

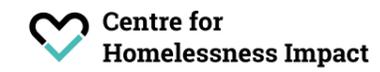


# Homelessness Impact:

A What Works perspective  
on Homelessness

**Impact Report 2020**





# Homelessness Impact:

A What Works perspective  
on Homelessness

**Impact Report 2020**

The Centre for  
Homelessness  
Impact  
improves  
the lives of  
**people** who  
are at risk of or  
experiencing  
homelessness

through better  
use of data and  
evidence.



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# Message from the Chair

It's a pleasure to introduce the first Impact Report from the Centre for Homelessness Impact.

Standing back from the detail, I am struck by two things:

- the amount the Centre has achieved in two and a half years; and
  - the amount that needs to be done to achieve our goal of ending homelessness for good.
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For decades, we've been used to relying on proven evidence to help judge what medical treatments are effective. In recent years, that approach has spread to other sectors such as education, but until the Centre was established in 2018, the same had not been done for homelessness. The problem had waxed and waned over the years, but without the evidence base needed to tackle it sustainably. That is the challenge for the Centre.

I'm proud of the progress on all three of our strands of work.

- The process of building a stronger evidence base began early on, in 2018, with the publication of the Evidence and Gap maps. These broke new ground in themselves, but have been only the foundation for work to synthesise what we do know, and start plugging the gaps of what we don't, by conducting trials.
- The What Works Community pilots with three local authorities showed how implementation support can be delivered through a multidisciplinary team, bringing evidence to bear on real-world operational problems, while spreading the culture of using data and evidence.
- In parallel, the Centre has grown the movement for evidence-driven change, building networks and relationships with a very broad range of stakeholders. This was epitomised by the online Impact Festival this summer, where sessions ranged from a memorable performance from Cardboard Citizens through personal learning events to discussions with some of the country's leading economists.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, we have struck a balance between flexing the work to address immediate needs, and keeping going with things which are as necessary as ever for the longer term.

Ligia Teixeira has done a fantastic job of getting the Centre going, and developing the team to take it forward, and on behalf of the whole Board, I'd like to thank them all for their hard work. The Centre will always remain a platform organisation, so I'd also like to thank the colleagues we work with: research partners and academics, policymakers and practitioners, charities and funders, people with lived experience and senior advisers – all have played their part. Special thanks are also due to Humphrey Battcock for his generous funding of the Centre.

A lot has been done, but there is a huge amount more to do if we are to deliver on our mission of catalysing the use of evidence to end homelessness. So in the coming year, we will be publishing the results of our first randomised controlled trial, with Cardiff University. We will be working with more than 20 local

authorities to address their implementation challenges. And we will be drawing on the messages of the book published in spring 2020, *Using Evidence to End Homelessness*, in a campaign to build support to #EndItWithEvidence. More generally, we will be looking to grow and diversify our funding; the more we can invest, the sooner we can build the evidence base that's needed.

I hope you enjoy the Impact Report – as ever, we welcome feedback. And I hope very much that in 2021, we can all meet safely in person to share our ideas and work together towards using evidence to end homelessness for good.



*Andrew Hudson*

Andrew Hudson

Chair, Centre for Homelessness Impact



# Our Board



**Humphrey Battcock**  
Philanthropist



**Jon Sparkes**  
Chief Executive, Crisis



**Andrew Hudson**  
Centre Chair



**Selina-Valencia McDonald**  
Director and Private Banker



**Jo Bibby**  
Director of strategy at  
the Health Foundation



**James Turner**  
Chief Executive,  
Sutton Trust



**Stephen Aldridge**  
Director for Analysis  
and Data at the  
Ministry of Housing,  
Communities and  
Local Government



**Dr Rebekah Widdowfield**  
Chief Executive, Royal  
Society of Edinburgh



**Merici Vinton**  
Ada's List Co-Founder  
and Managing  
Director



**Prof. Ken Gibb**  
Director, Collaborative  
Centre for Housing  
Evidence



# Message from the CEO

We were set up in 2018 to act as a catalyst for the evidence-led transformation of the homelessness field. We help governments and local areas harness the power of evidence to improve the lives of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and over the past two years we've already co-designed or invested in many inspiring projects in areas as diverse as landlord behaviour, direct cash transfers, and out-of-borough mobility.



But we also seek to improve the conditions in which evidence can flourish by pioneering new ways of supporting evidence translation, from our groundbreaking evidence tools, to launching our What Works Community, to the emerging leaders programme, to the SHARE framework, as well as in person or at online festivals.

We knew early on in our journey that a major challenge would be to show that generating evidence of 'what works' in homelessness – through the use of rigorous randomised controlled trials and systematic reviews – was not only possible, but that it would be welcomed by practitioners and policymakers. With several systematic reviews and trials delivered or underway since then, we feel confident in saying our approach has not only been well received, but warmly embraced across the field. We are also inspiring a growing number of homelessness scholars to focus their work on rigorous evaluation and synthesis.

We're proud of all that's been achieved. All of this is a work in progress, however. It's been an exciting couple of years for us – but the best is yet to come.



Projects such as the evidence tools not only helped map the global evidence on what works, but also helped advance a big idea – that now is the time for accelerating progress by raising the standards of the evidence available in homelessness. Our work to date provides a roadmap for synthesising and filling the gaps in the knowledge base, and we are proud of how much we've been able to accomplish on limited resources. With a long list of more than 80 trials in the 'wish list' that we co-created with policymakers and practitioners, it also highlighted that there is an urgent need for greater investment in experimentation in the field.

For anyone dedicated to ending homelessness, these are exhilarating and scary times. Exhilarating because of the impressive flow of energy and creativity from all parts of the country and the world; scary because the economy is not growing, and services in local areas are caught between declining revenues and growing demands. Many of our systems seem stuck, struggling to adapt to changing technologies and public attitudes. And the homelessness sector looks little better at understanding, let alone addressing, homelessness. There's a lot at stake.

That's why we need experimentation and evidence-led innovation – and the courage to test strongly held assumptions. In 2021, we want to raise our game in achieving impact; to grow our reputation as a centre of expertise and person-centred innovation; and to become more useful to everyone working to end homelessness for good, whether in government, charities or public organisations. At a time when many have lost confidence in their ability to transform the homelessness system, it's more important than ever that we provide practical support and act as a catalyst for creative evidence-led ideas that make a real difference.

Longer term, we want to achieve in homelessness what NICE and the Education Endowment Foundation – sister organisations in the What Works Network – accomplished in healthcare and education.

### Finally: thank you

I believe we are on the right path. That confidence is bolstered by the enthusiasm of so many who wish to partner with us on this journey. I want to say a big thank you: to those who have helped develop our evidence tools or taken part in our trials and systematic reviews; or partnered with us to create or deliver them; helped to communicate our evidence to local areas, or contributed to our first book and 'End It With Evidence' campaign.

Despite the many painful consequences of the ongoing crisis, we are optimistic that better use of data and evidence, and the application of tools to stimulate creativity and improve capacity, is vital to ending homelessness for good. Homelessness is complex, as are the challenges the people affected face every day. But the steps towards positive change don't have to be daunting. Our job is to make sure that's true.



Ligia Teixeira, Founding CEO,  
Centre for Homelessness Impact



# Our impact in brief

The inaugural Impact Report from the Centre for Homelessness Impact serves as a summary of our first two years of work and an assessment of the impact of our achievements to date.

## Overview

**The Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) launched in 2018 to act as a catalyst for evidence-led change. We believe not just that homelessness can be reduced, but that it can be ended, on a sustainable basis, by building and using the evidence about what really works across complex systems. That's what we were set up to do, and this report covers what we've achieved so far.**

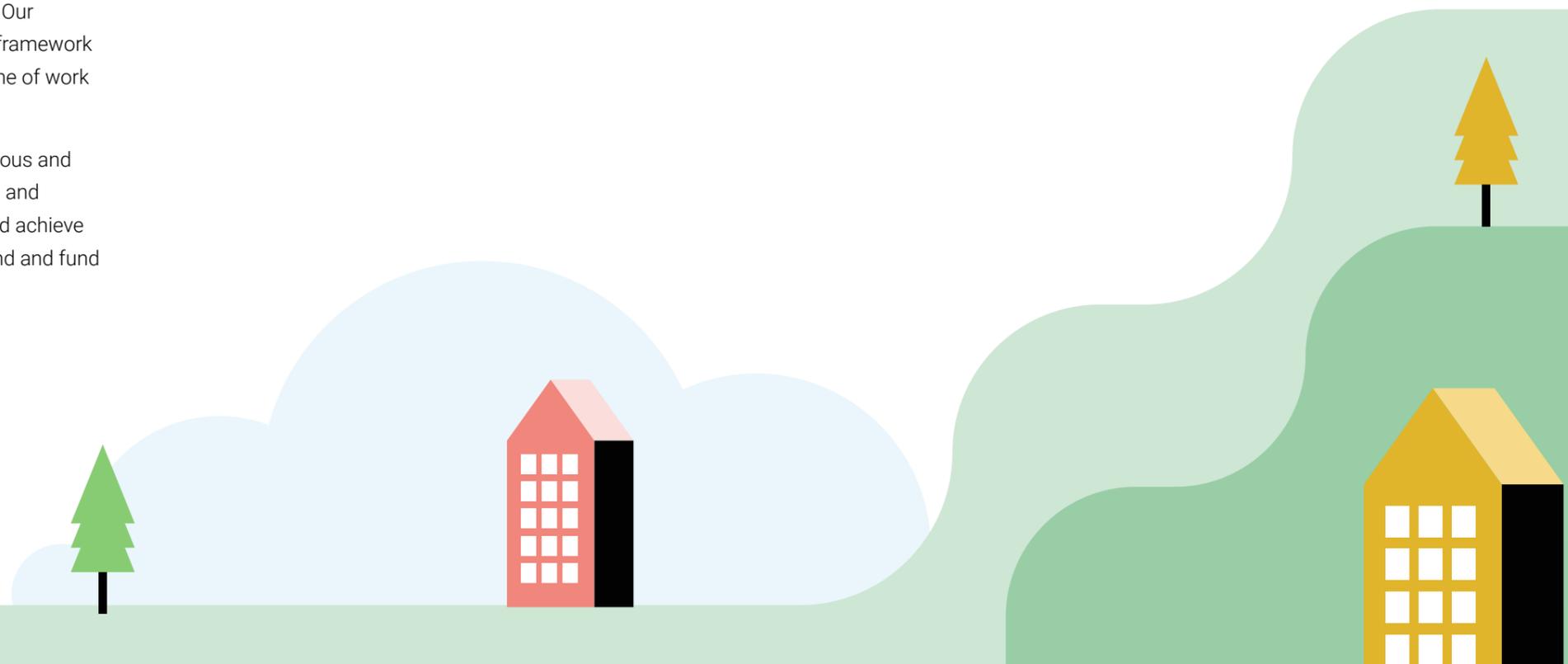
Our first year was spent building a suite of tools that, for the first time ever, put reliable evidence at the fingertips of those working to end homelessness. Our evidence and gap maps, evidence finder, intervention tool and outcomes framework gave us strong foundations on which to build a comprehensive programme of work to end homelessness sustainably.

