



Evaluation of place-based work in Brent

Campbell Tickell, January 2024

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 **Berkeley**
Foundation

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Crisis head office

50-52 Commercial Street
London E1 6LT
Tel. 0300 636 1967
enquiries@crisis.org.uk
www.crisis.org.uk

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Executive summary

The Berkeley Foundation has funded Crisis Skylight Brent to develop place-based work in the borough since 2019. Place-based work is 'a long-term approach to identifying, understanding, and addressing social issues rooted in the experiences, expertise and relationships that exist within a recognised geographic area'.¹

This funding included an independent evaluation, conducted by Campbell Tickell, to evaluate the work carried out in Brent since 2019 and provides insight and learning in relation to:

Strategic learning - the extent to which efforts uncover insights that are key to future progress on place-based working in Brent and elsewhere.

Systems change – the extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues.

Individual change – the extent to which efforts at a place-based level help to make the lives of people experiencing homelessness better.

The two intended outcomes for the place-based work are:

- to increase opportunities to end homelessness in Brent through strengthened, multi-agency

partnerships and co-ordination of combined efforts to tackle the issues around homelessness

- to add to Crisis' learning about how ending homelessness can be delivered locally; and the role Crisis Skylights can play in achieving this.

The findings from the evaluation can be used to inform and influence:

- how the partnership between Crisis, the Berkeley Foundation and Brent Council might be **further developed to work towards ending homelessness** more effectively
- the development of Crisis' future place-based work in **other local areas**
- the ongoing development of a **Built for Zero² programme** within Brent.

The nature of place-based work in Brent

Place-based work, funded by the Berkeley Foundation, in Brent has consisted of a number of activities:

- development of the **Brent Homelessness Forum** – consisting of around 200 members, 40-50 of whom meet bi-monthly
- a **Community of Practice** – established in 2021 to share learning and develop best practice and meeting monthly
- a number of **working groups and task and finish groups** – the rough sleeper working group, task and finish groups around migrant homelessness, mental health, youth homelessness, evictions, complex needs – this led to the creation of a complex needs panel which has led to the commissioning of a Supportive Multi-Agency Response Team (SMART) service
- **research on homelessness and health** addressing issues regarding health needs and access to health services by people experiencing homelessness in Brent
- **homelessness awareness sessions** for a wide range of organisations in Brent
- work on the development of a **Built for Zero community** and the recruitment of an officer to lead this
- opening **new premises** for Crisis Skylight Brent in Harlesden and opening of the Council's Turning Point Housing Emergency Centre for people experiencing homelessness nearby.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation has been qualitative and mainly interview-based, using in depth semi-structured interviews with 22 stakeholders in senior and operational roles from public and voluntary sectors. The researchers also gathered quantitative data through a questionnaire completed by 31 members of the Brent Homelessness Forum (17 voluntary and community sector responses, 4 London Borough of Brent responses and 10 other statutory body responses).

Interviews with two individuals with lived experience of homelessness in Brent were conducted, using a visual approach to map their journeys. Examples were also gathered from stakeholders about the impact of place-based work on individuals experiencing homelessness in Brent. These testimonies illustrate how systems change has improved outcomes for individuals.

Findings of the evaluation of place-based work in Brent

Strategic learning

Place-based work, mainly through the Homelessness Forum, has helped contribute to the 'bottom up' development of Brent's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25. The new Brent Homeless Health Plan, part of integrated care work, benefitted from being able to connect to the Forum to discuss needs early on and develop the plan with these insights.

The relationships – both informal networks and more formal funded partnerships – that have been established and nurtured through place-based work have enabled partners to respond quickly by using live information. For example, the partners were able to mobilise very quickly to respond to the recent accelerated termination of Home Office accommodation for Asylum Seekers; and have been able to share

¹ See work from Renaisi on place-based change and approaches. The quote is from [Place-Based Change - Renaisi](#)

² Built for Zero is a data driven solution to ending homelessness in specific areas for different groups of people. It redesigns how systems and services work together in local communities so it's possible to respond to real-time need – and to prevent and end homelessness swiftly. **A key focus is the development of a 'by name' list of people who are homeless in an area** and working to resolve their homelessness.

information on new rough sleeping 'hotspots' as they occur and mobilise a swift response.

The role of Crisis as a national charity in connecting national and international approaches to local place-based work is seen as an important factor in achieving buy-in from partners.

'Crisis is key to homelessness in Brent because it has a history, has built relationships, including with the council. Cabinet and [council] Members know of Crisis even if they don't have working contact – a recognised organisation and delivery partner.'
(Public sector)

One example where local work is underpinned by national support lies in the fact that Crisis is now trialling Built for Zero in Brent (the first place in the UK to trial this approach) building on the place-based work already carried out.

Systems change in Brent

A key driver for systems change in Brent has been collaborative leadership between directors and managers across public and voluntary sectors. This enabled a number of joint working practices to be developed:

- joint recruitment panels for shared posts or posts where the voluntary and public sectors have a shared interest
- secondments, embedded staff, co-located staff across both the voluntary and public sectors.
- training and upskilling of public sector officers by voluntary sector staff
- outreach work carried out jointly, for example, in public spaces that have been identified as homelessness and rough sleeping 'hot spots'

- accompanied visits; or 'satellite' services that enable public sector services (primarily health and homelessness) to reach spaces and people that they would otherwise be unable to reach because they can work through 'trusted third parties' in the voluntary sector

- improved joint working on referral, assessments and decisions. Cooperation between service providers gives reassurance to staff and improved outcomes for individuals.

'It has helped to improve the support patients are receiving when they are discharged from hospital as we are more aware of services, we can link them into when they leave from here. I think it has probably reduced the risk of relapse into street homelessness/rough sleeping for some of the people we have seen.'
(Public sector)

Individual change

Changes for individuals as a result of place-based partnerships (the local informal networks) and collaborative leadership across sectors include:

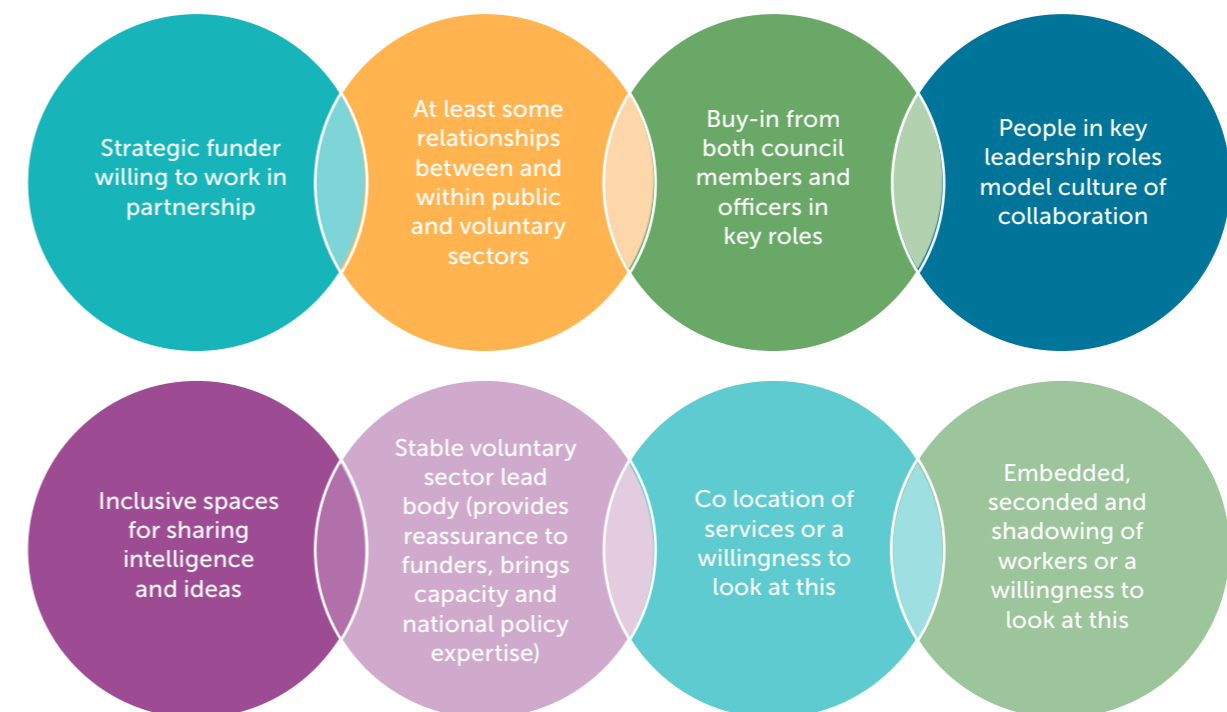
- Getting people the support they need quickly by cooperating over referrals, assessment processes and decision making; for some people this meant that they received help before the issues they face became more serious.
- Smoothing people's transitions between services – hospital to community, temporary winter or Home Office accommodation to other options – meant they were less likely to lose touch with the support services that could help them resolve their housing issues.
- Resolving Universal Credit claims that are cancelled or held up. Place-based working had led to sharing information and jointly investigating these issues.

- Finding accommodation and support for people whose needs and circumstances are complex and where no one agency alone is likely to be able to help.
- GP registration for people experiencing homelessness has improved and attention is now also turning to work with GPs that have a high number of patients experiencing homelessness so that individuals receive:
 - a health & wellbeing assessment
 - a referral to a social prescriber
 - flu jabs
 - a medication review
 - lifestyle advice.
- Working through the unintended consequences of statutory processes. For example, having a relationship of trust to find an alternative solution where a closure order would have led to homelessness.

The evaluation also included a survey of 31 members of the Brent Homelessness Forum. Responses were largely positive about their relationship with the Homelessness Forum and its impact on the sector:

- 97% of respondents said being involved with the Forum was very or fairly significant.
- 81% of respondents said it had strengthened their own relationships.
- 81% of respondents said it had positively influenced their own ways of working.
- 87% of respondents thought sector relationships had been strengthened.
- 83% of respondents thought the sectors ways of working positively influenced.

Figure 1: Creating the conditions for change – based on learning about place-based work in Brent



Implications and recommendations

Evaluating the place-based work in Brent has identified that the following create conditions for change (See Figure 1).

The emerging principles for place-based work are:

- A **strength-based approach** that builds on existing relationships and **creates safe spaces for agencies** to reflect, share intelligence, the most up to date insights and practices and to develop approaches to joint work iteratively.
- **Partnerships need to be nurtured to become well embedded** and there is a particular need to ensure smaller groups or agencies are kept engaged and aware of place-based work and their contribution to it.
- It is **important to recognise and value small incremental changes** as they are often the foundation for bigger change.
- The **active involvement of the Council in a two-way relationship** (as distinct from a managerial relationship) is critical.
- **Letting go of power by public agencies is necessary** to build effective place-based partnerships.
- **Voluntary agencies need to be willing to look beyond their individual services** and understand system constraints and how to impact on these.

