⁵, thus supporting parents to be able to provide for their children’s physical, social and emotional needs at this time is critical and can impact on future life chances⁵⁶. However, interventions at all stages of childhood, including adolescence, have been found to be effective⁵⁷.

⁴⁵ Homeless Link Research Team, 2020; Centre Point, 2016

⁴⁶ See Matthews and Besemer, 2014;

⁴⁷ Fitzpatrick et al, 2020:58

⁴⁸ Elliott, 2016

⁴⁹ Elliott, 2016:21

⁵⁰ See Crisis, 2018; Fowler et al, 2019;

⁵¹ Alma Economics, 2019; JRF, 2014;

⁵² Fowler et al, 2019:465

⁵³ Fitzpatrick et al, 2019

⁵⁴ Molly, 2019

⁵⁵ First Five Years Fund, 2021

⁵⁶ See Save the Children, 2016; Fell and Hewstone, 2015; UK Trauma Council, 2020

⁵⁷ Early Intervention Foundation, 2021

How help is provided matters

For a number of years, there has been growing interest in understanding the benefits of ‘how’ help and support is provided. Publications such as Nesta’s ‘Good and Bad Help’⁵⁸ and Julia Unwin’s work around ‘Kindness, emotions and human relationships’⁵⁹ demonstrate this, along with increasing recognition of the value of strength-based, person-centred and whole family approaches⁶⁰. Taken together, these approaches put greater emphasis on:

- The power of human relationships and connections to create change;
- The value of tapping into, or building on, the strengths and capabilities of individuals and communities;
- Viewing people as resourceful and resilient in the face of adversity; and
- Providing services that are tailored and relevant to individual circumstances⁶¹.

In the homelessness sector specifically, recognition is given to the value of Psychologically or Trauma-Informed approaches, whereby the impact of past trauma, and the role of services in mitigating further trauma, are influencing the way in which services are being designed and delivered⁶² in order to support the development of trusting relationships that can be “*translated into action points for change*”⁶³. In addition, the value of providing support at transition periods, offering sustained services and providing intensive case management support, have also been found to be effective in the homelessness sector⁶⁴.

Systems change

It is well known that there are a number of structural, or system-wide issues, which contribute to one’s risk of homelessness and/or poverty. For example, the impact of: welfare reform; the availability of good quality, affordable homes; the employment market and legislative frameworks (e.g. around minimum wage); access to affordable childcare; access to good quality education; and the immigration system⁶⁵. A number of national organisations therefore actively campaign for changes in the system and see this as an important part of the solution to solving homelessness and poverty⁶⁶.

However, it is recognised that not all organisations can or should be focused solely on systems change at the detriment of dealing with people’s immediate needs⁶⁷. Rather, it is important for organisations to reflect on what their role should be in relation to systems change and how they can incorporate systems thinking into their activities and organisational culture. Abercrombie et al (2015), for example, identified four ways in which charities can tackle social problems in a more systemic way, including: challenging themselves on mission; advocating on system improvements based on the lessons they learn from their own front-line delivery as well as clients’ lived experience;

⁵⁸ Wilson et al, 2018

⁵⁹ Unwin, 2018

⁶⁰ Baron and Stanley, 2019; Homeless Link National Practice Team, 2021; Centre point, 2016:15

⁶¹ Unwin, 2018: 39; Nesta and Osca, 2018; White, 2017

⁶² St Basils, 2020: 38; Homeless Link, 2021b

⁶³ Revolving Doors Agency, 2019: 22;

⁶⁴ Sheikh and Teeman, 2018

⁶⁵ Gardener and Patel, 2021:3; Pleave, 2019; Wilson and Foster, 2017; CPAG 2016; CPAG, 2021a; JRF, 2016;

⁶⁶ See CPAG, 2021: JRF, 2016; Homeless Link, 2021; Shelter, 2016;

⁶⁷ Abercrombie et al, 2015: 3

collaborating with others in the system and being outward looking; and constantly reflecting, adapting and learning⁶⁸.