The scope and scale of work in our second year has been similarly ambitious and fast-paced. We have drawn on the findings revealed by our evidence tools and worked across three key areas to galvanise support for our movement and achieve step change in homelessness by focusing on what works to effectively find and fund solutions backed by evidence and data.

All of this has kept us incredibly busy, and as a new organisation we have had little time to publicly reflect on what we have accomplished, what we have yet to achieve, and how our work will need to evolve and adapt in order to achieve it. This inaugural Impact Report is our first opportunity to do just that, and future reports will serve as an annual process of learning and reflection from our experiences to ensure that we acknowledge our successes and learn from our mistakes to make the next year as successful and impactful as possible.

## How CHI works:

CHI is a member of the What Works Network of 13 independent centres in the UK. Unlike medicine, the social sciences still have some way to go in their approach to the use of evidence to develop policy and practice, but we're already making substantial progress and changing attitudes towards the use of data and evaluations.



We work with universities, government, strategic partners (such as the Behavioural Insights Team and Nesta), local authorities and other What Works organisations (such as NICE and the Education Endowment Foundation).

#### Our work is guided by five key principles:



**Start with the person:** create a solution tailor-made to their needs



**Focus on impact:** focus on sustainable changes, set goals and follow through on them



**Design for action:** tools that are simple and easy to use

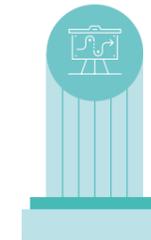


**Lead with the evidence:** work guided by evidence, not ideology



**Work with and through others:** collaborating with those in different fields

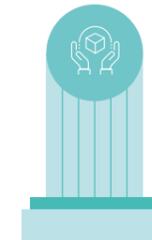
#### Our practice has three pillars:



## 01

##### **Making evidence**

**accessible** – We have helped generate a wide range of evidence required to effectively address the complex systems that influence homelessness. We have translated that evidence to make it accessible to everyone.



## 02

##### **Supporting**

**implementation** – We have provided resources and services that improve the skills of policymakers and practitioners to analyse data, evaluate interventions and use those processes for decision-making.



## 03

##### **Mobilising change-**

**makers** – We have fostered a learning culture in which data and evidence helps policymakers, practitioners and commissioners to improve outcomes for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

#### Highlights from our journey:

### Making evidence accessible

- Our evidence and gap maps are the first of their kind in homelessness. To date, they have been used nearly 7,000 times. The latest edition of our effectiveness map now includes 394 studies – 173 more than the initial edition – while our implementation map contains 246 qualitative process evaluations. Although more than 85% of the studies included in the map are from North America and fewer than 5% from the UK, the trend is moving in the right direction with an increase of more than 50% in the UK since we created the map in 2018. This tells us that we are seeing a surge in rigorous evaluation and synthesis, alongside a commitment to an evidence-informed end to homelessness.



- We have used our tools to co-create a long list of potential trials and systematic reviews. Rigorous synthesis is very rare in homelessness, so we were delighted to join forces with the Campbell Collaboration to design and release our first systematic reviews in areas as diverse as accommodation-based interventions, the effectiveness of discharge programmes and the accessibility of health and social care services for people experiencing homelessness.
- We have designed a series of groundbreaking randomised controlled trials (RCTs) to address pressing gaps in our knowledge from a policy and practice perspective on topics such as landlord behaviour, improving access to the private rental sector, curbing COVID-19 infection among people experiencing street homelessness, understanding the impact of out-of-borough mobility and testing the effectiveness of the individual placement and support model.

## Supporting implementation

- We created SHARE – a simple, memorable framework that provides a comprehensive view of what it takes to prevent homelessness at population level, that will be used to track progress at local and national level towards ending homelessness for good. Working with the Office for National Statistics and users themselves, the original framework has evolved into a reporting platform for 37 different contributory indicators for homelessness. Working with the Government Statistical Service (GSS), we've developed a comprehensive user testing programme to inform the next iteration, which will be ready for launch in February 2021.
- We piloted a What Works Community programme with three local areas across the UK, to help them embed data and evidence, design thinking and behavioural insights methods into their work. This was designed to help them address a specific problem in their area and increase the number of successful tenancies in the private rented sector to people experiencing homelessness. Based on the success of this programme, we are scaling it up to 30 different local areas in 2021.

- We successfully trialled our evidence surgery service, which provides tailored in depth and impartial advice to individuals and organisations working in and around homelessness to improve their use of data and evidence and foster a more experimental approach. These surgeries happen on an ad hoc basis and are designed around the challenges practitioners need help with in their day-to-day practice.

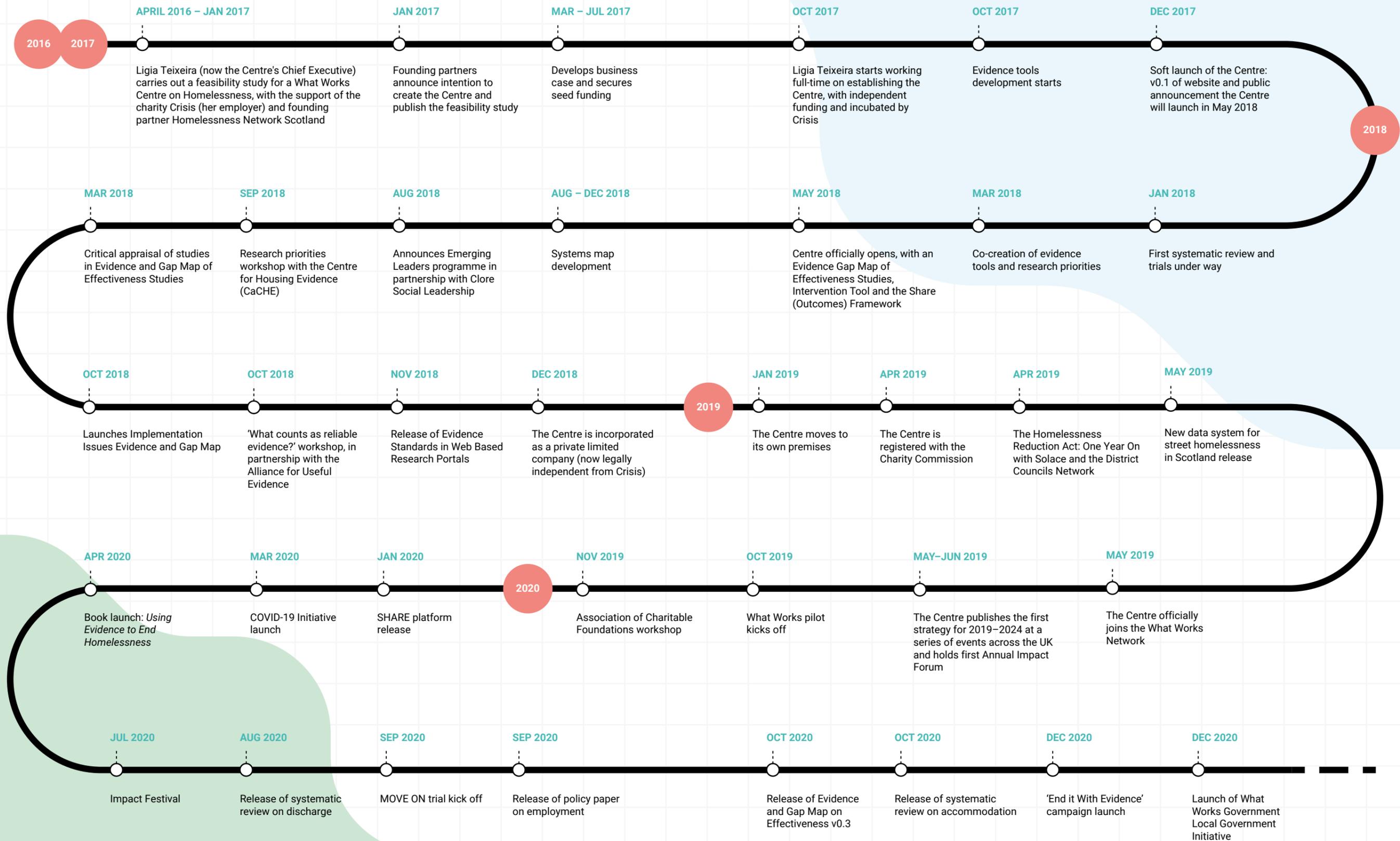
## Mobilising change-makers

- We established a Research Network in 2020 to share new and ongoing work, discuss ideas, and create new collaborations among the leading homelessness scholars from across the global north, alongside policymakers and researchers working in the government and voluntary and community sectors. It was designed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that we were learning as fast as possible across countries, and help address potential research wastage.
- In April 2020, we published our first book with Policy Press, *Using Evidence to End Homelessness*, in which contributors from a wide variety of organisations and with a unique breadth of experience, argue for a new approach to ending homelessness that embraces data and evidence. The book provides essential methods to underpin future policy, practice and funding decisions. It is intended to help grow the movement for evidence-led change in the field.
- In 2019, we took our Impact Forums to Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London, and launched our strategy in all four corners of the UK, bringing together the foremost leaders from homelessness policy and practice, as well as people with lived experiences of homelessness. While coronavirus has prevented us from holding events in person, our 2020 online Impact Festival saw 159 speakers across 53 live events explore what's happening in homelessness and related fields globally, and what needs to happen next to ensure we build better systems.

To discuss anything further contact [hello@homelessnessimpact.org](mailto:hello@homelessnessimpact.org).



# Our story in brief





# How we create change

Realising our vision takes patience, perseverance, and the energy and efforts of a whole host of individuals and organisations. In all of this, we are guided by five key principles:



## Start with the person

Our work is designed and delivered alongside people with lived experience of homelessness, and with input from policymakers and practitioners in different services.



## Focus on impact

We focus on sustainable changes that help people exit homelessness permanently or stop them becoming homeless in the first place. We set and communicate clear goals and follow through on them. We share our process and learning openly, stay humble and constantly question and challenge our thinking.



## Design for action

We build tools that are designed to be simple and useful, always aspiring to communicate the insights instead of just the information.



## Lead with the evidence

We are guided only by the evidence, and the belief that success comes to those who keep pushing past the obvious.



## Work with and through others

We don't work alone. We believe it takes a multitude of minds, partners and skills in different fields and sectors to accelerate and deliver change.



# Why What Works?

In 2019, we were thrilled to formally join the What Works Network, a family of organisations that includes the likes of NICE, the Education Endowment Foundation, and the College of Policing. Founded in 2013, the Network aims to improve the way that the government and others create, share and use data and evidence in decision-making and support more effective and efficient services at national and local levels.

What Works Centres are different from standard research institutions because each centre is committed to generating new evidence, helping policymakers and practitioners to implement it and to mobilising a learning culture. Members of the network need to subscribe to its IMPACT values and be: Independent, Methodological, Practical, Accessible, Capacity building and Transparent.

“For me, something even more fundamental is at the heart of the What Works movement: humility,” says our CEO Ligia Teixeira. “Policymakers and practitioners are often far too ready to conclude that an existing practice is effective – that they already know ‘what works’. But there might be a better way to help this patient to heal, this child to learn, or this service to innovate. In this sense, the first step to more effective policy and practice is humility.”