Recommendations for Crisis

To further develop place-based work Crisis needs to:

- a. **resource leadership across the sector to avoid reliance on a few key individuals, who drive change**
- b. establish and **promote communication and engagement with the widest possible network of agencies** both through representation of marginalised and minoritized parts of the community and to strengthen the role of people with lived experience in place-based work
- c. **continue to maintain the connection between local place-based work and national housing and homeless policy** and ensure a flow of information in both directions so that one can influence the other and vice versa.

Recommendations for the partnership between Crisis, Brent Council and the Berkeley Foundation

- Continue to work as a partnership with Berkeley Foundation's welcome commitment to being an engaged funder. The benefits and impact of the funding so far are clearly shown through the evaluation, but place-based work requires a long-term commitment.
- Continue to build leadership capacity in both the public and voluntary sectors based on the evidence that this will help develop and sustain place-based work. This needs to include funding key posts.
- Consider how to use the evaluation findings and wider Brent Homelessness Partnership expertise to develop work in in Brent and promote this type of approach in other areas.

Recommendations for a Built for Zero approach

- **Challenges:** It will take time for the concept to be understood and supported; for frontline teams to overcome barriers to sharing data. These challenges are compounded by external pressures including a shortage of affordable accommodation, and the rising scale of homelessness.
- **Being focused and realistic** about what can be achieved through the initiative and getting the pace of the work right is important. Regularly sharing back progress, making visible the stages and steps involved and promoting positive change will all help with this.
- **Work towards a good, shared understanding of Built for Zero** throughout homelessness organisations including frontline staff and volunteers. This will help ensure that new systems are used effectively throughout the homelessness system. One way to achieve this which is already working well is for senior leaders to model their commitment to it.



1. Introduction

This is a report on the evaluation of place-based work in Brent from 2019 to date, which has been supported by funding from the Berkeley Foundation. Place-based work is 'a long-term approach to identifying, understanding, and addressing social issues rooted in the experiences, expertise and relationships that exist within a recognised geographic area'.³ In Brent, this is being used to address homelessness with Crisis Skylight Brent in a leadership role in partnership with Brent Council and the local network of providers that make up Brent Homelessness Partnership.

Policy and delivery context

The borough of Brent in North West London has a population of around 340,000. The following overview in Table 1 of housing and employment issues in the borough is taken from the Trust for London, London's Poverty Profile⁴ which provides a comparison with all London boroughs. The table shows that while Brent is consistent with London averages across many domains, it experiences higher than average levels of repossessions; and worse levels of low pay and unemployment rate. The unemployment rate was the highest in the Capital at Quarter 1, 2023.

Table 1: Figures on housing and work, London Borough Brent, 2023

Housing

Evictions: Repossessions per 1,000 households – **3.45**
Worse compared to all London Boroughs (2.42)

Homeless acceptances: Main homelessness duty owed per 1,000 households – **0.44**
Average compared to all London Boroughs (0.71)

Housing affordability: Median rent as a percentage of median pay – **42.4%**
Average compared to all London Boroughs (45.1%)

Housing delivery: Average net affordable, social and discounted housing completions – **190**
Average compared to all London Boroughs (132)

Rough sleeping: People seen sleeping rough by outreach – **373**
Average compared to all London Boroughs (219)

Temporary accommodation: Households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 – **7.36**
Average compared to all London Boroughs (15.99)

Work

Benefits: Out-of-work benefits – **14.7%**
Average compared to all London Boroughs (12.6%)

Low pay (resident): Proportion of borough residents' jobs that are low paid – **23.6%**
Worse compared to all London Boroughs (16.1%)

Unemployment rate: Unemployment rate – **6.8%**
Worse compared to all London Boroughs (4.3%) and the highest across London

Source: Trust for London: London's Poverty Profile, last updated 2023

There is growing evidence and awareness that place-based work can be helpful in addressing complex issues where no one sector or body holds the solutions.^{5,6} While this policy focus is supportive for place-based work in Brent, the challenges in the wider policy environment are significant. In addition to the housing and employment trends shown above, they also include: a lack of accessible and affordable accommodation of good quality; a saturated private rented sector that is no longer filling gaps or providing a readily available option

for those on low incomes; and the tight funding climate affecting both councils and voluntary organisations. Further, increased demand on mental health services, with a reduction in offer, increased waiting lists and higher thresholds for access; changing environment for those with insecure immigration status; and reduced funding for supported housing, create many challenges when seeking to work on a place-based basis.

³ See work from Renaisi on place-based change and approaches [here](#). The quote is from [Place-Based Change - Renaisi](#)

⁴ Trust for London, [London's Poverty Profile](#) (Brent page); updated for Q4 2023 from multiple sources spanning 2019-2023. Data sources and borough overview [here](#). There are more recent sources for some statistics, e.g. numbers in temporary accommodation.

⁵ Taylor, M. and Buckley, E. (2017) *Historical Review of Place-Based Approaches*. London: Lankelly Chase. Renaisi (2020) *Funding for Systemic Change: Learning paper #4 – A framework for place based systems change*. London: Renaisi

⁶ For example as seen in the NHS Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) partnerships established from July 2022 in which organisations come together to plan and deliver joined up health and care services, with the aim to improve the lives of people who live and work in an area.

Background to Crisis Skylight Brent's place-based work

Crisis Skylight Brent was established in 2016 following the merger of Crisis with local Brent charity, Lift,⁷ which itself began as Brent Homeless User Group in 2001 and had become a key agency within Brent's homelessness landscape. Crisis Skylight Brent has a long history of place-based work, including four years spent working with residents in Harlesden to create a Neighbourhood Plan (Harlesden Working Together established in 2015). Following the merger, Crisis Skylight Brent focused on Crisis' strategic goal of 'ending homelessness in local places', setting up Brent Homelessness Forum in 2018 and over the next two years forming sub-groups on Complex Needs and Migrant Homelessness, as well as delivering peer research into digital inclusion. Work continued with the Harlesden Neighbourhood Plan development, securing charity registration and further funding. In addition, a working group was formed to create a Community Land Trust to develop new housing.

In 2019 Crisis Skylight Brent received funding from the Berkeley Foundation to continue building and developing new elements of its place-based work across two themes, both of which are explored in this evaluation with respect to partnership working in general and Built for Zero in particular. The themes are:

- **Partnerships and influence** – to influence the local ecosystem further so that it adopts approaches that are in line with Crisis' Plan to End Homelessness⁸;
- **Systems change through individual advocacy** – to continue to work with Crisis service users (referred to as 'members') to end their

homelessness through direct services and collect data and learning from the service to inform and evolve partnerships and influencing work.

Place-based work in Brent 2019-2023

The following activities sit under the place-based umbrella and as such have benefited from funding from the Berkley Foundation. Referred to as the **Brent Homelessness Partnership**, they enable place-based, joined up work across the public and voluntary sectors in Brent. They are the focus of this evaluation.

Brent Homelessness Forum: The Brent Homelessness Partnership is a network of local organisations working together to prevent and address homelessness in the London Borough of Brent. The Partnership meets via the [Brent Homelessness Forum](#) every other month.

Established in 2018, it is led by Crisis Skylight Brent and delivered in partnership with Brent Council. It meets in person bi-monthly and is attended by 25-40 people with a membership circulation list of close to 200 spanning statutory, voluntary and community roles. It provides the main space for information sharing and collaboration between voluntary and public agencies working on homelessness in Brent.

Community of Practice: This was established in 2021 and provides a shared forum for frontline practitioners to build knowledge and learn from best practice. It meets in the months between Brent Homelessness Forum meetings.

Working groups or Task and Finish Groups: These are also a feature of the Brent Homelessness Partnership.

- **Rough Sleepers Working Group:** This is a standing working group that exists to influence ways of working around rough sleeping in Brent and to enable sector practitioners to build knowledge and learn from best practice. It grew out of a Covid Working Group set up as a response to challenges around service integration and awareness.
- **Specific Task and Finish groups:** These have covered migrant homelessness, eviction; mental health; and youth homelessness.
- **Homeless health** research and issues around health needs and access to services.
- A task and finish group on complex needs resulted in the creation of a *Complex Needs Panel* which in turn led to the commissioning of a *Supportive Multi-Agency Response Team (SMART) Service*.

Homelessness Awareness Sessions:

These are short introductions to the problem of homelessness. They are aimed at any organisation working in Brent that wants to learn more about the subject and what it can do to support those in need. Organisations accessing the training cover health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, employment, and specialist immigration services, as well as faith and community groups.

Built for Zero is a data driven solution to ending homelessness in specific areas for different groups of people. It redesigns how systems and services work together in local communities so it's possible to respond to real-time need – and to prevent and end homelessness swiftly. It has proven successful in North America, Australia and some other European contexts. A key focus of Built for Zero

is the development of a 'by name' list of people who are homeless in an area and working to resolve their homelessness. Currently, there are three areas in Britain setting up Built for Zero initiatives – Brent, Islington and Rhondda Cynon Taf. That number is expected to grow to eight in the next 18 months. Brent was the first Built for Zero community.

In 2023, **Crisis Skylight Brent** moved to larger and more prominent premises on Harlesden High Street. When the Council opened a designated single homelessness service away from the Civic Centre, it chose a location for **the Turning Point Housing Emergency Centre for homeless people** in close proximity to Crisis Skylight Brent's new location.

⁷ See article on the merger [here](#).

⁸ [Everybody In: How to End Homelessness in Great Britain \(Crisis: 2018\)](#)

2. Evaluation

The evaluation was carried out between June and November 2023. The evaluation aims and approach are described and discussed below.

Evaluation aims

Taking a retrospective approach, the evaluation aimed to understand how different stakeholders perceive the changes brought about by place-based work in Brent in relation to strategic learning, systems change, individual change. The evaluation and this report use the following definitions adapted by Crisis⁹ as follows:

- **Strategic learning** – the extent to which efforts uncover insights that are key to future progress on place-based working in Brent and elsewhere.
- **Systems change** – the extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues.
- **Individual change** – the extent to which efforts at a place-based level help to make the lives of people experiencing homelessness better.

The report is structured around these three headings. Below are more detailed questions which guided the evaluation interviews and discussions.

Strategic learning:

- What have we learnt about what the Brent place-based approach is doing (strengths/limitations of activities, practices, processes, relationships, capacity, resources)?

- What have we learnt about the assumptions, understanding and thinking about the systems and context of the challenge the Brent place-based approach is addressing?
- What have we learnt about how the Brent place-based approach is operating (principles, responses, norms, dynamics, values, narratives)?
- How might learning about the experience in Brent inform decisions about adopting a place-based approach in other local areas, both where Crisis does and does not operate services?

Systems change:

- What changes have happened in the 'drivers' that shape the way the system behaves?
- What changes have happened in the behaviours of system actors?
- What changes have happened in overall system behaviours?
- How might learning from the experiences in Brent inform the approach to systems change in other local areas?

Individual change:

- Which changes have been experienced by individual people?
- Which changes have been experienced by target groups?
- Which changes have been experienced for specific populations?
- To what extent might such individual changes be experienced in other areas if a similar place-based approach was applied?

The evaluation also aimed to generate learning in relation to the two intended outcomes of the place-based work in Brent:

- To increase opportunities to end homelessness in Brent through strengthened, multi-agency partnerships and co-ordination of combined efforts to tackle the issues around homelessness;
- To add to Crisis's learning about how ending homelessness can be delivered locally, and the role Skylights can play in achieving this.