A multi-pronged approach

Overall, the evidence base suggests that a multi-pronged approach to breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty is essential, incorporating both systems change as well as prevention and early intervention services provided at the individual level: *“Efforts to prevent intergenerational poverty depend on their ability to sustainably increase family economic security and to prevent or ameliorate the adverse social conditions that make it more likely that children from impoverished homes will remain poor as adults”⁶⁹.*

2.4 Our enablers

Underpinning our Theory of Change are the following enablers, the majority of which we have recently operationalised in our [values and behaviours framework](#). These enablers describe the way in which we will deliver our services, as well as how we intend to use our resources and expertise to help us to best deliver our outcomes.

- **We offer a breadth of services and specialist expertise:** This will help us meet clients’ immediate needs quickly, as well as address their multiple and longer-term needs. It will also prevent re-traumatising clients by asking them to repeat their story to multiple services.
- **We welcome and listen to our clients, and take the time that is needed to bring about change:** This will enable us to a) understand our clients’ range of needs, b) develop trusting relationships, c) get to know our clients so that we are able to work from a strength’s based approach, and d) achieve long lasting change.
- **We seek to work in a Psychologically Informed way and focus on people’s strengths and potential:** This will enhance the effectiveness of our services and ensure we operate from a principle of ‘doing no harm’.
- **Our building is an asset that we can use for the benefits of our clients:** This will enable us to offer affordable services to funders and gives us an element of autonomy so that we can be agile and adapt the use of our building in line with our clients’ needs.
- **We invest in effective partnerships:** This will ensure a) our services are well known amongst our external partners so that they can effectively and appropriately refer clients into our services, b) we are able to take into account clients’ holistic needs by referring them to external partners appropriately and c) we contribute to wider systems change.
- **We will use our knowledge and learning to influence the wider system for the benefit of our clients:** This will enable us to support systems change, which we understand is a fundamental part of achieving our mission.
- **We are committed to continuous learning and delivering evidence-informed services:** This will enable us to deliver the most effective services and interventions.

⁶⁸ Abercrombie et al, 2015: 38

⁶⁹ Ryzin et al, 2019

2.5 Our assumptions

A number of assumptions have informed our thinking and decision making about a) how we should deliver our services, b) the range of activities we should provide and c) how we should prioritise and invest our resources to achieve our mission.

- Whilst there are considerable structural issues that cause poverty and homelessness that does not mean that personal improvements cannot be achieved for individuals and families
- A stronger focus on particular client groups is critical to building impact and effectiveness.
- Being a stable presence in the lives of our clients builds trust, which enables us to be a stronger support.
- There are other strong, organisations who are campaigning and influencing policy change so our resources are best used to support them by sharing our experience and learning.
- Knowledge of housing options enables people to make good choices and decisions.
- If parents have hope and aspirations it is more likely their children will too.

3. Service Development

As well as documenting our current theory of change, we have purposefully created time and space throughout the process to consider how we could enhance our service offer in order to increase our impact and the chance of us delivering outcomes for our clients. The section below provides a summary of the main service innovations and enhancements that have emerged during this process, as well as how they relate to our Theory of Change.

3.1 Key messages

We have reviewed our service offer in line with the evidence base set out in 2.2.1 above. This has reassured us that:

- Our service areas are the ones that are key when tackling homelessness and poverty

Having also considered our approach to delivery (see 2.2.3 above - ‘How help is provided matters’) we are also reassured that:

- Our method of delivery enhances our impact

In this review we also considered:

- Were there gaps in provision for our clients, which could offset the benefits of our other services significantly?
- Were there improvements to our current services which could significantly enhance the possibility of breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty?

The 'gap'

The gap that we have identified is around the availability (internally and externally) of provision that supports our clients' wellbeing and resilience in an on-going, protective and preventative manner. One of our longer term outcomes is Increased wellbeing and resilience. Currently we do not offer any services that are focused *specifically* on improving wellbeing or resilience. There are activities within our hostel and Family Services that do promote wellbeing and others that are designed to develop resilience but given the trauma so many of our clients have/are experiencing, a far more intentional approach is necessary for many of our families and young people. We are therefore now actively exploring how to address this gap.