It was this that inspired us most of all, and made us ask ourselves “What if we applied the same rigour and meticulous testing to the issue of homelessness?” Our new centre, a What Works Centre on homelessness, was created to help homelessness catch up with other fields and ensure that, when we’re trying to help people, we do so as effectively as possible and that we do no harm. This approach ensures that we’re working towards ending – as opposed to managing – homelessness.

Applying a ‘what works’ approach to homelessness is about using evidence and reason to figure out how to help people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness as much as possible at a societal level, and taking action on that basis. It means acting promptly on the best available knowledge, while being aware of the limits of what we know. And, like evidence-based medicine, ‘homelessness impact’ can help us figure out what works and what does not, allowing us to reject the dangerous half-truths that can pass for wisdom.

In homelessness, our ‘what works’ journey is only just getting started. We hope that one day, the public can take for granted the fact that data and evidence are routinely used to create better outcomes for people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.

# How What Works is different



Here are some things we know thanks to the UK What Works Centres:

- Antibiotics are ineffective in treating most cases of sinusitis (despite being routinely prescribed).
- Transferring young people from the juvenile to the adult criminal justice system makes reoffending more likely.
- Repeating a school year, school uniforms, peer-to-peer teacher observation, and new school buildings have little impact on pupil attainment.



Here are some things we don’t know about addressing homelessness:

- Whether rapid rehousing could improve outcomes and reduce the cost of temporary accommodation.
- Whether better family mediation and conciliation could have an impact on rough sleeping.
- Whether direct cash transfers can help people exit homelessness for good.

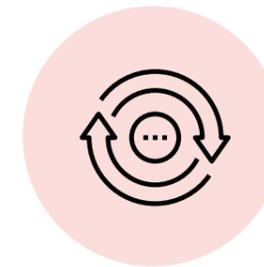
Operating in such an uncertain environment makes it extremely difficult to know where to focus our efforts. Only by finding out what doesn’t work – and being transparent about it – can we identify where we’re being ineffective and re-invest that money in effective interventions.

This is why a What Works approach to homelessness is so essential.

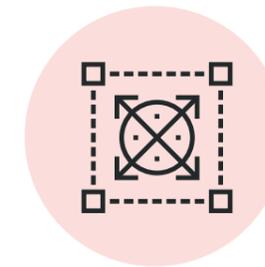
We are at the cusp of an extraordinary revolution. The methodological tools that transformed medicine from an art into a science are now spreading into other disciplines. We're moving from a world where evaluations were tacked on as an occasional afterthought, to where they are baked into policymaking and service delivery. I think we'll look back with amazement on the period before we used to ask 'What Works?'

David Halpern, National Adviser on What Works and Chief Executive, Behavioural Insights Team

## Barriers to evidence-based practice



Inertia and status quo



Limited frameworks for action



Inadequate data and disclosure



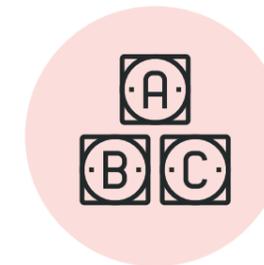
Funding challenges



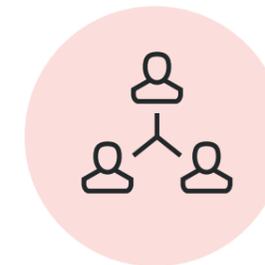
Leadership



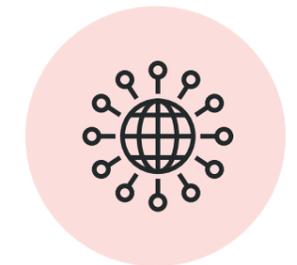
Political challenges



Poor workforce training



Rigid organisational culture



Cultural and geographical differences

# Who we are working with



## Universities

- Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh Campus
- King's College London
- Queen's University Belfast
- Cardiff University
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Sheffield Hallam University



## Government

- Office for National Statistics
- MHCLG
- Scottish Government
- Welsh Government
- Her Majesty's Treasury



## Strategic partners

- Behavioural Insights Team
- UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence
- Nesta
- Pathway & The Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health
- Wales Centre for Public Policy



## Local authorities

- East Ayrshire Council
- Newham Council
- Southwark Council
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Oxford City Council
- Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
- Brighton & Hove City Council
- BCP Council



## What Works organisations

- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
- Education Endowment Foundation
- College of Policing
- Early Intervention Foundation
- What Works Centre for Wellbeing





## Successes

We've achieved more than we could have hoped for in our first two years. Here are just a few of the things we're most proud of.

### **Redefining what we mean by What Works**

We've brought a whole new approach to the homelessness sector that commits to the highest standards of robustness in the evidence we use to drive decision-making. This is reflected in our designation as the UK's What Works Centre for Homelessness.

### **Co-creating our suite of tools**

Our evidence tools are groundbreaking in the field, for the first time systematically mapping and synthesising the existing evidence on what works in homelessness across the globe to ensure that evidence informs policy and that those working in homelessness can have greater impact. Every iteration has been developed in consultation with users, including those with experiences of homelessness, who we're dedicated to helping. When the need arises for more tools, we've accepted the challenge to produce them, like in the case of our Housing Costs Calculator, which helps local authorities to find cost-effective solutions when moving people on from emergency accommodation.

### **Establishing a strong network of partners**

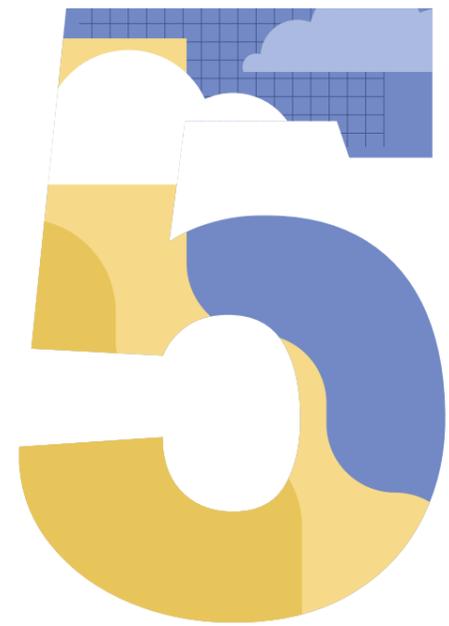
Homelessness is driven by a multitude of inextricable contributing factors, and tackling it demands work across numerous disciplines. For that reason, establishing strong partnerships with national government, local authorities, the third sector, academia, experts by experience and other specialists has been key. Fostering a collaborative network between these organisations, through our Impact Forums, research network and ever-expanding What Works Community, has been one of our greatest successes to date.

### **Taking the lead in evidence mobilisation**

Embedding evidence in practice, using our tools and effective collaboration, can only happen if we disseminate our message effectively. Since our inception, we've held Impact Forums in the four nations of the UK, published a book, *Using Evidence to End Homelessness* – to demonstrate why and how a new movement is needed that embraces data and evidence as integral to ending homelessness effectively – published articles in the national and international press and held a series of open-access online events to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on homelessness. And there's plenty more in the pipeline.

### **Thriving with limited resources**

Our full-time team has only recently grown to 10 people, but for much of the first two years we were often a core team of fewer than five working with the support of a network of associates. In spite of our small size, we're proud of how much we've achieved, but are now looking for the opportunity to scale up our work to achieve even more ambitious goals.



# Lessons

These are the areas where we know we must do better.

## **Communicating evidence tool insights**

There is a wealth of information in our evidence tools, but there is still a great deal of work to be done to bring them to life and ensure we are communicating their insights in a timely and effective manner. Our first iteration depended on people engaging with the tools in detail to reap the benefits. Our next iteration will make that process as easy and seamless as possible, by supporting capacity building and doing the hard work of translating information into bite-size, ready-to-use insights and ensuring there is no barrier to accessing the information.

## **Generating evidence**

A large part of our early work was focused on assembling the existing evidence in the evidence and gap maps. This highlighted the size of the gaps and the areas where there is little rigorous evidence to support policy and practice. Our ambition now is to plug as many of those gaps as possible, focusing first on the highest priorities, by working with partners to generate new evidence. Part of this will involve looking for more resources to support this work.

## **Embedding lived experience**

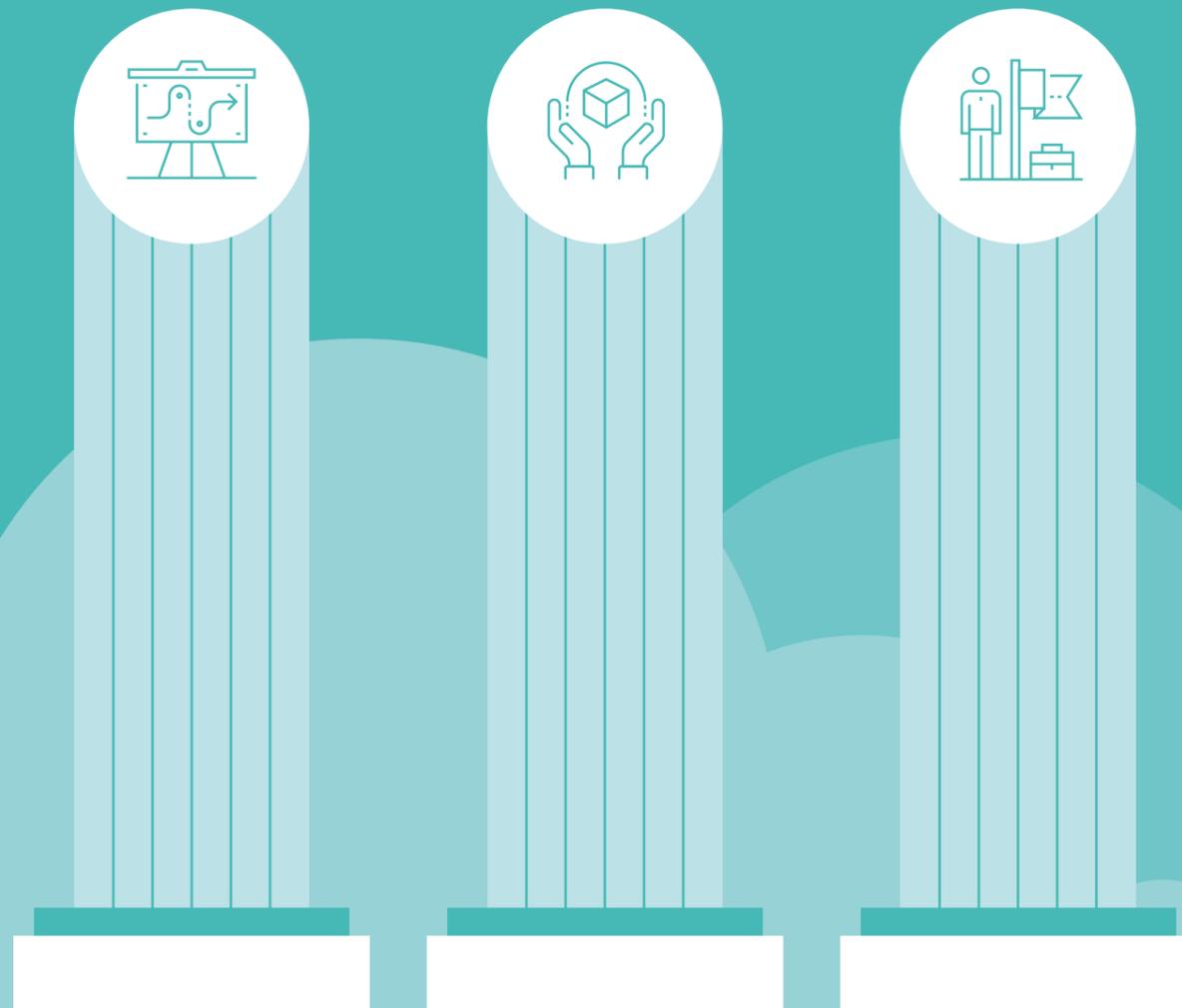
We firmly believe in the 'no decision about me, without me' approach, and have sought to embed the voices of lived experience at every stage of our development through consultation and co-creation. It is essential that those most affected by our work have a seat at the table. Though we have always made a concerted effort to involve people with experiences of homelessness in our work, we haven't always created environments where people felt comfortable sharing their experiences, especially in our first year. It also took us longer than we'd hoped to embed anyone with lived experience within our core team, although we are pleased to have recently welcomed our first Lived Experiences Specialist, Hannah Green, to join us.