The evaluation findings will be used to inform and influence:

- How the partnership between Crisis, the Berkeley Foundation and Brent Council might be further developed to work towards ending homelessness more effectively;
- The development of Crisis' future place-based work in other local areas;
- The ongoing development of a Built for Zero programme within Brent.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation has taken a largely qualitative approach and is mainly interview-based with a small amount of quantitative survey data collected from members of Brent Homelessness Forum. This was felt to be a suitable approach because it would enable the evaluation to be flexible around people's time and capacity to engage with the evaluation; iterative and adaptive as the Built for Zero approach would be continuing to develop as the evaluation progressed; and mindful of the complex context which makes it difficult to determine causality or attribute change. In practice, this meant offering a range of ways for people to take part in the evaluation, sharing back findings as the evaluation progressed and encouraging people to share specific case examples of systems and individual change.

The methods used were:

- In depth semi-structured interviews (with a wide focus on homelessness in Brent) with 22 stakeholders in a range of senior and frontline roles in the voluntary and public sectors. See Appendix A for a list of organisations that were interviewed. All were familiar with the Brent Homelessness Partnership, but not all regularly attended the Homelessness Forum, particularly the senior representatives of Brent Council (elected representatives and some of the officers interviewed).
- Qualitative case examples of systems and individual change collected from interviewees, including five which are described in a table in section 3c.
- Survey of Brent Homelessness Forum members (with a specific focus on the Forum) was sent to 194 organisations listed as members and received 31 responses (16 per cent response rate) from both the voluntary and community sector (17), LB Brent (4) and other public bodies (10) which included health and the DWP.

- Individual interviews with two people with lived experience of homelessness and of using support services in Brent (recruited by Crisis' Member Involvement team).
- Observation and discussion at meetings of Brent Homelessness Forum and its subgroup, the Rough Sleeping Working Group that took place during the course of the evaluation period.

In practice, the term 'place-based' was unfamiliar to some people that took part in the evaluation. In interviews and discussions, the terms 'collaboration' or 'partnership working' were also used.

Limitations of the evaluation

People with lived experience of homelessness in Brent

The evaluators were only able to speak with two service user members of Crisis Skylight Brent. Both of the conversations were useful and relevant to the evaluation questions. The evaluation used a visual approach to map their journey and talk around their experiences in order to better understand where agency collaboration had helped and where the absence of collaboration between agencies had made their journey harder. Despite following a procedure that Crisis uses frequently to engage people with lived experience in research and evaluation, and which is often effective, it had limited success for this evaluation. A request was submitted by Campbell Tickell and the opportunity was advertised to Crisis members in Brent with a fee based on Crisis' own fixed hourly rate. Members applied and were supported to take part by Crisis staff. Four members were recruited and two attended on the day. While the information obtained from the two members that attended was useful, the evaluation would have benefitted from more examples.

Data about individual outcomes

The section in the report discussing individual change (or outcomes) is drawn from testimony from a range of stakeholders that gave interviews and took part in discussions as well as conversations with people with lived experience of homelessness and support services in Brent. These testimonies reflect examples of how systems change has improved outcomes for individuals and helped the evaluation to understand how place-based work adds value to mechanisms of change.

Providing data around individual outcomes within place-based initiatives involving many different stakeholders is a challenge, particularly where the focus is in a highly pressurised sector facing escalating demands and within different funding and reporting requirements. Whilst all agencies generate their own data around the people they have assisted, there isn't a collective mechanism that measures individual outcomes for all people experiencing homelessness, or the range of organisations in a place that play a part in tackling multiple and complex needs linked with homelessness and sustainable solutions. Part of the Built for Zero methodology involves real time 'by name' data, backed up by data-sharing protocol agreements, which will generate outcome data for people rough sleeping in Brent when fully operational.

3. Evidence

The evidence collected using the methods described in section two is summarised in relation to strategic learning, systems change and individual change below.

3a. Strategic learning

The evaluation looked at strategic learning, defined, for the purposes of this evaluation, as the extent to which efforts uncover insights that are key to future progress on place-based working in Brent and elsewhere. The evidence is drawn from the interviews and discussions with stakeholders, and from the interviews with people with lived experience of homelessness in Brent and of support services in Brent.

The evidence is set out in terms of, first, learning about what the place-based work is doing, then, learning about assumptions and what underpins place-based work; and the aligned mission and values found in place-based work. Ways that the learning might inform place-based work elsewhere is discussed in section 5 as part of the evaluation implications and recommendations.

Learning about what the place-based work is doing

The activities that fall under the place-based 'umbrella' were described in the Introduction. Below are some examples of how the activities have contributed to changes in thinking and practice to support tackling homelessness in Brent.

Developing strategy

A particular focus for the evaluation has been the shared role of Crisis Skylight Brent and Brent Council in developing and now delivering Brent Homelessness Forum and its Working Groups. These are of strategic significance to both the public and voluntary sector in Brent and are in themselves examples of systems change towards even greater partnership working. The work of the Forum informed the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 and Crisis Skylight Brent align their place-based activities, including the development of Brent Homelessness Partnership, with the strategy.

'The development of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was a first for Brent in working with stakeholders on the Forum in a bottom-up approach. The strategy started with a combination of internal (Council) interviews and discussion at the Forum. The Forum space was used to agree positions, shape the strategy and get commitments from stakeholders and was followed up with action planning sessions to reach a collective agreed position'. (Public sector)

Building networks

Interviewees and discussion participants said that the Forum has become a 'go to' place to connect with others, and a source of information about activities affecting people's work where relationships are developed, intelligence is shared and ideas are tested. It can do this because it brings together people with a deep understanding of the borough landscape and population needs from different roles and perspectives. It can cut through the process of finding the 'right' people to engage with.

For example, the new Brent Homeless Health Plan, part of integrated care work, benefitted from being able to connect to the Forum in the first instance to discuss needs and develop the plan.

'Crisis [Skylight Brent] and Brent Homelessness Forum have been key to developing our integrated care planning around homelessness. I can't say how it's affected the work, because it's been part of it from the start'
(Public sector)

Enabling rapid response

There is evidence that the homelessness sector is being responsive to change and using live information to respond quickly; and Forum partnerships can be the driver of change. The Rough Sleeping Working Group developed out of a Covid response working group and is now a space where new rough sleeping sites (for example, a supermarket carpark) can be identified with outreach and support put in place. Another recent example is around the accelerated termination of Home Office accommodation for asylum seekers following decisions on their applications. The existing contract between Brent Council and Bridges social impact investor to

deliver outcomes-based, payment by results, for the Single Homeless Prevention Service (SHPS), which is subcontracted to Crisis Skylight Brent, was swiftly replicated for new refugees. The impetus for this came from within Brent Homelessness Partnership when frontline workers shared the growing numbers being asked to leave their accommodation within seven days.

Learning about assumptions and what underpins place-based work

Several interviewees commented that the local work carried out by Crisis Skylight Brent was strengthened by the involvement of the national charity, Crisis which was felt to bring status, stability and reassurance both for external funders and the Council. It provides opportunities not always present in local initiatives to connect with national policy aims and identify lessons to share in other localities. Interviewees also thought it helped Crisis Skylight maintain its role as a critical friend to the Council; working alongside but being unafraid to challenge and raise questions.

'Crisis is key to homelessness in Brent because it has a history, has built relationships, including with the Council. Cabinet and [Council] members know of Crisis even if they don't have working contact – a recognised organisation and delivery partner.'
(Public sector)

'I like that the Forum – and Crisis [Skylight Brent] – hold the Council to account to meet their priorities. It's also place to raise what can we do to change.'
(Public sector)

One example where local work is underpinned by national support lies in the fact that Crisis is now trialling Built for Zero in Brent and building on

the place-based work that has already been carried out in the borough. Crisis is able to connect international good practice to this local work and draw out lessons learned. To date learning about Built for Zero can be summarised in two ways; more will be forthcoming as the work progresses beyond the timeframe of this evaluation:

Learning specific to Built for Zero in Brent

How has existing place-based work helped develop Built for Zero?

The existing place-based work has ensured that Built for Zero gained a positive reception and helped to introduce some of the cultural shifts required. For example:

- Built for Zero benefits from high-level engagement and leadership: it is included in the borough plan and very senior members of the Council (at Member and officer levels) attend the steering group.
- It builds on the existing ecosystem of relationships in Brent.
- The post holder is employed by Crisis but based within the Council and has a Council laptop and access to data, also attending a fortnightly team 'huddle'. This embeddedness and co-location and having a dedicated systems improvement lead enables the postholder to hear what's going on, ask questions and raise awareness with Council colleagues, developing informal and personal, as well as professional relationships.
- The post holder has been able to use the Forum to engage with wider partners, sharing information, encouraging 'buy-in', and supporting the development of processes.

What are the early signs of progress identified by interviewees and discussion participants?

In October 2023, Built for Zero was sufficiently developed to be able to soft launch. It is too early to be showing results, but the evaluation asked all those that took part for their views on its progress and heard that:

- There is a real willingness to engage with the initiative even where there is some crossover with other initiatives such as the pan-London mechanism for collecting data, CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network)¹⁰ which links people directly to interventions and support.
- People are broadly optimistic that the Built for Zero approach to data collection will address some of the limitations of official data, especially around understanding of patterns of homelessness – sofa surfing, women (including when experiencing domestic violence), people outside but not bedded down or 'verified'¹¹.
- Those responsible for leading and implementing the initiative have been open to developing it with partners i.e. taking the Built for Zero model and international examples and adapting them to suit the local ecosystem in Brent.
- During the evaluation period, more organisations were becoming interested in getting involved with the 'by name' list.

¹⁰ See [here](#) for more information about CHAIN on the Homeless Link website.

¹¹ People sleeping rough are 'verified' if they meet certain criteria e.g. if seen bedded down on the street.

Aligned mission and values in place-based work

Place-based work in Brent is underpinned by well-aligned mission and values as well as being driven by the need to address increasing demand, scale and complexity of the housing crisis (see the Introduction for a summary of the policy context). This alignment of mission and values can be seen in the following ways:

- The growing strength of place-based work in Brent was attributed by interviewees to mutual respect, shared goals and a practical attitude to working together. This does not mean that everyone always agrees, but that there is sufficient trust and commitment to work together. For example, some of those engaging with the development of Built for Zero have expressed reservations about developing a 'by name' list when CHAIN data is available but are nonetheless engaging with testing the approach.
- Brent Council has provided the Forum with funding and support in kind, such as free meeting space at the Civic Centre. The Council has also shown willingness to let go of some of its power and join meetings alongside voluntary sector colleagues as peers.

'Partnerships are the cornerstone of the [place-based] approach. There is a culture of coming together, leaving egos at the door and finding solutions. No single agency can do that alone.'
(Funder)

- Council colleagues, both Members and officers, recognised the importance and value of being held accountable both in terms of doing their own 'day jobs', but also in their capacity working with the voluntary and community sector to pursue shared goals. Closer working is accepted as involving being challenged where challenge is needed; and a preparedness to

engage openly with voluntary and community sector colleagues.