3.2 Service improvements under consideration

The suggested developments listed below are all in an early stage of consideration. They have all 'made it on to the list' because they are likely to provide solutions to gaps/needs/desired improvements we have discussed during our theory of change work. We are developing full proposals for each which will set out fully the need, the outcome(s) they will help us deliver, evidence base for the suggested approach and the funding feasibility. They are not listed in order of priority, except for the first (highlighted) row which is the 'gap' in our theory of change.

Development area	Summary of the proposed development	Which outcome(s) will it help us achieve
<p>1. Supporting our clients' mental wellbeing and resilience</p>	<p>Why? (see 'the gap' above) How? Partnership working with other service(s). Currently exploring the placement of a Wellbeing Hub at CHC. Many of our clients have complex needs so this support will need to consider a wide range of issues for example support from gang workers, substance misuse support, domestic violence support, family therapy, family attachment support, relationship counselling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased wellbeing and resilience
<p>2. Family mediation</p>	<p>Why? One of our outcomes is increased wellbeing and resilience - and for our families a key element of this is through strengthening family relationships. Currently we support this through our family stay and play sessions. Evidence shows that we could do more by providing family mediation provision. How? We are looking to explore partnering with another organisation to partner with us to provide this service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased wellbeing and resilience
<p>3. Debt advice</p>	<p>Why? Debt advice is one of the advice provisions that helps clients immediately but also prevents further or repeated crisis. Although we have a referral arrangement with a partner organisation, this is to support clients with their immediate needs rather than on a preventative basis. How? We want to explore how to provide a preventative/on-going approach. Several ideas were mooted during the theory of change discussions that we will now develop and explore such as appointing an onside debt relief advocate/partner to meet medium term debt advice needs and advice on longer-term approaches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial and economic stability • Increased wellbeing and resilience
<p>4. Improved digital literacy for clients</p>	<p>Why? We see parents struggling to support their children with their online homework or clients being unable to carry out essential activity online such as completing benefit forms. Although we do help on an ad hoc basis we do not currently have any programme of activity that focuses on this need. How? We have volunteers who can (when restrictions are eased) support both parents and children with essential digital needs. We are talking to families about their needs to allow us to make targeted plans. Where clients need hardware or financial support with connectivity, we are often able to also support with this (through our relationships with other partners).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved educational opportunities and attainment

<p>5. Proficiency in communicating in English</p>	<p>Why? We see parents struggling to support their children with their homework or being unable to carry out essential activities that require the ability to communicate in English. Although we do help on an ad hoc basis, and whilst we do have our ESOL support for UASCs, we do not currently have a programme of activity that focuses on this need for all of our clients. One of our assumptions is that having a social or community network decreases social exclusion and being able to communicate in English will support our clients to be part of such a community.</p> <p>How? As restrictions lift we are beginning to bring groups of families together at the Centre and on trips. We have volunteers who are able to facilitate targeted English language development conversations to support clients to learn the English they need for their day-to-day interactions. We want to build on this provision, being led by the language needs that clients share with us. These discussions can also take place through other activities such as cooking, crafts gardening (perhaps a community kitchen garden)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved educational opportunities and attainment • Increased wellbeing and resilience
<p>6. Ensuring clients understand their housing options.</p>	<p>Why? One of the assumptions we rely on in our theory of change is that knowledge of housing options supports people to make good choices and decisions. Currently we advise individuals about their options but this is usually when they are already experiencing a level of crisis. We want to consider how we might do this earlier as part of a preventative approach.</p> <p>How? This might include information/education for young people on their entitlements, outreach work with schools & colleges to reach young people who don't usually seek out advice, a programme to help young people to think about housing - preparing them for the London housing situation and managing expectations earlier on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable suitable accommodation secured
<p>7. Continuing to provide welcome and assessment to those clients we will not serve at the centre</p>	<p>Why? Central to our theory of change is our focus on early intervention with young people and families to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. To do this we must focus most of our resource on these client groups. However, we know that if we do not support clients to find the help they need we could a) cause them further trauma b) provide a barrier to them finding the help they need.</p> <p>How? We want to carry out a holistic assessment of a client and take the time to refer them, with care, to an appropriate external service(s). To do this we need to a) review our current assessment process b) review current capacity. Another suggestion that was mooted in our discussions was having someone in the community to advocate for clients and support them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased wellbeing and resilience