## **Incorporating user feedback**

Compiling this report made it clear that we need to do more to catalogue the feedback of our partners as we create work together. Moving at such a fast pace over our first two years, it has sometimes been difficult to allocate sufficient resource to collect and incorporate the insights of our network as a routine part of our practice. Over the next 12 months, we hope to better engage our network and use more of their insights in our 2021 Impact Report, and of course in the design and development of future programmes and iterations of our tools.

## **Increasing capacity**

Although we have reached many of our goals with limited resources, the first two years of our work have given us a clear understanding of what it would require to increase our capacity and scale up our offering. Influencing local and national governments, embedding evidence within local authorities, filling the gaps in our evidence base and increasing the number of trials we can manage would help us to end homelessness faster. We stand ready to scale up and meet these challenges.



## The pillars of our practice

CHI has spent the past two years exploring, experimenting and evolving how a What Works Centre can change the lives of people who are homeless or at risk. This is how we've done it:



### 01

#### Making evidence accessible

We have helped generate a wide range of evidence required to effectively address the complex systems that influence homelessness. We have translated that evidence to make it accessible to everyone.



### 02

#### Supporting data and evidence to be applied in practice

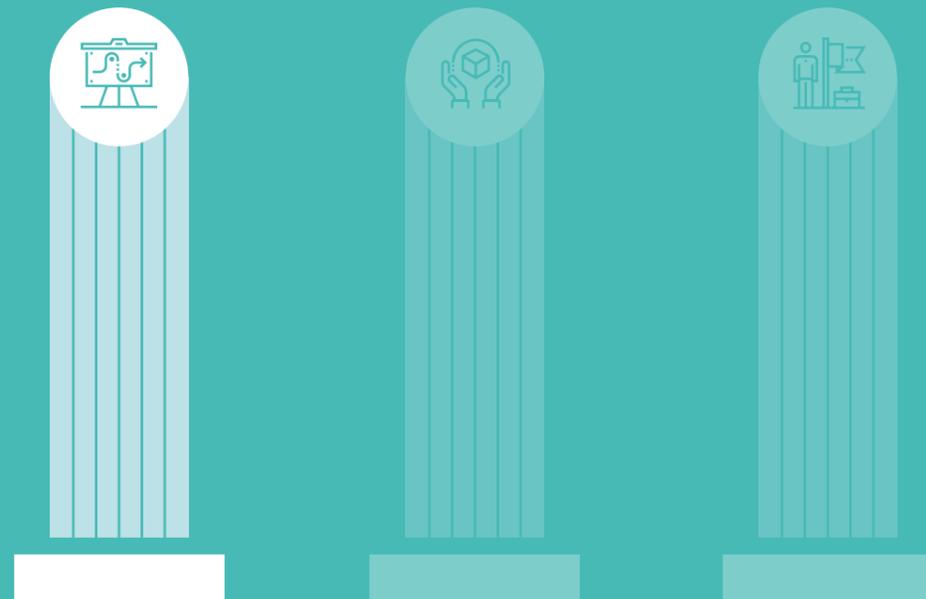
We have provided resources and services that improve the skills of policymakers and practitioners to analyse data, evaluate interventions and use those processes for decisionmaking.



### 03

#### Mobilising change-makers

We have fostered a learning culture in which data and evidence helps policymakers, practitioners and commissioners to improve outcomes for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.



# 01 Make evidence accessible

Homelessness is not an issue with a single cause or solution. While we already know a great deal about the structural causes of homelessness, very little is yet known about what solutions are effective to address them.

What we do know is that using reliable evidence is critical to making informed, impactful decisions. But this isn't easy for people working day-in-day-out to end homelessness, simply because they often don't have the data or evidence they need to guide their work.

When we launched the Centre it was crucial to address these gaps immediately, so we developed our suite of evidence tools to map the evidence base systematically – something that had never been attempted before – as well as help users discover and make sense of what evidence is available, to synthesise what was already known and to highlight the gaps to help us generate evidence where none yet existed.

By revealing the extent of the existing evidence, the maps enabled us to quickly begin work on synthesis to reveal new insights. Synthesis is a vital tool in policymaking to ensure that decisions are not made on the evidence of individual studies and that the entire evidence base is considered in order to reveal new and useful insights. While evidence synthesis is used extensively in other fields, such as health and international development, there is no such tradition in homelessness.

As part of our mission and commitment to raising evidence standards, we commissioned systematic reviews examining accommodation-based interventions, the effectiveness of discharge programmes and the accessibility of health and social care services for individuals experiencing homelessness. We will continue to carry out rigorous synthesis where sufficient studies exist to do so.

We have also been working to fill the holes in the evidence available by designing



The maps also revealed clear and striking gaps: for almost all common interventions used with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, the sector does not have evidence telling us what works – a huge shortcoming that needs to be addressed if we are to build confidence in the evidence base.



and undertaking randomised control trials (the gold standard for evidence). For instance, we are looking at ways to nudge landlords into renting accommodation to people at risk of experiencing homelessness, while another trial evaluates the relative effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of using settled accommodation to prevent COVID-19 infection among people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

None of this work would be possible if we didn't have a clear end goal in mind, and a clear shared framework to help CHI and its partners work collaboratively to achieve it. Previously, there was no common conceptual framework upon which 'ending homelessness' could be addressed or any measure of how progress towards ending homelessness could be assessed. Developing a clear understanding of this complex system was essential to advance our goals.

That's why we designed the SHARE framework and reporting platform to address this specific issue; to set out clear principles to inform how preventing and ending homelessness should be framed and assessed. It takes into account all relevant data, while also setting the highest standards for transparency and accountability when working to prevent or relieve homelessness. SHARE underpins all the work we do to make evidence accessible.

We know we can't achieve our goals on our own.

The following three examples show what we've achieved with our partners.

## A framework for tracking progress towards ending homelessness for good

Partners:

### The Office for National Statistics & the Government Statistical Service

First launched in 2018, SHARE began as a framework through which we could structure smart conversations about how to end homelessness for good and create a society in which any experience of homelessness was rare, brief and non-recurrent. It provided a bird's-eye view of homelessness as a whole and an outline of five strands of work that evidence shows are critical to ending homelessness sustainably, all captured in a handy mnemonic: Smart Policy, Housing System, All in it Together, Relational and Ecosystem of Services.



Since then, CHI has been working closely with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and the recognised national statistical institute of the UK, to develop a set of indicators to help track progress at population level towards ending homelessness for good.

SHARE was designed from the ground up in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders following an extensive review of the homelessness evidence literature, an online consultation, stakeholder engagement events and a series of inputs from our regular collaborators and stakeholders.

“By working with specialised groups like the Centre for Homelessness Impact we are able to share knowledge and skills to create tools which can help policy makers make informed decisions which can have a real impact.”

Hugh Stickland, Head of Strategy and Engagement, ONS.

In early 2020, the original framework evolved into a reporting platform for 37 different homelessness indicators that make up the complex web of contributors to homelessness. Until this point, data to measure the impact of homelessness had been fragmented, incomplete and hard to keep track of, with many different measures being used across different devolved governments and other organisations. The new framework of indicators brought all the data into one place and identified where evidence is still needed, making it easier for effective decisions to be made.



“We could not have effectively reached the right people to inform the direction of our work without the expert knowledge of the team at the ONS,” says CHI CEO Ligia Teixeira. Their two previous flagship frameworks, ‘National Well-being’ and ‘Sustainable Development Goals’, achieved international commendation from governments and civil society, and the same internationally recognised best practice has been drawn on for our own platform.

Since launching the reporting platform, a subgroup of the Government Statistical Service has been created by the ONS to help drive the development of future iterations of the homelessness set of indicators and the reporting platform. Working together we are identifying existing public data sets that are currently not included in the platform and are working out how best to fill current gaps in the data. Finally, we are planning a comprehensive engagement and user testing programme to inform the next version of SHARE, which will be ready for launch in the first half of 2021.

“We are pleased to continue to be involved with CHI as many of the aims of SHARE align well with ours. The Tool is a great example of an ambitious product that meets the needs of both the public as a whole as well as specialist audiences by communicating the best evidence well.

We look forward to continuing to work with CHI to develop the SHARE Tool further.”

Liz McKeown, Director of Public Policy Analysis, ONS

## A new understanding of the homelessness evidence base

Partners:

**The Campbell Collaboration, Heriot-Watt, and Queen's University, Belfast**

### Evidence and gap maps

Until 2018, there were no reliable tools to help us identify what we know and what we don't about homelessness interventions, where our understanding could be strengthened, and where there were still gaps to be filled. Evidence was scattered around in different databases, journals, websites, and grey literature, and there was no way for decision-makers to get a quick overview of the evidence base as a whole.

Our first two evidence and gap maps (EGMs) started to bridge this gap. The latest edition of our map of effectiveness studies now includes 394 studies – 173 more than the initial edition – while our implementation map contains 246 qualitative process evaluations. Although more than 85% of the studies included in the map are from North America and fewer than 5% from the UK, the trend is moving in the right direction with a rise of more than 50% in the UK since we created the map in 2018. This tells us that we are seeing a surge in contemporary research alongside a commitment to an evidence-based end to homelessness.



“The Centre’s evidence tools make it clear that the UK is lacking more quantitative forms of evaluation compared to the US. CHI is paving the way for other organisations in their evidence-led drive to end homelessness. Their evidence finder and intervention tool provides a strong platform from which to build a comprehensive programme of work to end homelessness sustainably.”

Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Professor of Housing and Social Policy at Heriot-Watt University

To produce our EGMs, we joined forces with Campbell Collaboration, a world-leading social science research network that specialises in the production and use of systematic reviews and other evidence synthesis tools for evidence-based policy and practice.