'The Forum is also a space for local authority accountability to the voluntary and community sector – it forces senior managers to reflect. In practice it's more like a continuous conversation based on a degree of trust – a constructive challenge which leads to joint problem solving.'
(Public sector)

- There is recognition that everyone has a role to play in thinking about and creating workable - and sustainable - solutions. There is a shared understanding that agencies can achieve more together than they can separately; that the Forum 'allows us to divide the work and share and be bigger than the sum of its parts' (Public sector).

'A key thing is the demand, scale and complexity together with a government that gives funding in bits and pieces means that no one organisation can do all this.'
(Public sector)

- People feel able to question one another and this is done in a spirit of collaboration rather than competition or criticism: *'[There's] no gatekeeping; people care about the work ... all do their best. You can ask direct questions without ruffling feathers'* (Voluntary sector).
- Brent Homelessness Partnership focusses on the shared mission; and the aligned values ensure that people's needs are always at the fore in any discussions.

'People can present as homeless but their support needs are wider and need to be holistic, so it's [the Forum] a good place to understand what's going on.'
(Voluntary sector)

In summary, the evaluation has identified in relation to the specific evaluation questions, that:

- The place-based approach has provided a combination of structures, activities and processes that have enhanced the development of borough-wide policies, relationships and practice.
- The learning about the assumptions, understanding and thinking about the systems and context of the challenge the Brent place-based approach is addressing, has been strengthened by the place-based work and Crisis Skylight Brent's partnership with Brent Council.
- The place-based work is operating with well-aligned mission and values, sharing common goals that have been translated into a culture of collaboration and willingness to operate beyond organisational boundaries.

3b. Systems change

The evaluation looked at systems change, defined, for the purposes of this evaluation, as the extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues. The evidence is from the interviews and discussions with stakeholders, and from the interviews with people with lived experience of homelessness in Brent and of support services in Brent. Four case examples are set out in Table 2.

The evidence is set out in terms of, first, the drivers of change and, second, changes in systems behaviours. Finally, it sets out the findings from the survey of Brent Homelessness Forum members for what that tells us about systems change. Ways that the learning might inform place-based work elsewhere is discussed in section 5 as part of the evaluation implications and recommendations.

Drivers of change

Interviewees identified the following drivers for achieving systems change.

Leadership

In interviews and discussions, people said that leadership was a key driver in systems change. This included leadership from people in senior and influential roles at Crisis Skylight Brent, Brent Council and St Mungo's who were widely seen as having made a significant contribution to driving place-based work in Brent through the Brent Homelessness Partnership. Their leadership gives legitimacy to frontline teams also spending time building relationships and working together on place-based solutions.

By continuing to promote collaboration and being welcoming to new interested agencies, sector leaders were encouraging them to see the benefit of collaboration and even co-location. As the collaboration is backed up with new resources, especially The Turning Point and Crisis Skylight Brent centre, so new partners have shown an interest in getting involved. The Skylight is seen as a positive asset alongside civic buildings in addressing homelessness in the borough.

Culture of collaboration

Place-based work in Brent has led to a culture of collaboration within and between public and voluntary sectors. This culture of collaboration is seen in many of the activities that come under the place-based umbrella. They include Brent Homelessness Forum and the Community of Practice which provide safe spaces for voluntary and public sector personnel in management and frontline roles to share issues and discuss solutions. Beyond meetings, these and related activities (working groups, awareness raising sessions) were thought to have had a 'ripple effect' across both sectors because of the way they lead to:

- **New relationships being formed.** Working together with statutory and voluntary organisations has helped with the service offer to customers. Sharing information on clients has helped to achieve outcomes quicker. For example, *'the single homelessness team leaders and myself meet with Crisis on a monthly basis to discuss cases and how to best resolve. I also meet with Somewhere Safe to Stay, hospitals ... to discuss clients and ways to alleviate pressures on all services.'* (Public sector)
- **New and emerging issues can be identified and agencies brought together to act on them quickly.** Examples provided by interviewees included when trying to coordinate around inequalities for women with complex needs; and responding to a sudden reduction in notice for new refugees to leave their Home Office accommodation. It is hoped that Built for Zero will be similarly helpful in quickly bringing 'live' intelligence to the attention of local services.
- **Knowledge sharing.** The spaces created by Brent Homelessness Partnership are ones where people feel able to ask questions and share information about the issues they are dealing with in their own community or organisation. They are also seen as great conduits for spreading information.

'Both the Homelessness Forum and Rough Sleepers Working Group are really proactive groups to be in and they're really good for delivering key messages e.g. from Council about what's happening with services.' (Voluntary sector)

'It's been a learning curve as well – learning how different homelessness projects work, learning how it's linked with other things mental health, domestic violence.'
(Voluntary sector)

- **Improved mutual understanding between sectors and organisations.** Interviewees said that by engaging regularly with the activities of the Brent Homelessness Partnership – whether the Forum or inviting Crisis back to deliver the awareness raising sessions to new staff members – they accumulated knowledge and improved their understanding about where they fit in the ecosystem of homelessness provision in Brent. This in turn helps them to see where they could be working in partnership with others. Ultimately, improved mutual understanding within and between sectors creates a virtuous circle of even more collaboration and partnership working in place. Ultimately, regular and diverse attendance of organisations in large numbers that bring a wide range of expertise leverages the engagement and interest of even more public and voluntary services and makes the Forum a 'go to' for further work to bring about change.

'I now know who to have conversations with and can talk in a different way – i.e. not touting a service but offering something more specific and tangible – we talked about this, this is what I can offer.'
(Voluntary sector)

'It has created a structured process and clarity on roles and responsibilities of partners involved in the pathway.'
(NHS North West London)

- **Familiarity with other services and 'what's out there'.** Interviewees felt that regular engagement with place-based work had helped them better articulate and make decisions about what they are providing themselves and where to work in partnership with others. Examples provided by interviewees included developing a new triage system to address inappropriate referrals and feeling more confident about suggesting ways to improve joint working.

'When [I was] given the homelessness brief it was hard to connect with Brent housing team. Crisis and the Forum are open to new initiatives – e.g. when trying to coordinate around inequalities for women with complex needs, Crisis [Skylight Brent] gave contacts and were very responsive. Every person has been approachable.'
(Public sector)

Changes in systems behaviours

Leadership and the spaces to come together has helped generate a range of examples of joint working practices. For example:

- joint recruitment panels for shared posts or posts where the voluntary and public sectors have a shared interest
- linked to this, secondments, embedded staff, co-located staff in both the voluntary and public sectors
- training and upskilling public sector officers through 'community of practice' activities, about homelessness and legislation, policy and practice as well as building awareness and understanding about the issues faced by people experiencing homelessness. Peer to peer learning

'In the last three or four months Crisis [Skylight Brent] has given presentations on legislation, referrals, eligibility criteria. It's great to have refresher training so that we keep upskilling staff and training new staff.'
(Public sector)

- outreach work in public spaces that have been identified as 'hot spots' and in contingency hotels where there is an urgent need to connect migrants to services

'A colleague from public health goes every Friday to make sure they're linked in especially because of the challenge around swift move-on currently happening [7 days' notice instead of the usual 28 days] and keeping a GP registration.'
(Public sector)

- joint outreach; accompanied visits; or 'satellite' services enable public sector services (primarily health and homelessness) to reach spaces and people that they would otherwise be unable to reach because they can work through 'trusted third parties' in the voluntary sector

'Crisis may know the person better than us. Not everyone declares everything to us. It's not the customer's fault – they are homeless and vulnerable.'
(Public sector)

- improved joint working on referral, assessments and decisions. Cooperation between service providers gives reassurance to staff and improved outcomes for individuals that, where their help stops, they know who can and will pick up e.g. following hospital discharge into community-based support.

'It has helped to improve the support patients are receiving when they are discharged from hospital as we are more aware of services, we can link them into when they leave from here. I think it has probably reduced the risk of relapse into street homelessness or rough sleeping for some of the people we have seen.'
(Public sector)

'We're all part of the same team in the end aren't we, all have the same goal. We do need to reduce duplication. A joined-up approach so that we aren't expecting people to keep having to tell their story.'
(Voluntary sector)

How Brent Homelessness Forum contributes to systems change

Brent Homelessness Partnership meets via the Brent Homelessness Forum. As such the Forum plays a pivotal role in driving place-based work. This section sets out key findings from a survey of its members, draws out sector variation in responses and comments on its strengths and limitations. It concludes by identifying the features of the Forum that were thought by interviewees and discussion group participants to enable it to play such a critical role.

Key findings from a survey of Brent Homelessness Forum members

A survey was sent to 194 organisations listed as members of the Brent Homelessness Forum and received 31 responses (16 per cent response rate) from both the voluntary sector (17) and public sectors (14). Its questions were focused on the Forum. The full findings are in Appendix 2.

The results are extremely positive in terms of what members gain from their involvement. They certainly endorse the Forum as being a critical foundation for ongoing place-based work on homelessness in Brent.

An analysis of quantitative feedback showed a very positive picture:

- Nearly all (97%) respondents said being involved with the Forum was very or fairly significant.
- 8 in 10 said it had strengthened their own relationships. 1 in 10 not at all.
- 8 in 10 said it had positively influenced their own ways of working. 1 in 10 not at all.
- Nearly 9 in 10 thought sector relationships had been strengthened .
- More than 9 in 10 thought sector ways of working positively influenced.

An analysis of qualitative feedback identified four ways that being a part of the Forum makes a difference:

<p>Supporting clients <i>'Builds a team around the person'</i> <i>'Helped to improve the support for patients leaving hospital.'</i></p>	<p>Strategic impact <i>'Helped shape Brent specific Homeless Health Plan'</i> <i>'More access and information about what is available in Brent.'</i></p>
<p>Operational impact <i>'Supports smooth transitions and prevents gaps in services'</i> <i>'Enables effective sharing of information on clients'</i></p>	<p>Partnerships <i>'Building relationships between organisations'</i> <i>'Partnership working with the Council's community'</i></p>

Sector variation in the survey findings

The survey analysis looked for variation in responses. Public sector survey respondents were slightly more likely to give a positive view about the Forum than their voluntary sector colleagues (see charts below and Appendix B for full survey results). The small number of more negative results came from voluntary and community sector respondents and even these included a mixture of positive and less positive results. For example, one voluntary sector respondent whose responses for all questions except one was 'not at all' also gave a positive answer about how the Forum has brought about partnership working with other teams within the Council that aren't as directly involved in Brent Homelessness Partnership.

The small number of negative responses were along two themes. One was more driven by the intensifying challenges around housing need and the possibility of the Forum activities being able to progress against such pressures, rather than a negative view of the Forum itself. The other spoke to a concern that attendance alone may not be resulting in active listening or recognition of the severity of the situation.