	in accessing services if they are not able to do so independently – this person could be linked in to our assessment team potentially. It might be necessary to seek joint funding with other partners to fund a staff member who facilitates partner referrals.	
8. Consider the optimum use of our shop	<p>Why? One of our theory of change assumptions is that our building is an asset that we can use for the benefit of our clients. Our shop has been closed since the first lockdown. There are some maintenance issues that will need attention before its re-opening. This may be an optimum time to consider how it might best serve the needs of our clients.</p> <p>How? This needs further exploration; we would like to involve our clients (including residents) in these discussions. Some suggestions have included: a café run by clients/residents; another social enterprise idea; or repurposing as a food supermarket for donated food – i.e. get £10 of food for £5 which would help break dependency cycles/give dignity to those in need</p>	<p>Could be any of all of the below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable suitable accommodation secured • Improved educational opportunities and attainment • Increased wellbeing and resilience • Financial and economic stability
9. Sourcing more affordable housing for young people	<p>Why? One of our longer-term outcomes is to secure stable, suitable, accommodation and in our business plan we aimed to seek a partnership to develop a more affordable housing option to support young people’s transition through welfare, work and into independence.</p> <p>How? We have begun to explore partnerships with organisations who are attempting innovative solutions to making housing affordable for young people. We want to make a plan to do this in a more intentional manner. This might include, for example, a partnership with social housing providers to provide secure long-term housing ensuring security of tenure and a secure place to start to address the other issues similar to Housing Plus. Another suggestion was to encourage funders to pay initial rent deposits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable suitable accommodation secured
10. Introducing a greater focus on pre-employment skills	<p>Why? We are seeing many parents and young people who need support with the very initial pre-employment journey.</p> <p>How? This thinking is in its early stages but some ideas that are being discussed are peer mentoring (linking young people with others they will identify with), planning for longer term support (into both work and education), access to basic skills support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved educational opportunities and attainment • Increased wellbeing and resilience • Financial and economic stability
11. Client Engagement	<p>Why? Engaging clients in the planning, delivery, evaluation and re-development of services will help to ensure their insight is informing our decisions and approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable suitable accommodation secured

	<p>How? Currently, we consult clients about our services and look to make improvements as a result. We want to change this by including clients in our work – at every stage. Many ideas on how we might do this emerged through this process; we will make a start by opening up volunteering opportunities. A wider strategy needs developing, and we need to learn from other organisations before we write this. The Client Engagement role (s) outlined in 4 above could be instrumental in progressing this development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved educational opportunities and attainment • Increased wellbeing and resilience • Financial and economic stability
<p>12. Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE)</p>	<p>Why? To ensure that our services are being designed and delivered in a manner that mitigates the impact of past trauma.</p> <p>How? Includes - Client engagement, staff training, changes to processes and physical environment.</p>	<p>This will help strengthen our enablers.</p>
<p>13. Improving the accessibility of our services to ensure that clients can access the breadth of the service offer and be supported over time</p>	<p>Why? One of our ToC enablers is the breadth of our services. We do not currently have a mechanism for ensuring that our clients are offered the services when they need them and that they continue to engage with them as/when needed over time. There is a need to a) ensure clients are referred into all of the services needed internally b) they are referred externally where necessary c) they are tracked over time (where appropriate) d) immigration clients are contacted at the appropriate time to be offered further services once their immigration status has been stabilised e) we continue to offer the services our clients need.</p> <p>How? Current thinking involves employing client engagement roles as there is a strong evidence base for this approach. For some of our families we will need to consider how to support them with childcare to ensure they can access our services, for others our opening hours may be prohibitive and will need consideration.</p>	<p>This will help strengthen one of our enablers.</p>
<p>14. Influencing practice change.</p>	<p>Why? One of our enablers is that we support system change by influencing practice by sharing learning and knowledge.</p> <p>How? We have some examples of doing this and are currently developing some evidence of the experience of families living in temporary accommodation. We would now like to develop a strategy for which evidence we want to develop and share, for what purpose and how we will do this in the future.</p>	<p>This will strengthen one of our enablers</p>