“Working with Campbell, and Howard, meant we could develop the taxonomy for our evidence and gap maps,” says Ligia Teixeira, “which then gave us the foundation we needed to start filling gaps strategically. Howard’s expertise both on evidence tools and the global What Works movement really helped us to move faster with our vision for the organisation.”

“By mapping the evidence base of hundreds of evaluations of interventions for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, the evidence and gap maps contribute to building the evidence architecture in homelessness.”

Dr Howard White, CEO, Campbell Collaboration

Our EGMs, which were all co-created with a wide range of people – including those with experience of homelessness – are the first of their kind to put the best available evidence from across the globe at people’s fingertips in one systematic search. They help address research wastage and improve decision-making for a variety of key stakeholders and are the first building block of our approach to discovering, synthesising and generating evidence.

# 6,904

Between July 2018 and June 2020 the EGMs were used a total of 6,094 times.

This allows us to identify the most robust evidence available, target those areas where a substantive evidence base exists and needs to be summarised, and clearly identify the gaps in knowledge. The EGMs also reduce the costs and time of conducting new research, addressing research wastage and ensuring that insights end up where they are needed the most: in the hands of policymakers.

The maps also provide a roadmap for researchers and funders to make more strategic decisions about the research they are commissioning, helping to address research wastage.



## Systematic reviews

Systematic reviews are a way of combining information from multiple studies that have investigated the same thing, to come to an overall understanding of what they collectively found. This can help us determine how effective a certain intervention is, or how people have experienced a particular condition or service.

While systematic reviews have been used extensively in other fields, they have not traditionally been used in homelessness. As part of our commitment to raising evidence standards, CHI is working on bringing about these new methods to the homelessness field.

To begin this journey and to build on the findings of the first iteration of the EGMs, we brought together experts in systematic reviews, including the Campbell Collaboration team at Queen's University Belfast, to work alongside leading homelessness academics from Heriot-Watt and Cardiff universities to help to build much-needed capacity to undertake this type of work in the process.

**“As part of the Government’s ongoing commitment to work with local authorities, public bodies and other government departments to improve joint working in homelessness prevention, MHCLG has been working jointly with the Ministry of Justice to reduce the risk of homelessness on release from prison. The Centre for Homelessness Impact’s Systematic Review of Discharge Interventions provided valuable insight to inform this work.”**

**Lorna Fraser, Head of Homelessness Strategy & Policy,  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**

Through consultations with the sector and some of our key academic partners, we selected the topics for our first systematic reviews. This process highlighted the value of an integrated system for discovering, generating and synthesising evidence, while also listening closely to the priorities and needs of the sector.

“The areas chosen were informed by the EGM, but importantly also by key stakeholders, to maximise each review’s relevance and potential impact,” says Professor Sarah Miller, director of Campbell UK & Ireland. “Using the EGMs as a basis for the reviews meant that the process was more cost-effective and could be conducted more quickly because the searches and screening had already been done to a rigorous and high standard through the construction of the EGM.”

Our systematic reviews are unique because they capture both quantitative and qualitative evidence – a groundbreaking innovation in the world of synthesis – and are integrated into a logical pipeline for discovering, generating, and synthesising evidence. By harnessing the systematic searches used for the EGMs, they can be produced at lower cost, reducing research wastage. They are also used to produce the short summaries in our [Intervention Tool](#) and any policy-oriented products we create.

“CHI’s systematic review of accommodation-based programmes for individuals experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness convincingly evidences the type of interventions that are the most successful in helping people achieve housing stability and positive health outcomes and, chillingly, shows that some popular forms of service delivery may be doing more harm than offering no service at all. It’s the type of investigative review that, if we are serious about wanting to end homelessness, must be required reading.”

Jeremy Swain, ex Senior Advisor MHCLG and former CEO of Thames Reach



## The initial reviews

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1

The first review explores the effectiveness of discharge programmes (services which support people leaving institutions), to find out how effective such programmes are for improving housing stability and decreasing homelessness. The findings emphasise the importance of an effective discharge into an ecosystem of services, whereby high levels of communication between different services are essential to achieve the best outcomes for the individual.

2

The second considers the effectiveness of accommodation-based interventions, including housing first, hostels, shelters, supported housing, temporary accommodation, and rapid rehousing. It shows that accommodation interventions which include high-levels of support are more successful in terms of both housing stability and health outcomes. It also indicated that the most basic types of accommodation currently provided could be worse for individuals than providing no intervention at all.

3

The third considers the accessibility of health and social care services for individuals experiencing homelessness and asks whether interventions aimed at improving access to services by addressing barriers are effective in doing so. The findings suggest that access programmes can indeed be effective in increasing access to health and social care services.

We are committed to conducting more reviews, and already have a number in the pipeline on issues like drugs and alcohol. Systematic reviews are necessarily time consuming, and while we wait for the arrival of new evidence synthesis, we'll also be publishing policy papers on the most pressing issues like the role of employment support, and individualised interventions in particular, to stem the flow of homelessness as we experience the full economic impact of COVID-19.

“By focusing on What Works, the Centre for Homelessness Impact is paving the way for organisations in the field of homelessness and beyond to make evidence-led decisions. Their commitment to helping generate new evidence and then supporting it to be applied in practice means that policymakers, practitioners and commissioners everywhere can improve their outcomes on an ongoing basis, which during a pandemic is more important than ever.”

David Halpern, CEO, Behavioural Insights Team

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## An experimental paradigm in homelessness policy

### Partners:

**The Behavioural Insights Team, the National Residential Landlords Association, Home Connections, Manchester Metropolitan University and Cardiff University**

Testing the effectiveness of interventions should be an everyday part of homelessness policy and practice, but we have traditionally lacked an experimental mindset in the field. This may be caused in large part by the assumption that being experimental would be too difficult, but research conducted in other countries and in other fields confirms that, despite some scepticism, conducting robust evaluations is possible in homelessness.

There has only been a fledgling tradition of impact evaluations in homelessness in the UK, but we've already worked hard to change that. To fill the gap, CHI has already designed and launched a number of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) as they provide the best causal evidence of whether a programme or intervention is effective.

### Trial 1: Improving access to the private rented sector

For people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, accessing or maintaining a tenancy in the private rented sector (PRS) can be an uphill battle. The decisions landlords make can be a huge barrier to finding permanent accommodation, and in a recent survey, 52% of landlords reported that they would be unwilling to let properties to tenants who were in receipt of housing benefit (English Private Landlord Survey 2018).

Many people experience homelessness because they're unable to secure a tenancy in the PRS, and the conclusion of assured shorthold tenancies is one of the leading causes of homelessness in the south east of England. In spite of this, very little research has been done to drive behaviour change among landlords to ensure that more of them will rent to people at risk of homelessness.

We joined forces with the Behavioural Insights Team and the National Residential Landlords Association to conduct a series of trials which will try to understand whether the information disclosed by a potential tenant can help them get the tenancies they need and how local areas can offer support to landlords to increase their willingness to rent to people receiving benefits.

### Trial 2: Curbing COVID-19 infection among those experiencing street homelessness

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, 29,000 individuals experiencing street homelessness in England have been offered self-contained temporary accommodation, mainly in hotels. This approach involved emptying existing hostels, shelters and similar shared provision for people experiencing street homelessness, but it was a short-term response. The next step required decisions about how to house these individuals in line with the government's continued commitment to preventing rough sleeping, particularly in light of the ongoing pandemic.

In response to this challenge, we teamed up with Cardiff University to conduct the first RCT in the UK to evaluate the relative effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different accommodation models in preventing COVID-19 infection and reducing housing instability for single-person households.

We worked in close collaboration with six local authorities and our academic partners, and the results of this study will help us understand for the first time what works for whom where, and also provide robust input to central government policy and funding decisions due to the study's use of the 'gold standard' of evaluation methods.

### Trial 3: Understanding the impact of out-of borough mobility

Local authorities are required to try first to secure accommodation for people experiencing homelessness within their own area, and if this is not feasible, then as nearby as possible. Out-of-borough placements occur when it is not possible to place applicants within their local area, and commonly move people from higher-to lower-rent areas. Placements can occur voluntarily, or where the applicant does not wish to be placed outside the borough.

There is a key need in the evidence for robust empirical inquiry into the impacts of out-of-borough placements (both voluntary and involuntary) on applicants' housing and other outcomes. CHI joined forces with King's College London to conduct the first robust evaluation of the impacts of voluntary out-of-borough placements, as facilitated by Home Connections (via their Homefinder UK scheme), on housing stability and other outcomes. Starting in early 2021, we will conduct an RCT with individual randomisation occurring at the point that Home Connections engages with a client and explains the offer of support.

### Trial 4: Individual placement and support

The individual placement and support (IPS) model is an evidence-based employment intervention, originally developed in the US, that targets individuals with significant barriers to work with customised, long-term, and integrated vocational and clinical services to help them gain and maintain competitive employment. Originally designed for adults with severe mental illness, the IPS model has been implemented and adapted for different groups, including people experiencing homelessness alongside psychiatric issues or substance dependency.

The South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA) has supported the implementation of an IPS-AD trial and, based on the encouraging results to date, is looking for mechanisms to expand this offer to those receiving housing support. SYHA is in the process of securing funding to deliver the IPS model for 1,100 people experiencing homelessness over the next three years and would like to evaluate the rollout of the programme to this cohort. The association is set to start this programme for people who experienced homelessness in early 2021.

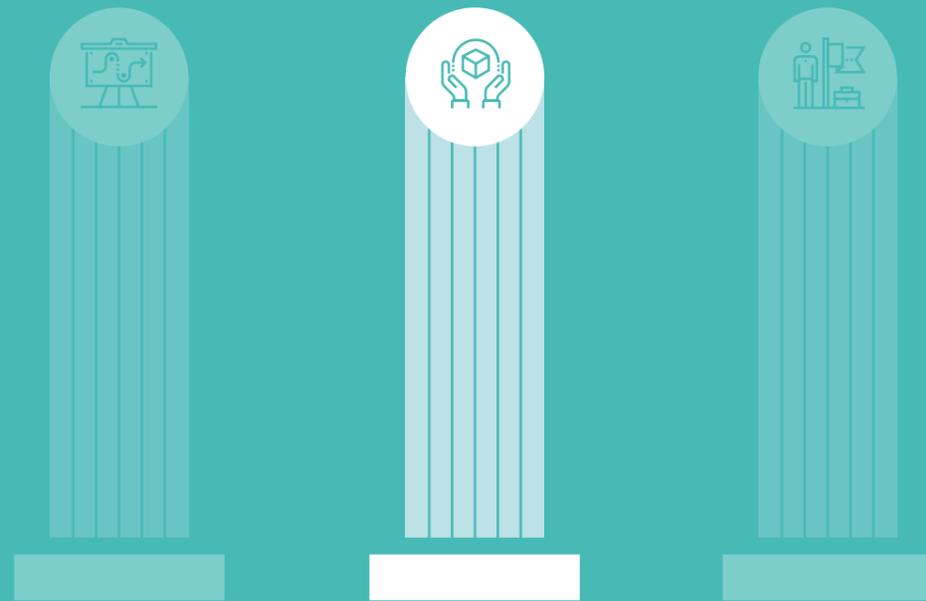
CHI is partnering with the SYHA to run a robust RCT of the IPS model and expect that this study will include at least 500 people during 2021.