Strengths and limitations of the Forum

The figure below summarises some of the strengths that members identified as features of the Forum. The stability that the partnership between Berkeley Foundation, Crisis and Brent Council provide is seen as an asset that enables the Forum to keep track of its work – institutional memory and collective learning. Similarly, the funding and support for its leadership ensures that Crisis Skylight Brent has the time and resources for brokering connections. Any Forum will have its limitations and will be constantly needing to evolve. For example, some organisations won't have the time to attend meetings and some may feel that attendance does not necessarily result in change. The Forum is positioned as part of a wider effort – Brent Homelessness Partnership – that seeks change through a diversity of activities.

Figure 2: Features of the Homelessness Forum**Table 2: Case examples of systems change**

For each case example the context in which it has occurred is described followed by the way it is delivered and what outcomes it has enabled.

Example 1: Brent Homelessness Forum

Context: Forum brings together public and voluntary sector organisations. It is chaired by Crisis Skylight Brent with the support of Brent Council. Established in 2018. Grew out of an imperative to work together. Now provides a well-attended, genuinely cross sector base for the exchange of information and collective problem-solving. Suggestions from interviews and discussions include engaging more faith-based organisations and seeking to rebuild links with Brent adult social care.

Mechanism: Driven by historical partnership working between the voluntary and public sectors including between key individuals; by a willingness on the part of the Council to give up some of its power; and to look collectively at ways to make best use of capacity and resources. Proactive and able to work on almost live intelligence sharing; spirit of adaptability.

Outcomes:

- Strategic focus for activity; the place to go or be linked with; safe space for discussion; status as a partnership between Brent Council and Crisis Skylight Brent helps provide credibility and safe attendance by other statutory agencies (Department for Work and Pensions; Integrated Care Board etc. to share and/or develop their own programmes).
- Enabled a swift response to the pandemic. Focused work on mental health, physical health (pathway team learned from earlier engagement with forum).
- Creates a non-judgmental empathetic culture that concentrates on finding ways to work together in order to support people.
- Been able to bring the non-commissioned agencies into the forum alongside commissioned and ensure that they sit together constructively.
- Developed working groups that feedback into the Forum, including the Rough Sleeping Working Group.
- Embedding strategies in borough planning, e.g. rough sleeping action and Built for Zero.

Example 2: The Turning Point provides a specialist single homelessness service

Context: Recognition that appointment-based single homelessness service at Civic Centre was problematic – wrong environment, not co-located with other relevant services, better ways to support single homeless people. Recognition that mainstream Council locations and homelessness services are not best-suited to single homeless people

Mechanism: Developed through collaboration with Forum (discussions and workshops to shape) and one of earliest issues brought to the Forum by Brent Council.

Outcomes: This was newly opened at the point of the evaluation (so improved outcomes for individuals not tested) but positive early signs and calmer atmosphere reported (more appropriate and not 'in competition' with others). An important step forward in partnership working, collaboration and doing things differently. Drop-in to Brent's single homeless team and with co-located services improves chances of being accessed. Locating the service so close to Crisis Skylight Brent and SHPS reduces travel and improves access to the right support.

Example 3: Single Homeless Prevention Service.

Context: A new funding model, payment by results and the first in London to be set up; commissioned by the Council for four years but independent culture.

Mechanism: Payment contingent upon: a Personal housing Plan (PHP) identifies the housing need alongside a series of actions the individual and the SHPS staff team need to complete with target dates for completion.

Outcomes: Part of a Pan London approach. It has proved to be a transferrable model and was used to quickly set up a new Single Homeless Refugee Service to address Home Office accommodation changes and sudden increase in newly-granted refugees seeking support. The impetus was the result of raising the issue through partnership mechanisms that provided early knowledge of unannounced changes in Home Office practice.

Example 4: Winter shelter provision 2022/23

Context: Used connections – inside and outside of people's day jobs - through culture of collaboration to connect with faith and civic organisations to deliver a rolling shelter.

Mechanism: Raised at Forum, pursued by Crisis, brought in resources of civic and faith sectors.
Weekly meetings held.
Got the right stakeholders together and was action-oriented process of coproduction.

Outcomes: Acknowledged as speedy and effective response that was successful in protecting people rough sleeping in the cold and saw around 15 people each night. Partnership delivery – Rumi's Kitchen for food, Crisis for housing support, etc. Brent Health Matters helped to find locations.
Integrated health delivery - health checks every 6 weeks (including BMI, weight) and GP registrations, mental health referrals.
Led to follow-on work that had further impact on individuals (see individual change).

In summary, the evaluation has identified in relation to the specific evaluation questions, that:

- a. Key drivers of systems change have been collaborative leadership between directors and managers across public and voluntary sectors; and creating a culture of collaboration (for example, building new relationships, identifying new and emerging issues, knowledge sharing, and improving mutual understanding between sectors).
- b. This leadership has enabled staff teams to move to a range of joint working practices leading to increased cooperation around referrals and outreach work that has led to swifter responses.
- c. Overall, systems change can be seen to have been embedded through longer term changes in systems behaviours such as co-locating posts and services for the long term.

3c. Individual change

The evaluation looked at individual change, defined, for the purposes of this evaluation, as the extent to which efforts at a place-based level help to make the lives of people experiencing homelessness better. The evidence is from 12 of the interviews with stakeholders and from the interviews with people with lived experience of homelessness in Brent and of support services in Brent. Five case examples are set out in Table 3.

The evidence is set out in terms of, first, the drivers of change and, second, the evidence about what has changed. Ways that the learning might inform place-based work elsewhere is discussed in section 5 as part of the evaluation implications and recommendations.

Drivers of change

Individuals can and do experience positive changes in their housing situation in areas that have not pursued a place-based approach to addressing homelessness. The evaluation has identified ways that place-based work adds value to the mechanisms for change. They include:

- willingness and ability of voluntary sector organisations to intervene when individuals are being passed between public agencies without resolving their housing issues
- willingness of voluntary and public agencies to engage with and understand one another's resources, capacities and constraints; and together find ways to work within them

'If someone turns up at [the Council] 1 minute to 5 needing help, we can call [voluntary agency] and they can signpost to emergency accommodation' (Public sector).

- improving engagement between people experiencing homelessness and public agencies (e.g. health) by having them deliver outreach alongside trusted voluntary sector providers
- structures that can support work on complex cases or on specific cohorts or populations (e.g. Brent Homelessness Forum task and finish groups on mental health, migrant rough sleepers and people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF); complex case panel):

'It's an asset of the Forum that it can tap into all these agencies to find that flex in the system to meet the needs of the individual'. (Public sector)

Evidence of change

When asked to give examples of people experiencing homelessness whose situation had been positively affected by place-based work, the main cohorts or populations mentioned by interviewees were: people with complex needs for whom finding accommodation is challenging; migrants with no recourse to public funds who are rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness; and people with drug and alcohol dependency and mental health issues. Five anonymised case examples are set out in the table below. From the data the following evidence of individual change as a result of successful place-based working has been identified.

Interviewees identified change for individuals around housing and associated issues as a result of successful place-based working in the Brent area in the following ways:

- GP registration for people experiencing homelessness has improved and attention is now also turning to work with GPs that have a high number of patients experiencing homelessness so that people experiencing homelessness get, for example, a health & wellbeing assessment; referral to a social prescriber; flu jabs; and/or a medication review.
- Finding accommodation and support for people whose needs and circumstances are complex and where no one agency alone is likely to be able to help. For example, through a complex case panel or by agency workers being willing to get together and problem solve.

'The purpose [of the complex case panel] was to have the right people in the room to make decisions and unblock. A lot of cases were 'thorny' and most importantly for me difficult to find accommodation for'. (Public sector)

- Getting people the support they need quickly by cooperating over referrals, assessment processes and decision making; for some people this meant that they received help before the issues they face became more serious.

'We talked to Brent [Council] about accepting direct referrals. We said to Brent if they come to us, if we do a quick check and they are suitable especially for prevention work where time is of the essence then let us start working with them straight away'. (Voluntary sector)

- Smoothing people's transitions between services – hospital to community, temporary winter or Home Office accommodation to other options – meant they were less likely to lose touch with the support services that could help them resolve their housing issues.
- Resolving Universal Credit claims that are cancelled or held up. Place-based working had led to closer partnership working and a greater willingness to share information and jointly investigate these kinds of occurrences.

'A lot of the time the contact is about [voluntary agency] getting in touch when someone has been told by [the] Council that we can't help them. Say their Universal Credit has been cancelled. Usually there is a reason and [Council officer] unpicks the reason why [or] If she can't then she gets in touch with her contacts at the service centre'. (Public sector)

- Working through the unintended consequences of statutory processes. For example, where a closure order would have led to homelessness without the public and voluntary agency having a good enough relationship of trust to be able to find an alternative solution.

Table 3: Case examples of individual change

For each anonymised case example in the table below, the context in which it has occurred is described followed by the way it is delivered and what outcomes it has enabled. These outcomes may not have been reached, or negative outcomes may have been the result, had not place-based work been in place.

Individual	Context	Mechanism	Outcome
A	Person was at risk of homelessness due to letting people into the accommodation whose behaviour put the tenancy at risk.	Homelessness and drug and alcohol services worked together to support the tenant to stop using alcohol and to find ways that will enable them to not let the people in.	Prevented homelessness, kept the tenancy.
B	A person was sleeping rough. Had lost a lot of weight and visibly unwell. Health personnel had met the person previously during outreach work in a winter shelter.	Due to having already built trust through previous collaborative working in hotels (between public health and homelessness services), the health officer was able to approach the person who agreed to have a health check.	Health check identified serious health issue that was addressed.
C	A person had been banned by the two accommodation projects that might have helped them.	The frontline workers in the respective projects linked up – enabled by having existing trust and good working relationships in place – and worked out together how to manage the situation and help the person.	Case is ongoing.
D	A vulnerable person was being 'cuckooed' in their flat and at risk of eviction. A closure order had been put on the flat to exclude people but can lead to mandatory eviction.	A task and finish group were brought together under C MARAC ¹² to find a way to address the issues while avoiding cuckooing. Referred to social services and a local community group for support.	Case is ongoing and, so far, has avoided homelessness.
E	Older person evicted from their private rented tenancy had been unable to find suitable emergency accommodation.	Joined up work by Crisis and St Mungo's looked at finding short term accommodation for the person and then began work to support with addressing long term housing situation.	Now in short term housing. Has found longer term tenancy but delayed due to delays in Universal Credit.

In summary, the evaluation has identified in relation to the specific evaluation questions, that:

- a. Individual people appear to be getting the support they need quickly through cooperation over referrals, assessment processes and decision-making; for some people this meant that they received help before the issues they face became more serious.
- b. More generally, place-based work can be seen to be benefiting certain target groups with work on transitions between services including from hospital into the community; and rethinking the way services are delivered.
- c. Specific populations said to have benefited from the place-based approach were people with complex needs for whom finding accommodation is challenging; migrants with no recourse to public funds who are rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness; and people with drug and alcohol dependency and mental health issues.

¹² A Community MARAC (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference) is a multi-agency problem-solving meeting that promotes joint ownership and early resolution into how complicated anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases involving safeguarding issues are investigated and resolved.

4. Findings summary

In this section is a synthesis of the findings from evidence on strategic learning, systems change and individual change.