4. Next steps

Over the coming weeks and months, we intend to focus on three key activities that will enable us to build on this theory of change process:

1. Turn the service development ideas into full, evidence-based proposals in order to present back to our Board and funders to see if and how we can take these ideas forward.
2. Identify an appropriate suite of indicators that will enable us to review the effectiveness of our interventions in line with our theory of change and help demonstrate the difference our services are making for our clients. This will involve not only reviewing our internal MEL processes but also our client feedback processes.
3. Invest in our internal data and insights in order that we can contribute to the wider sector's knowledge and understanding about 'what works and for whom'.

Appendices

Appendix One: Our Theory of change journey

The Theory of Change process took place between October 2020 and June 2021⁷⁰. The process itself was led by our Director of Services and our internal Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) group, with support from an external consultant (adept at designing and facilitating such processes) and our Evidence, Impact and Learning Manager. As well as contributing their own knowledge and expertise to the process, the MEL group played a key role in consulting with service teams at regular junctures across the process to ensure everyone in the organisation had a chance to contribute.

The process itself was structured around 6 key ToC workshops. Specifically, these workshops focused on:

1. Mapping our clients' short, medium and long-term needs
2. Documenting our role in meeting those needs
3. Examining the range of actors and factors that impact on, or contribute to, our clients' needs
4. Understanding CHC's sphere of influence i.e. examining the changes that we believe we can contribute to
5. Identifying the assumptions that underpin our ToC
6. Visually representing our ToC and the change processes involved

Alongside this, we undertook some desk research to bring together the key pieces of evidence and insights that underpin our ToC.

Appendix Two: The Westminster Context

In 2019, Westminster City Council undertook a review of homelessness in the local area. Key findings included:

- Westminster has an unusual tenure structure; a very large private rented sector and lower levels of owner occupation compared with the rest of London.
- Homes to privately rent and buy are amongst some of the most expensive in London and are unaffordable to those with lower and moderate incomes.
- Waiting times for social housing was anything from 2.5 years for a studio flat, to 34 years for a 4 bed.
- Nearly 5,000 households contacted the council's Housing Solutions Service during 2018/19.
- The council spends over £23m each year on homelessness and rough sleeping services and nearly £5m alone on temporary accommodation.
- There was a higher representation of Black, Arab and Asian households, women and lone parents in temporary accommodation.
- Black, Arab and Asian households were over represented amongst homeless applicants in 2018/19⁷¹.

⁷⁰ This took place during the Covid-19 pandemic; – a time when the organisation was adapting to new working practices and responding to increasingly complex needs given the impact of the pandemic on our client base. As such, the process took longer than originally anticipated.

⁷¹ Westminster City Council, 2019

- Homeless applicants are more likely to have low incomes and receive benefits, although they are not necessarily unemployed (around 50% of households in temporary accommodation are working).

Poverty levels in Westminster are also high. For example:

- In 2019, 46.2% of children were living in poverty in Westminster (after housing costs)⁷².
- In 2019, 22.7% of children are known to be eligible for, and claiming, free school meals⁷³.
- In 2018, there were 76,000 employees in “in-work” poverty in Westminster⁷⁴.
- In 2019, Church Street ward in Westminster was ranked as the 6th most deprived ward in London based on ‘indices of multiple deprivation’. It was ranked the most deprived in relation to income deprivation and the second most deprived in relation to employment deprivation⁷⁵.

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⁷² London Councils, 2019

⁷³ DCSF, 2019

⁷⁴ ibid

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