# These studies are only the start.

We have identified numerous gaps in our understanding that need to be filled to focus resources more effectively and improve lives. To that end, we have co-created a list of more than 80 potential experiments, ranging from testing different types of accommodation models to very specific, promising interventions to support people into employment.

We started to create partnerships with like-minded organisations to undertake as many of these studies as quickly as is feasibly possible. To achieve those changes and bring about more experimentation and robust evaluation into homelessness policy we need a concerted effort from other research funders, organisations delivering services, and local and national government across the UK, and we're excited to take these new partnerships forward.





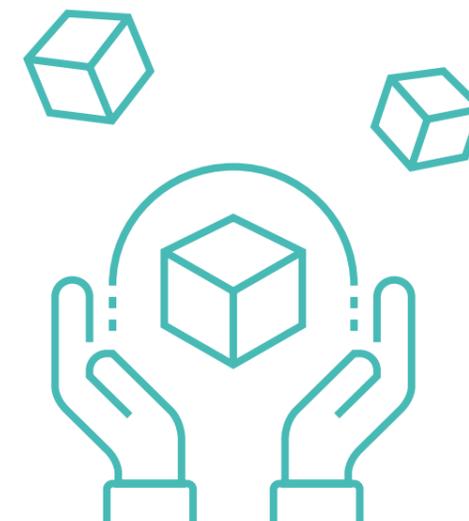
## 02 Support evidence in practice

Research is a behaviour change exercise and demands change from policymakers, practitioners and funders alike. Simply producing evidence will not bring about behaviour change on its own.

This means that a vital part of our work lies in translating and disseminating that evidence and ensuring its implementation in policy and practice. In addition, it means working with professionals to co-create evidence and ensure that their experiences and understanding are taken into account.

This is why CHI has always equally invested in evidence implementation and generation, to ensure that we are not just throwing new research into the void, but making sure we involve a variety of voices from the beginning and that the results are spread far and wide. We are not alone in this endeavour. With the UK's What Works Network now comprising 13 members, we have a strong base of different organisations working towards shared goals.

The What Works methodology is about understanding the various processes that impact on decision-making and, crucially, the context in which those decisions are made. Policymakers and practitioners are both time-poor, which is one of the reasons we created our [Intervention Tool](#), a one-stop shop for the current body of evidence for homelessness interventions. The tool was co-created with prospective users, including people with experience of homelessness, in a lengthy consultation period to inform how it could best support their decision-making processes and its insights be communicated to best serve their needs.



Our What Works Community pilot helped local authorities build their capacity for using evidence and data in their fast-paced day-to-day work. It involved close collaboration between local areas, Johns Hopkins University, the Behavioural Insights Team and design agency IDEO. The process involved an in-depth data audit of the local authorities, followed by an intensive set of residential and workshops to help them develop the tools to meet specific goals in their service provision. **The success of this pilot has allowed us to scale up the community to over 20 new local areas in 2021.**

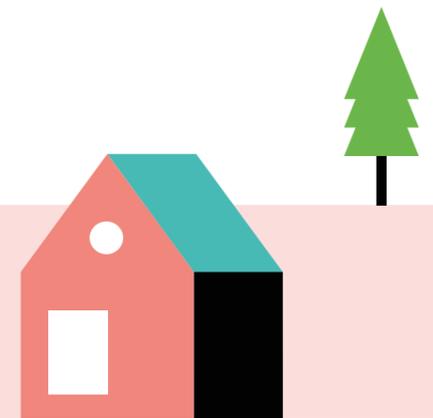


Of course, not everyone who wants to embed evidence into their working practice will have the time or funds to dedicate themselves to a months-long development programme, which is why we offer two options for individuals and organisations looking for support on a more ad hoc basis: evidence surgeries and workshops in a box.

Our evidence surgeries provide impartial advice to help individuals and organisations improve their use of evidence and data to achieve better results in their work. We know from the evidence that traditional training on evidence-based methods can be ineffective, so this resource provides an alternative means to build their capacity to use evidence in everyday decision-making and practice.

Upskilling the workforce in the everyday use of evidence was also at the heart of our collaboration with Clore Social Leadership, with whom we worked to develop a new group of young leaders keen to mobilise a What Works approach to ending homelessness. The programme challenged participants to engage with a design thinking methodology to solve problems and test assumptions about homelessness by making use of the best available evidence.

All of this work is intended to create a greater appetite and appreciation for evidence at all levels of policy and practice.



Most people working to end homelessness are committed to using data and evidence to improve the lives of those affected by, or at risk of, homelessness.

But their efforts are hampered by a lack of time and resources. Research use is increasingly recognised as a social process, meaning that active support for implementation – like open dialogue, coaching and training – is vital to produce substantive changes in practice. What’s more, the data available often lacks sufficient breadth and depth for the task at hand.

The following examples explore how CHI is helping to build capacity in local areas and working to improve the data infrastructure in homelessness.

## Building a What Works Community across local areas

Partners:

**Pembrokeshire, East Ayrshire, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Behavioural Insights Team, Johns Hopkins University, IDEO.**

At a local level, it is the responsibility of local government to respond to and tackle homelessness. Across the UK, they are working extremely hard to support those most in need, but they face significant challenges: limited resources, insufficient time for strategic thinking, and navigating complex public networks to achieve their goals.

Better use of data and evidence could help address all of these challenges, and growing their capacity in this respect will help local areas achieve better results. As a first step to address the urgent need for lasting reductions in homelessness at a local level, we invited three local areas to participate in an eight-month What Works Community pilot to help improve their use of evidence and data to achieve breakthrough results.

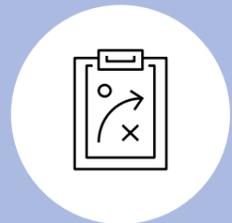
**“We came into the pilot thinking we already had quite a few of the solutions to our problem. But when we actually applied the learning from the pilot – the design thinking and behavioural insights – it took us down a different path. It’s taught us to keep an open mind.”**

**Lisa Punton and Patricia Harkness, East Ayrshire Council**

The founding partners – East Ayrshire, Pembrokeshire and Southend-on-Sea – were all set an ‘evidence accelerator’ challenge: to increase the number of successful tenancies in the PRS.

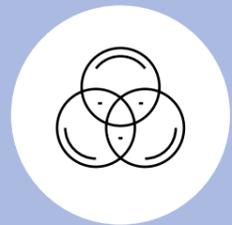
To help them respond to the challenge, we brought together a team from CHI, Johns Hopkins University, the Behavioural Insights Team and IDEO – who bring deep knowledge of data science, behavioural science, evaluation and design – to share their skills and support local areas to harness the power of data and evidence to improve results.

Through this structured programme and self-led learning, the pilot teams expanded their skill sets and applied these new methods to their local context as they went through the pilot in the following ways:



#### Data and evidence:

Undertaking a data inventory to understand their current capacity for and understanding of data, what data exists and its quality, and how they would like that to evolve in future.



#### Design thinking:

Undertaking a research journey geared towards building practices in which users are placed front and centre, to be learned from and inspired by, and to ensure their voice is heard in any proposed solution.



#### Behavioural insights:

Undertaking training in behavioural insights, intervention and solution design so that ideas have the ability to be effectively evaluated from conception and are based on the best understanding of human behaviour.

**“Everyone should have a home that meets their needs, and we intend to use every tool and technique we can to help get there. The WWC programme has shown us how we can better create and use evidence and data to understand homelessness in our borough... and how we can set up trials to understand the impact of our interventions, so that if something doesn’t work, we can adapt our approach and make better use of our resources. By working with the WWC we’ve found new ways of working which we can use to improve outcomes for people.”**

**Nicola O’Keeffe, Senior Project and Policy Officer (Housing & Social Inclusion),  
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council**

By doing this, the teams all gained deep insight into the root causes of the housing issue they were tackling, and through a unified approach – involving landlords, letting agencies, tenants and various housing support services – devised interventions unique to their local context.

We will continue to support all of these local authorities as their interventions progress.

In light of the success of this pilot programme, in late 2020 we opened up the What Works Community to more than 20 new local areas which will be offered a number of opportunities: an evidence accelerator programme, access to an open community of evidence-based practice, and ongoing support in the development of robust trials for their interventions.

“We’re not going to achieve what we need to achieve in local government unless we try new ways of working. The Centre for Homelessness Impact’s What Works Community pilot programme really gave us that opportunity and allowed us to bring some real expertise into learning how to do things differently, in a way that in local government we cannot normally do.”

Ali Griffin, Chief Executive, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council



### East Ayrshire

is trialling a digital toolkit to act as a mediator between landlord and tenant. By increasing the suite of knowledge available to both parties in a trusted and transparent way, it will ensure both parties feel mutually supported, improve communication between them from a shared understanding, and allow issues to be addressed sooner.



### Pembrokeshire

developed an intervention that offers person-centred tenancy support alongside a six-month rent guarantee, which they will enable more council tenants to take up and sustain private rental accommodation and provide greater housing stability. While the six-month rent guarantee will initially attract landlords to rent their properties, a single point of contact tenancy support (SPOC) will have the greatest, lasting impact. The SPOC is a matrix of people from all agencies and partners that will provide 24/7 support via a single access point – ultimately improving relationships between landlords and tenants.



### Southend-on-Sea

is developing a media campaign to improve awareness of their services, including the ‘Call before you Serve’ scheme. This will encourage landlords and tenants to engage with the Council’s housing solutions team to try to help resolve any issues.

## Supporting foundations to collect, share and use evidence

In January 2018 and November 2019, we held workshops in London with the Association for Charitable Foundations.

Foundations have a long history of helping to tackle homelessness, from investing in frontline services, nurturing campaigning efforts and innovation, to unlocking new insights by encouraging us to look at issues from a different perspective.

Participants were keen to discuss how their work could have even greater impact and what strategies they could use to tackle the root causes of homelessness, rather than 'tinkering at the edges'.

“Sometimes we think we have a solution to something, but actually we need to make sure it's the right one.”

David Duke MBE, CEO,  
Street Soccer Scotland

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Everyone was keen to explore how they might move to a greater focus on impact in relationships with their grantees, how this would change if foundations develop a stronger understanding of different levels of evidence, what it takes to build useful evidence, and how this would help them to invest in opportunities that build and sustain stronger outcomes over time.

Foundations have the power to shine a light on what's happening, to ensure the homelessness issue is not ignored. They can use grant making, commissioning and social investment powers to change the landscape in which people affected by homelessness live and ensure their voices are listened to.

But participants talked about how they can do more. They have the power to mobilise and they have the power to bring people together and challenge long held views. They have the leadership and the money to create alternatives.

“It's about thinking differently about solving a problem, rather than just addressing a problem.”

Amanda Andere, CEO, Funders Together to End Homelessness

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The conversations that happened in 2018 and 2019 were just the beginning. What matters most is what participants took back to their foundations, and how they continue the spirit of collaboration that was so energising in the room. That will have had a huge impact on the work they have all done since.