Place-based work is strongly embedded in the Brent homelessness landscape. The findings tell us that a cornerstone of work on systems change is the creation of safe spaces for organisations to share and discuss emerging challenges, celebrate progress and develop ideas or solutions. Brent Homelessness Partnership comprises a number of place-based activities that make this possible, including the Homelessness Forum, Community of Practice, working groups and awareness raising sessions.

Crisis Skylight Brent has played a critical role in the evolution towards place-based working in Brent. It is seen as a trusted partner willing and able to work effectively in tandem with Council and other public services. It is seen as approachable, proactive, willing to challenge the Council and also to work alongside, offering stability, reliability and pragmatism. Further, it is a valued partner and asset to public and voluntary and community sector organisations, recognised as benefitting from the resources and strength of national Crisis. It has a strong leadership role within strategic thinking and systems change and is trusted by political leaders to hold the Council to account and promote good practice.

Crisis Skylight Brent is valued by the Council for being able to tackle or facilitate what is beyond their remit, especially around people with No Recourse to Public Funds, co-occurring mental health and homelessness and/or substance misuse. It is also seen as being willing to align and collaborate with other organisations within and beyond Brent for the benefit of their service user members. The new Crisis Skylight building is viewed as a positive asset and is felt to be located in the right part of the borough for its purpose. It was part of the conscious decision-making when choosing a location for the new single homelessness hub, The Turning Point, that it should be close to the Crisis Skylight centre. It achieves a balance between being able to challenge and work alongside the Council.

The distinction between strategic learning, systems change and individual change are not so clear cut as this evaluation report implies. It is possible to begin to bring together how all three interact by setting out findings on what place-based work achieves for individuals and how that relates to the strategic learning and systems change described above:

- By building cooperation between agencies around referrals, assessments and decisions, people get started on their journey to resolving their housing and associated issues more quickly than they otherwise might.
- By building stronger links with health agencies, GP registration for people experiencing homelessness has improved and there has been some uplift in general health assessments. Some interviewees thought that this was in part due to health agencies being in contact with people in Home Office accommodation.
- By building cooperation between services, fewer people were 'lost' to the system when they moved between services e.g. moving out of hospital or winter shelter or Home Office accommodation.
- Bringing together a team of people from different agencies to discuss complex cases had helped with removing the barriers to resolving housing issues.

5. Implications and recommendations

This section sets out the implications of the findings and some recommendations for how Crisis might take the learning from Brent into place-based work in other areas. It would appear reasonable to expect improved journeys through and out of homelessness would be seen in other areas that implement this learning. However, a critical factor that will continue to affect sustainable outcomes in any area is a shortage of affordable housing.

Creating the conditions for change

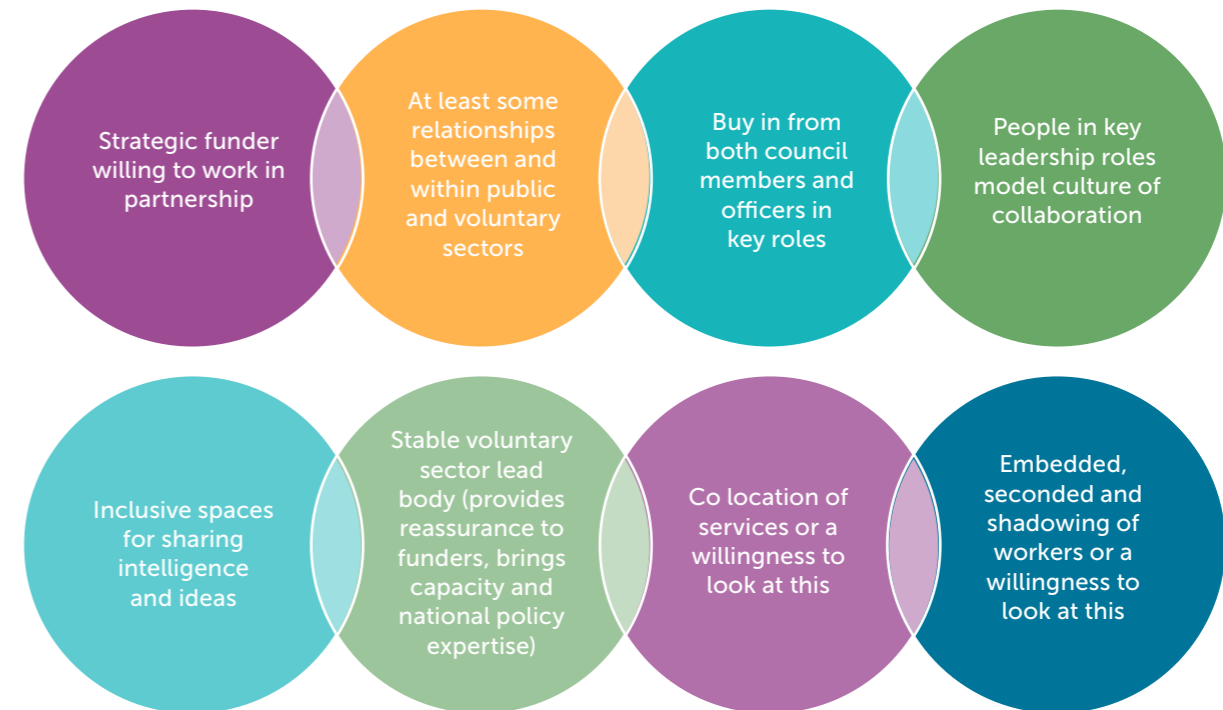
Place-based work will evolve in different ways depending on context meaning that a 'one size fits all' approach to creating place-based change won't be appropriate. Nonetheless it is possible to identify some conditions for change based on the findings from Brent that Crisis can look for when supporting place-based work elsewhere. Crisis could use these as the basis for discussion in new areas, for example, looking together with local partners at what exists and where work is needed to build relationships. Figure 3 below sets out the conditions for change that have emerged from this evaluation.

Emerging principles for place-based work based on learning in Brent

The following principles build on the findings including internal work carried out by Crisis and Crisis Skylight Brent to evaluate themselves and identify the lessons learned. The principles are intended for use when thinking about place-based work in other areas.

- **Strengths-based.** Take a strengths-based approach, building on existing relationships and structures and benefiting from where there is energy to get place-based work moving.
- **Safe spaces.** Invest in safe spaces for agencies to share practice and reflect on progress so that place-based work develops iteratively through reflecting on what's working and understanding what is not and why.
- **Partnership working takes time and resources.** Proper partnership work takes a long time and needs resourcing. Even established partnerships need ongoing nurturing and this should lead them to be well embedded in the long term.
- **Balance between sharing and pushing.** The reality is that this work is often 'extra' for partners. Don't expect all agencies to be able to give the same commitment. Find ways for small groups or agencies to keep engaged and be aware of the place-based partnership work and facilitate their contribution at whatever level is appropriate to them.

Figure 3: Creating the conditions for change — based on learning about place-based work in Brent



- **Recognise and value small or incremental changes.** Small victories help to explain the nature of the work and get more people on board. These may be the foundations for bigger change.
- **Council relationship.** The active involvement and commitment of the Council is critical. This ensures a two-way relationship (as distinct from a managerial one) between the voluntary and public sectors, as well as a flow of resources in-kind.
- **Letting go of power by public agencies is necessary** to build effective place-based partnerships.
- **Voluntary agencies need to be willing to look beyond their individual services** and to understand system constraints and how to impact on these.
- **Cheerlead for the place.** It helps to be visibly supportive of local initiatives even if you don't have direct stake, to build good will.
- **The importance of new (and existing) knowledge.** One of the key roles is helping people to understand the challenges that people experiencing homelessness face and to do this through sharing the most up to date insights.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Crisis

- Build leadership capacity across the sector in order to develop and maintain sustainable place-based work that avoids reliance on a few individuals.
- Build ways of communicating with the widest possible networks of agencies, including those that do not attend meetings whether due to a lack of capacity or because homelessness is only slightly relevant to their work.
- In particular, encourage inclusion and diversity in partnerships and voice, both through representation of marginalised and minoritized parts of the community and to strengthen the role of people with lived experience in place-based work.
- Develop work on establishing Brent Homelessness Partnership as a clearer 'brand', thinking particularly about communication and engagement with the widest possible network of agencies.
- Find ways to maintain a connection between local place-based work and national housing and homelessness policy so that there is a flow of information in both directions.

Recommendations for the partnership between Crisis, Brent Council and the Berkeley Foundation

- Continue to work as a partnership with Berkeley Foundation's welcome commitment to being an engaged funder. The benefits and impact of the funding so far are clearly shown through the evaluation, but place-based work requires a long-term commitment.

- Continue to support leadership in both the public and voluntary sectors based on the evidence that this will help develop and sustain place-based work. This needs to include funding key posts.
- Consider how to use the evaluation findings and wider Brent Homelessness Partnership expertise to develop work in in Brent and promote this type of approach in other areas.

Recommendations for Built for Zero

- It will take time for the concept to be understood and supported; for frontline teams to see the value of compliance and overcome barriers to sharing data. These internal challenges are compounded by external pressures including a shortage of suitable, affordable accommodation; and the rising scale of homelessness.
- Being focused and realistic about what can be achieved through the initiative and getting the pace of the work right is important. Regularly sharing back progress, making visible the stages and steps involved and promoting positive change will all help with this. Efforts to do all of these things have already been widely welcomed.
- Work towards a good, shared understanding of Built for Zero throughout homelessness organisations including frontline staff and volunteers. This will help ensure that new systems are used effectively throughout the homelessness system. One way to achieve this which is already working well is for senior leaders to model their commitment to it.

Appendix A: Organisations that were interviewed for the evaluation

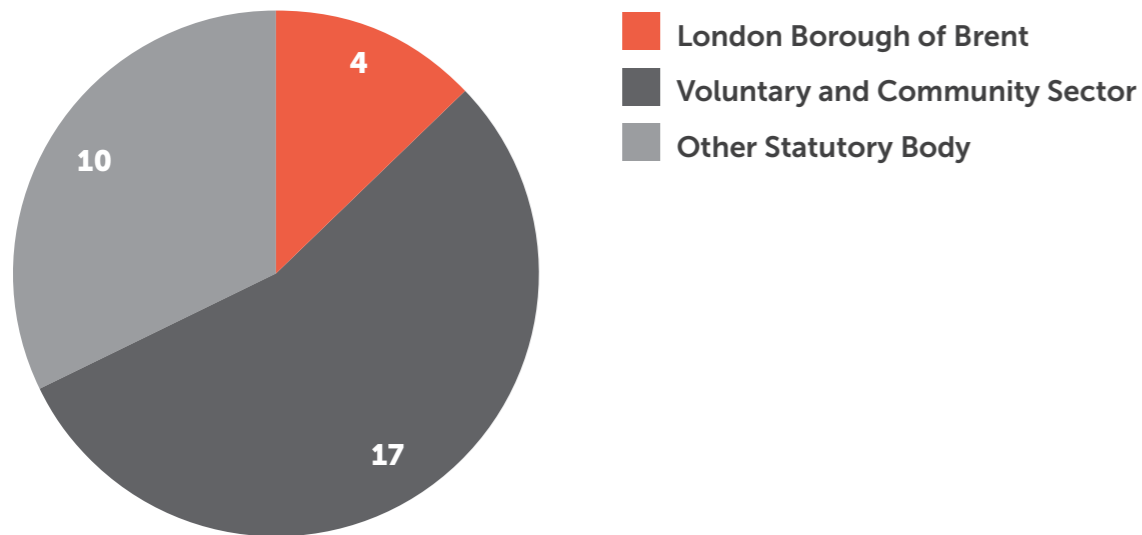
22 people across 12 organisations gave an interview.

Brent Health Matters
 Bridges Outcomes Partnerships
 Crisis Skylight Brent (2 staff members)
 Department for Work and Pensions
 Ealing and Northwick Park Hospitals
 London Borough of Brent Council (7 staff members in different teams and roles)
 NHS Brent (2 staff members)
 NHS North West London (Homeless Help)
 St Mungo's (2 staff members)
 Social Interest Group (2 staff members)
 Via
 West London Housing Partnership

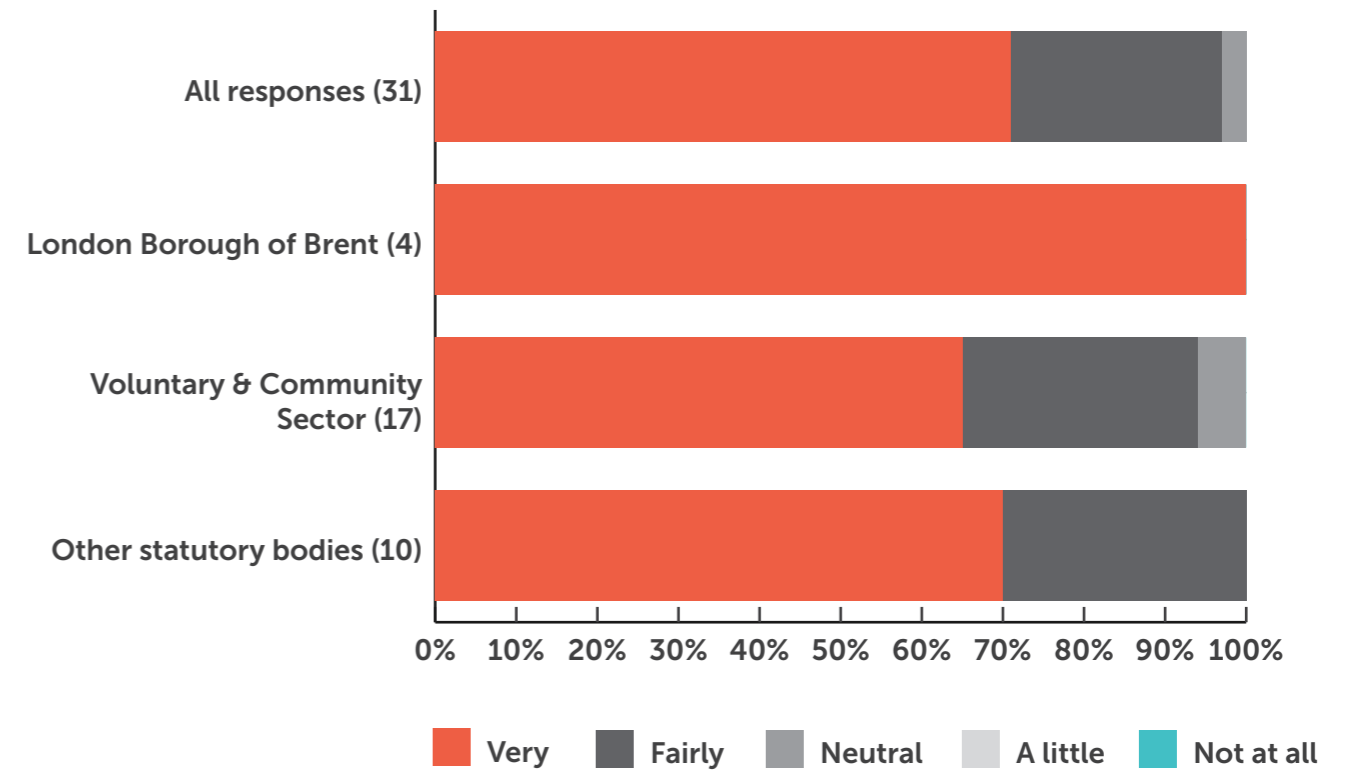
Appendix B: Survey findings in full

Organisation Types

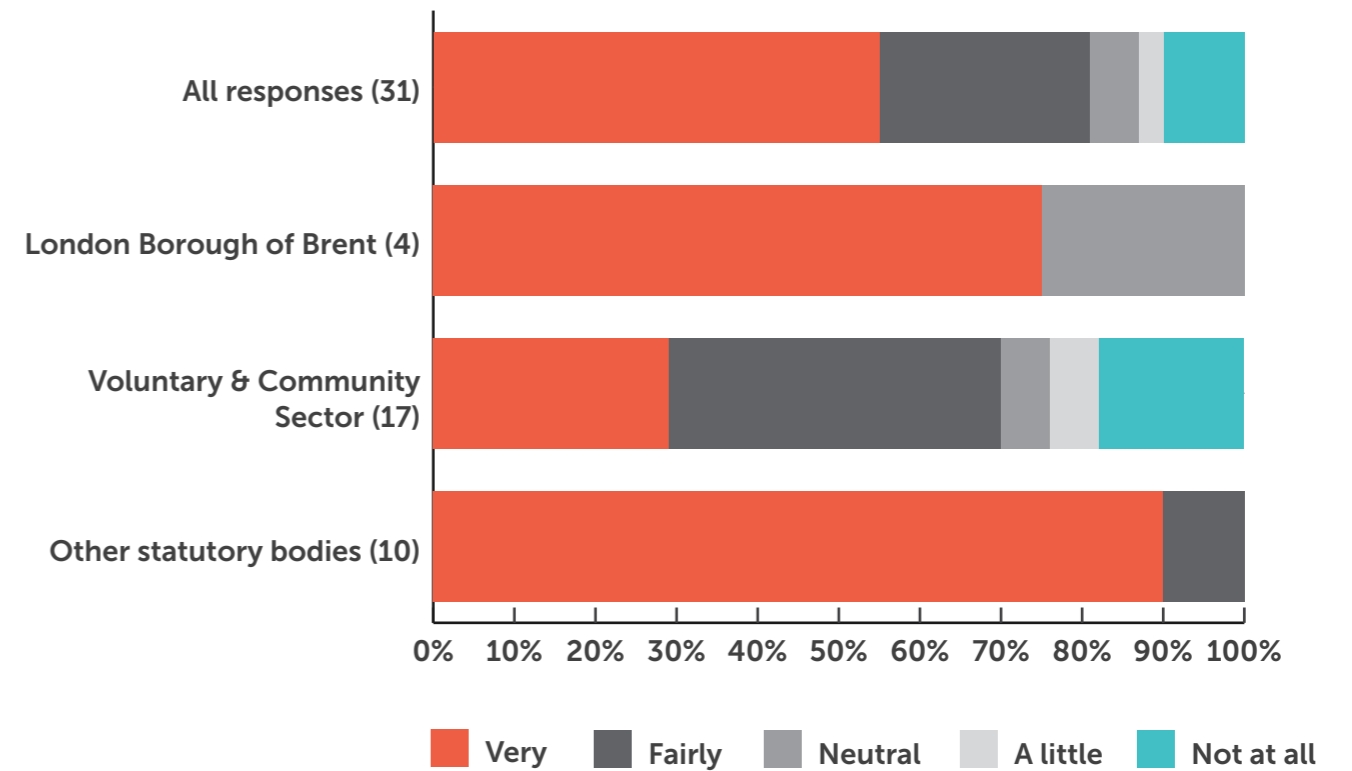
Organisation Breakdown	No.	%
London Borough of Brent	4	13%
Voluntary and Community Sector	17	55%
Voluntary sector organisation	13	
Community group	1	
Social enterprise	1	
Charity	2	
Other statutory body	10	32%
NHS	8	
Department for Work and Pensions	2	
Total	31	



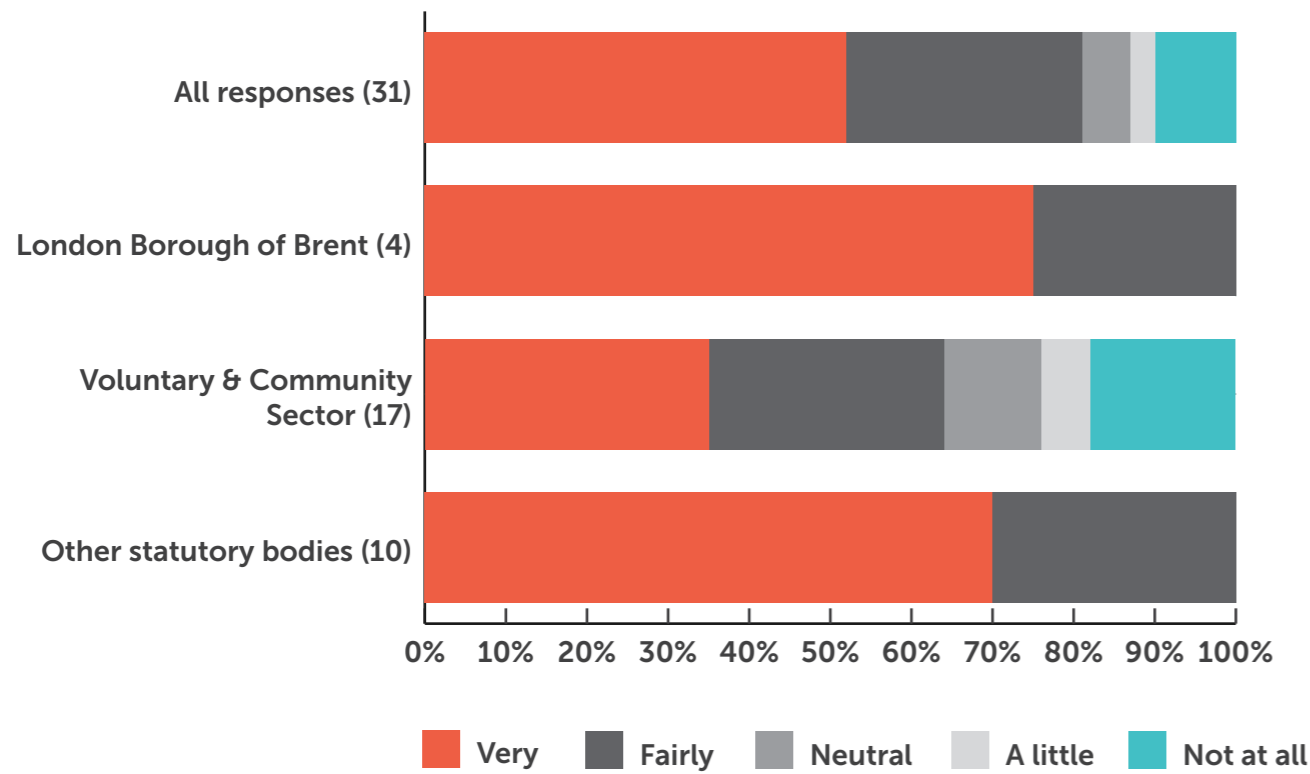
Q1. How significant for your organisation is being involved with the Homelessness Forum?