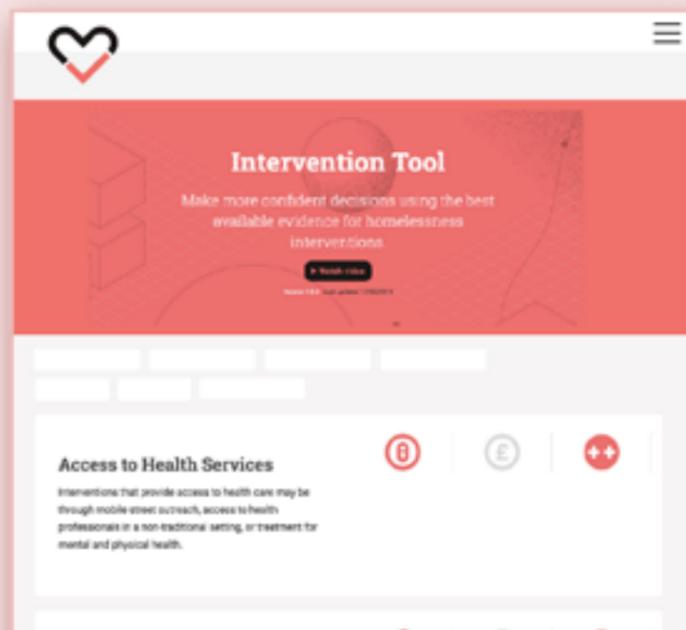
## Creating a one-stop shop to share knowledge about the most effective homelessness interventions

Partners:

**The Campbell Collaboration, University College London, Heriot-Watt and Cardiff universities**

Practitioners and decision makers are busy people. Even when they are already committed to using evidence to inform their practices, they might lack the time and tools to engage with the academic literature on a given topic. Thinking about this key group and the challenges they face on a daily basis, we decided to create a simple yet robust one-stop shop of what we know and don't know about some of the most common homelessness interventions.

Our [Intervention Tool](#) gives short overviews of the available evidence, including simple ratings for strength of evidence, cost-effectiveness and impact, for the first time identifying the most effective common homelessness interventions. The first version of the tool draws on similar evidence portals produced by other What Works organisations, like the Education Endowment Foundation, and a consultation



programme with potential users of the tool, including people with experiences of homelessness. The evidence standards behind the tool were developed in partnership with Howard White and David Gough, both experts in the creation of evidence portals.

**“The Intervention Tool represents an opportunity for evidence to become embedded, so that using evidence to determine policy in the future becomes normal and routine.”**

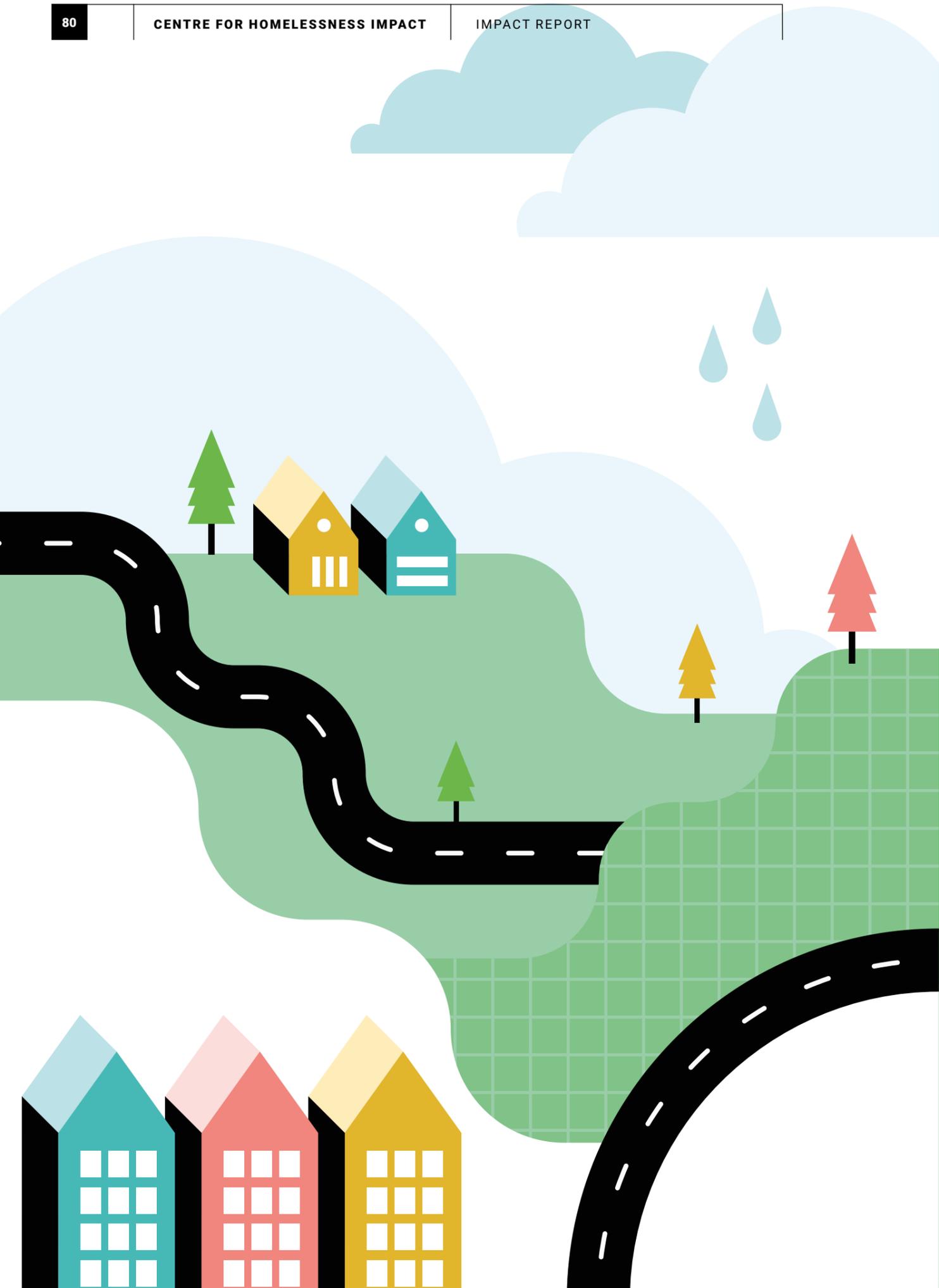
Julie Hunter, North Lanarkshire Council

The tool currently includes 19 of the most common interventions and shows that reliable evidence exists only for nine of them. For the first time it also revealed that we don't have enough cost-effectiveness data for any interventions, including Housing First, which is something we urgently need to remedy.

**“As a policymaker, I know that there's very rarely a single magic bullet that solves an issue. Evidence combined with service users' experience is a really powerful thing.”**

Leslie Fraser, Scottish Government

The Intervention Tool also highlights the need to make greater investments in understanding how much specific interventions cost, not only whether they achieve the results we expect to see. Our Intervention Tool summarises the extent and quality of the existing evidence to give decision-makers a quick indication of what they can expect, thus providing a trusted starting point for making evidence-informed decisions. We will continue to update the tool as new evidence is generated.



## Supporting the Scottish Government to develop a new data collection for street homelessness

Partners:

### The Scottish Government

In 2018, the Scottish Government made a commitment to end homelessness in Scotland and, as part of this effort, announced its intention to create a new national data and monitoring system to support this aim. CHI was invited to develop this system in collaboration with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) by creating an options appraisal for how this new system could work best.

We worked closely with people working in planning, commissioning and the provision of services (both statutory and non-statutory), outreach workers and people with experience of homelessness, to interrogate their respective needs and challenges to find out how a new system could best serve them.

As in the rest of the UK, numerous agencies and individuals are working to end homelessness in Scotland, but each one has its own methods of data collection and few share this information between agencies. While there has been a push in recent years to work more collaboratively, the new data collection and monitoring system needed to bridge existing gaps between organisations and their data.

There was also an opportunity to encourage a shift in attitudes towards data, which has historically been used as a means of managing performance – to account for ‘work done’ rather than ‘outcomes achieved’. If the system is to create meaningful impact, we heard that we should reframe the role of data as something to be learned from and responded to, not simply for setting targets.

“The Scottish Government has a real commitment to ending homelessness in partnership with everyone across the system that has a potential impact on meeting that ambition. A system of smart and timely and useful data collection that supports the momentum behind that change has the potential to support people in an individual way, and as a whole system.”

**Catriona MacKean, Head of Housing Support and Homelessness,  
Scottish Government**

The insights from these in-depth interviews complemented a thorough literature review of systems worldwide, all of which came together to inform our extensive recommendations to the Scottish Government which, following our research, has allocated resources to take our recommendations forward as part of its ‘Ending Homelessness Together’ action plan. CHI will continue to provide ongoing, ad hoc support to help them move into a testing and piloting phase.

## Uncovering cost-effective solutions for local areas moving people out of emergency accommodation

During the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, steps were taken across the UK to house thousands of people who were street homeless quickly in hotels, but to achieve this extraordinary feat, the pressure on local authorities and city councils was enormous.

To help leaders in local areas plan a longer-term strategy once this period of emergency accommodation ended, we developed a Housing Costs Calculator. The tool can be used to obtain rough estimates of the costs of moving people who are currently in hotels and in shared temporary accommodation to the private rented sector (PRS) with appropriate levels of support.

This can also help improve the use of resources; for example, we know there are still around 10,000 people to be moved into settled accommodation from ‘Everyone In’ and that they are heavily concentrated in only 10 local areas that represent close to 25% of the total. Using our Housing Cost Calculator we estimated that moving 2,500 people from expensive emergency accommodation into the PRS with the right types of support could save around £1.7 million per month. This would amount to savings of £10 million over the period November–April.

This type of analysis can help leaders to quickly test different options and assess the cost implications for multiple scenarios.

Once the tool is supplied with basic information specific to a local authority, it can create scenarios and estimate the cost of different accommodation types. For instance, Bloomberg Associates used it to help the Greater London Authority model the costs to continue the city’s emergency COVID-19 hotel programme for London as a whole, by borough, as well as costing options for moving people on according to their support needs.

The tool showed that the total cost to house people in London hotels would be over £72 million for a whole year and allowed local government to explore more cost-effective long-term solutions.

“This extraordinary public health cost begs the question of what it would take to house the hotel population in their own flats instead. Short-term shelter costs are very high; settled or permanent housing by comparison is much less costly. The CHI’s modeling tool also allows us to estimate the alternative costs for housing the population.”

Bridget Ackeifi, Bloomberg Associates

**Section 1**  
**You and Your Local Authority Area**

This section captures key information about your Local Authority (LA) and the Broad Market Rental Area (BIRMA) you want to analyse. For more on purposes we ask you to identify both a primary and secondary option for each, to analyse for in-borough and out-of-borough placements.

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS  
 YOUR NAME  
 YOUR ROLE

TO HELP US IMPROVE FUTURE ITERATIONS OF THE CALCULATOR, WE MAY USE THE CONTACT DETAILS YOU ENTER TO GATHER YOUR FEEDBACK. IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE CONTACTED PLEASE CHECK THE BOX BELOW.