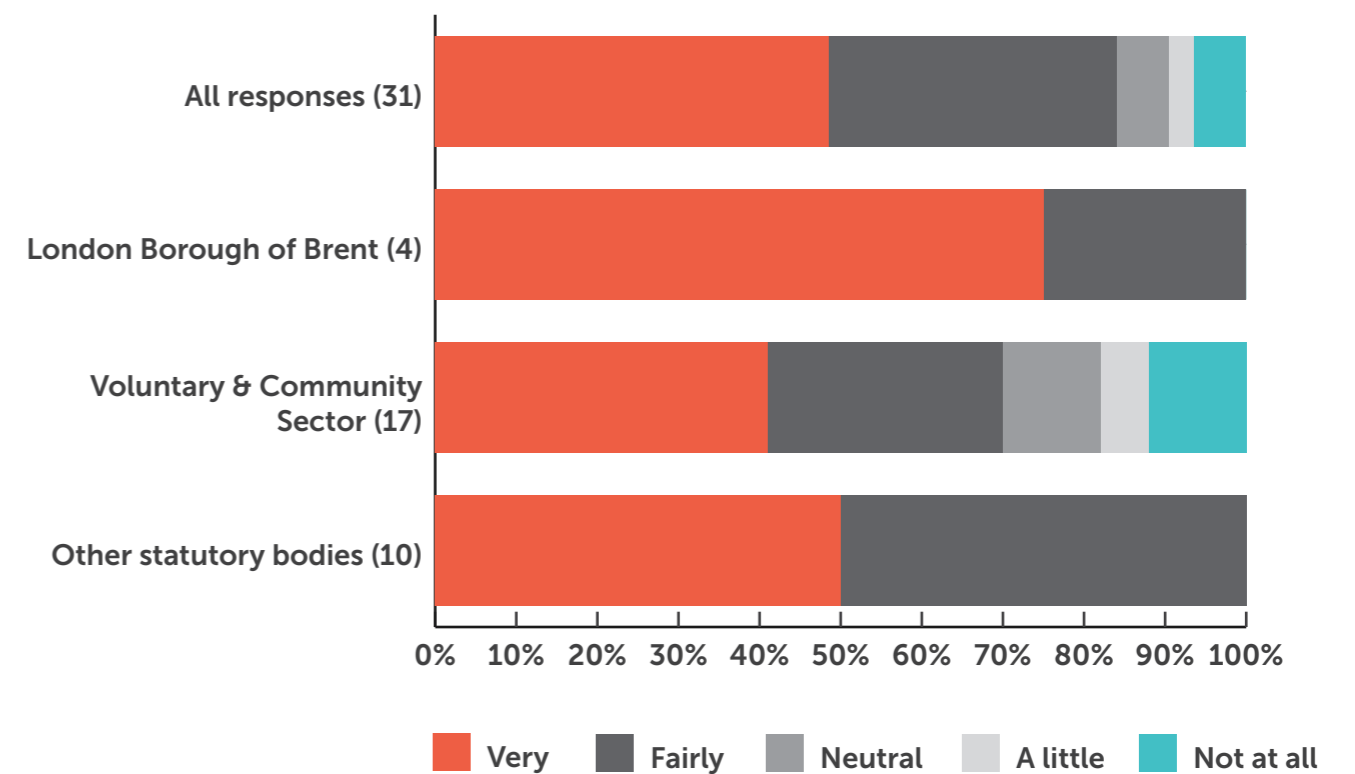
Q2. How far have your organisation's relationships in Brent been strengthened through being involved with the Homelessness Forum?



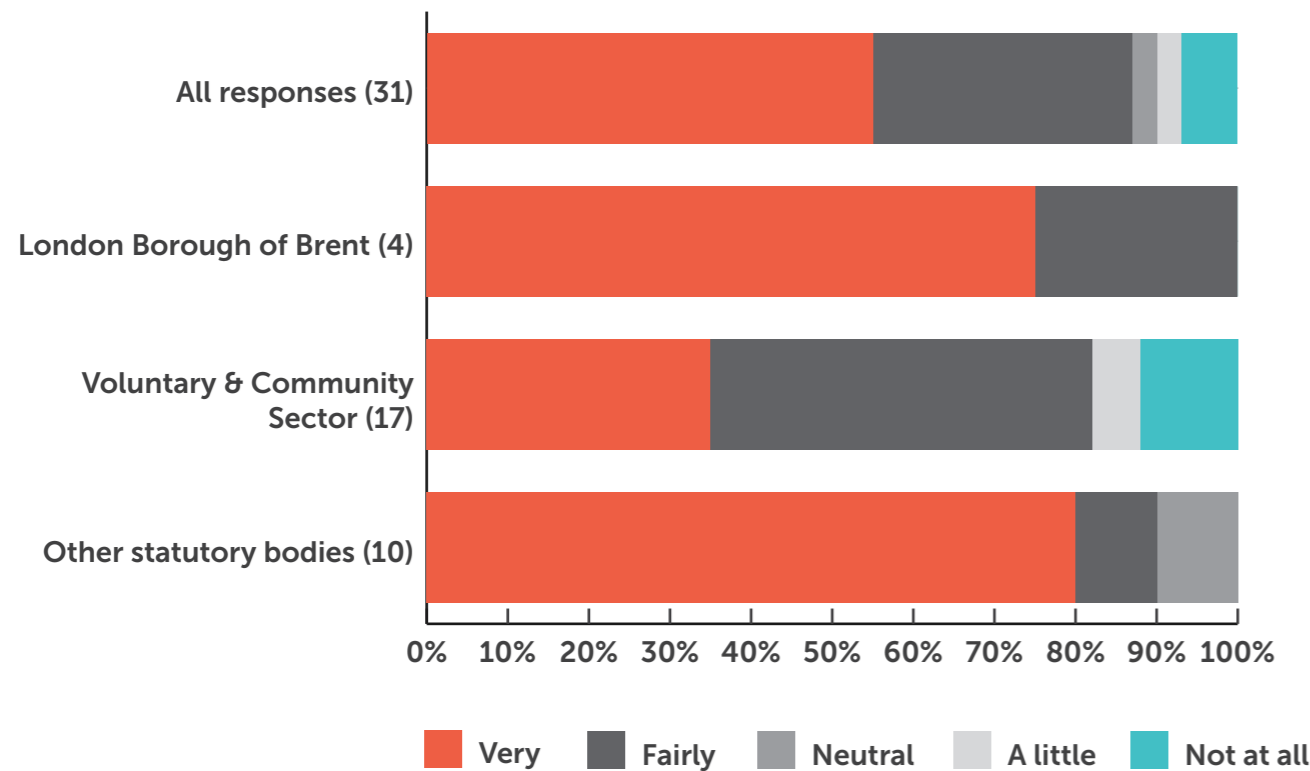
Q3. How far have your organisation's ways of working been positively influenced through being involved with the Homelessness Forum?



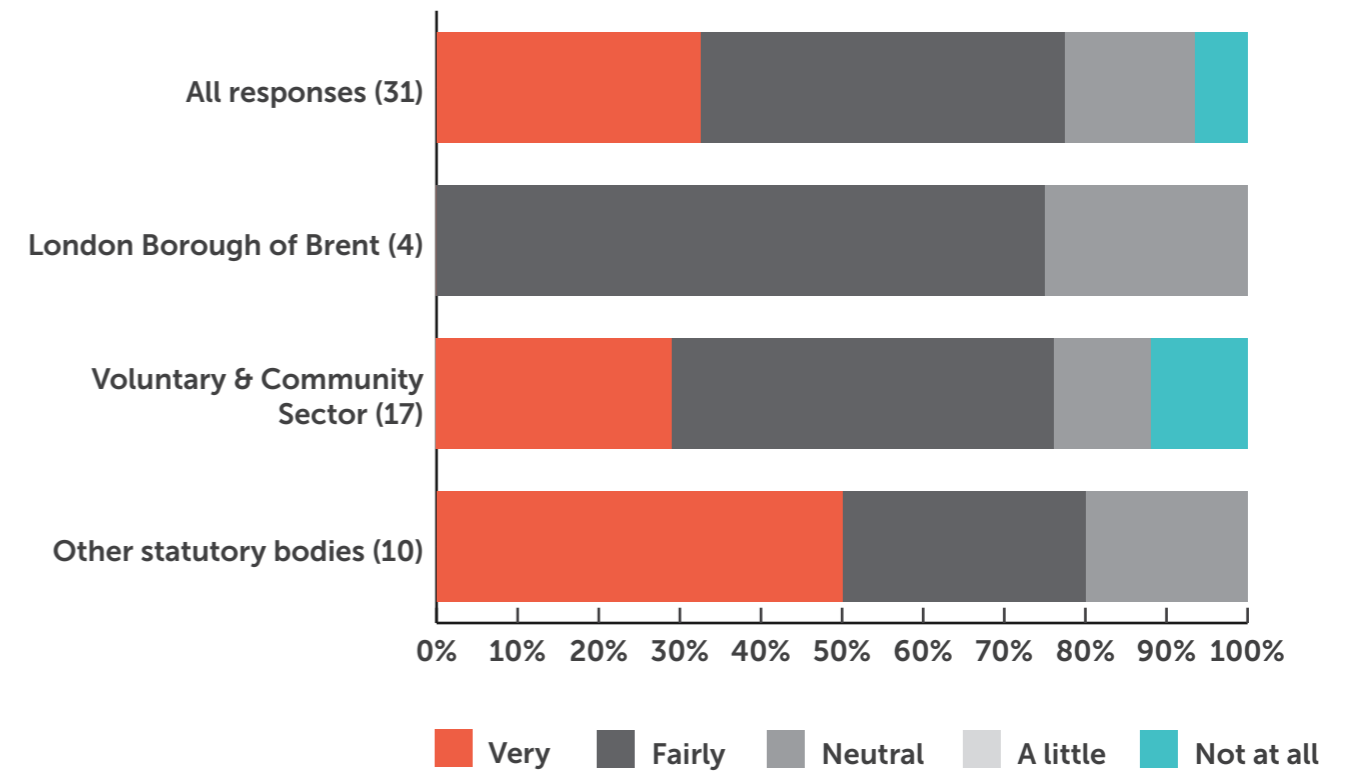
Q5. How far have the Brent homelessness sector's ways of working been positively influenced through the Homelessness Forum?



Q4. How far have the Brent homelessness sector's relationships been strengthened through the Homelessness Forum?



Q6. How well connected would you say the Homelessness Forum is to other forums or networks relevant to its work on homelessness in Brent?





Crisis head office

50-52 Commercial Street
London E1 6LT
Tel. 0300 636 1967
enquiries@crisis.org.uk
www.crisis.org.uk

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Together
we will end
homelessness