To identify the BIRMA for your area, you can follow these steps:

1. Go to <https://the-impact-research.com/uk/research.aspx>
2. Select your Local Authority and click "Submit"
3. Click on "BIRMA map". This will download a PDF showing you the BIRMA(s) for your Local Authority

YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY  
 Select your Local Authority

SECONDARY LA, FOR OUT-OF-BOROUGH PLACEMENTS  
 Select your Local Authority

PRIMARY BRIDAB RENTAL MARKET AREA (BIRMA)  
 Select your BIRMA

SECONDARY BIRMA, FOR OUT-OF-BOROUGH PLACEMENTS  
 Select your BIRMA

Next section

## Delivering evidence coaching for people working in and around homelessness

We know from the evidence that traditional training on research methods can sometimes be ineffective, but part of our mission is to ensure that as many people as possible are able to build evidence into their working practice. To address the dearth of research capacity within the sector, we wanted to provide an easy solution to help practitioners use evidence to inform everyday decision-making and practice.

We launched our evidence surgeries to provide impartial advice to help individuals and organisations working in or alongside the homelessness sector to improve their use of evidence and data to achieve better results. They also serve to encourage more experimentation, including the questioning of assumptions about interventions used and how services are provided. People can book a session and tell us about the challenges they need help with before attending.

We are piloting the service and so far have delivered 22 surgeries, but as the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, we are planning to scale up the offering in 2021.

## Case Study

### St Martin-in-the-Fields

“From the initial meeting at the evidence surgery to the more recent joint meetings with MHCLG, the advice and input from CHI has been invaluable in the development of the programme. The insight and expertise from CHI have enabled us to feel confident with the proposal we are working with and identify crucial steps to ensuring that we have an evaluation framework that will encourage learning which can be used to influence policy.”

Natalie King, Head of Development, St Martin-in-the-Fields

St Martin-in-the-Fields requested an evidence surgery appointment to seek assistance with developing an evaluation framework for a new funding programme they were designing around personal budgets as a homelessness intervention. Through robust evaluation, they wanted to explore if and how personal budgets might help improve outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

They were keen to take their approach to evaluation further than they had with their previous funding programmes, but were unsure of how to proceed with developing the evaluation framework while remaining faithful to the purpose of the funding and their organisation’s context.

“In late 2019 we started planning a new grant programme aimed at encouraging a more personalised approach to supporting people experiencing homelessness through the use of personal budgets,” says Natalie King, Head of Development at St Martin-in-the-Fields. “The project has four initial objectives: to improve the ability of frontline workers to provide personalised support; to overcome barriers to support where funding can facilitate this; to enable access to accommodation appropriate to the individual; and to prevent homelessness where it is predictable.”

They sought support with the process of designing an evaluation that would be the most effective way to achieve aims of funding at the same time as filling in the gaps in the evidence base.

**“We are in the process of updating the programme to reflect the changes brought about by COVID-19 and plan to implement the programme in 2020/21.”**

Success will be measured by setting clear objectives, then ensuring critical lessons from the programme evaluation can be used to inform policy. We want to understand how a personal budget can be used in different scenarios and which key elements of a personal budget are needed in various interventions to achieve different outcomes.”

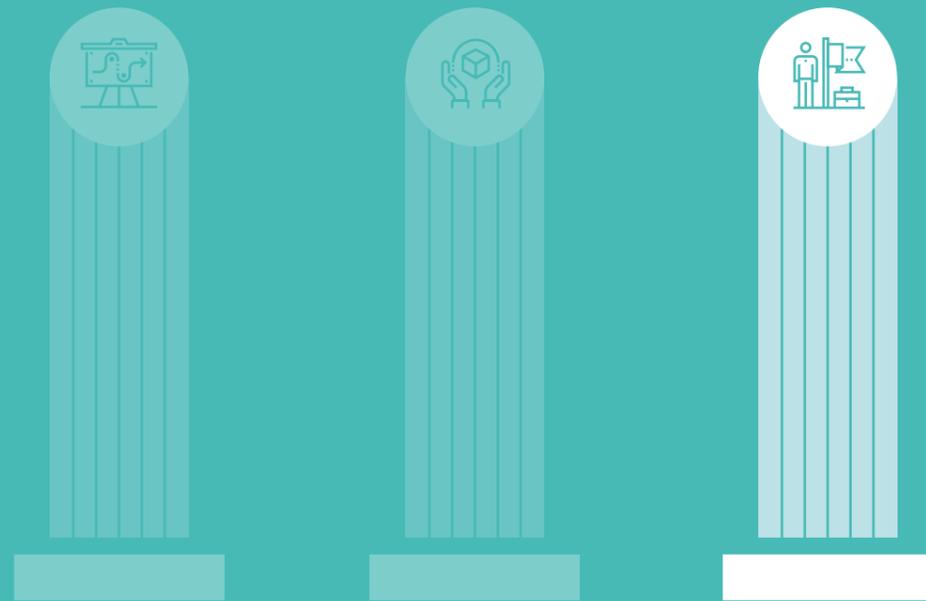
## Building a global network to share the best knowledge on homelessness

We established the Research Network in 2020 to share new and ongoing work, discuss ideas, and create new collaborations among the leading homelessness scholars from across the global north, alongside policymakers and researchers working in the government and voluntary and community sectors.

The initiative is a partnership between CHI, the MHCLG, the ONS and Public Health England. It was designed in the aftermath of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that we were learning as fast as possible across countries, and help address potential research wastage.

It's early days, but the Network is already creating a space where researchers can help design and coordinate useful, timely, and actionable research to improve local and national policy responses to the pandemic.





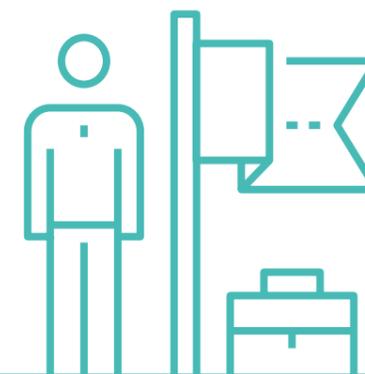
# 03 Mobilise change-makers

A key challenge for CHI and the movement for evidence-led practice in homelessness is to create the right conditions to increase the demand for research evidence. To do so requires that we drive a learning mindset in the field while simultaneously improving the public's understanding of homelessness as a systemic issue.

The public tends to equate homelessness with living on the street, and they have a narrow mental image of who homelessness can affect. Over decades, these cultural norms have been built up and sustained by the very people and organisations seeking to challenge them. We tend to focus on stories of rough sleeping when we talk about homelessness and neglect to tell those that support the links between individual homelessness and its structural causes. Not only does this give society a narrow image of who is homeless and why, it reduces the demand for data and evidence in a sector that is crying out for it – why conduct and invest in research if we believe that homelessness is the result of individual action?

But change is possible, and much of our work has been to shift the culture of evidence in and around homelessness by creating 'bottom up' demand to ensure that all policy and practice is informed by robust data and evidence. We have published a book, run regular events series, held large-scale Impact Forums in each UK nation, and brought those working in homelessness globally together to help drive radical change.

There are positive signs that our efforts are working: the latest versions of our EGMs show there has been a sharp uptick in the number of studies being undertaken relating to homelessness. But with the majority of studies taking place in the US, there is still much more work to do in the UK.



## A manifesto for ending homelessness sustainably

In April 2020, we published our first book with Policy Press, *Using Evidence to End Homelessness*, in which contributors advocate for a new movement that embraces data and evidence to end homelessness effectively. It provides crucial methods to underpin future policy, practice and funding decisions, and aims to help grow the movement for evidence-led change in the field.

**“This book is just the beginning of our campaign to grow a What Works movement in homelessness with bipartisan support, informed by the best possible data, evidence and evaluation about what works. *Using Evidence to End Homelessness* will be the manual that informs our next steps.”**

Ligia Teixeira

Our contributors came from across all wings of government, as well as academics, the third sector, NGOs and international names in homelessness and evidence-based practice, to unite behind a movement for evidence in homelessness. Similarly, it has enabled us to harness existing movements behind similar global initiatives that can speak to our shared message of evidence-based practice, and strengthened strategic relationships between individuals and organisations who can offer us valuable support.

“A serious way to achieve large-scale, sustainable progress for people experiencing homelessness.”

Nancy Hey, Chief Executive of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing

Of course, the book is just the beginning of our work to build a movement that embraces data and evidence to end homelessness effectively, and in order to disseminate its messages effectively it is being used as the foundation of CHI's first campaign to [#EndItWithEvidence](#), launched in late 2020.

#EndItWithEvidence is an opportunity to bring all the threads of CHI's work together under one clear, public-facing campaign, to engage with and grow our network and make them ambassadors for evidence and CHI's cause, and to widen the public understanding of our work and the context in which it exists. The campaign advocates for the urgent need to apply an evidence-led approach to tackling and preventing homelessness, and encourages policy-makers and practitioners to invest in solutions that are backed by evidence.

The campaign will serve as a long-term vehicle for the various components of our strategy, and support our ultimate vision: to create a society in which any experience of homelessness is rare, brief and nonrecurring.





## Supporting communities dealing with homelessness during COVID-19

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we realised there was a gap in the resources and support for local communities that were supporting people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, to stay safe and healthy. We reached out to our network across the country to find out how we could best support them at this challenging time. “We asked our networks what we could do that would be genuinely interesting and useful in the current climate,” says Ligia Teixeira “which is how the [In Conversation series](#) came about.”

“The Centre for Homelessness Impact’s COVID Talk series filled a gap for communities trying to figure out how best to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness during a period of stretched resources and rapid change. By identifying emerging and effective practices, and sharing both on the ground experience and data, the series provided vital information at a critical time.”

Nan Roman, President and CEO, National Alliance to End Homelessness.

The pandemic was rapidly evolving, so we designed and delivered our COVID-19 In Conversation programme with this in mind, in partnership with a variety of partners and collaborators. It offered a platform to discuss ideas and responses, as well as crisis management and communications on the question.

COVID-19  
Homelessness In  
Conversation series

## COVID-19 response

Resources to support communities to help people who are homeless or at risk to stay safe and healthy during the COVID-19 outbreak.

### Our COVID-19 webinars

#### The response of faith-based organisations to the pandemic

Dr Lige Teixeira speaks with Mark McGreevy OBE, founder of the Institute of Global Homelessness at DePaul University and CEO Depaul International, and Rev. Ian Rutherford, a City Centre Minister in Manchester, about the role of faith-based organisations in ending homelessness, in the UK and at a global level, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.



#### Wellness and resilience at a time of crisis with Frances Beecher and Muzzy Rosenblatt

Frances Beecher, CEO Llamau and Muzzy Rosenblatt, CEO Bowery Residents Committee (BRC), speak about how best to support the emotional resilience of frontline workers in their teams in times of adversity and in their...



We hosted an incredibly successful talk series, harnessing a range of prominent voices and experts by experience both in the UK and abroad to speak on a range of topics related to the global COVID-19 homelessness response. We welcomed 17 guests across nine conversations, which generated more than 2,000 live views.

“Really interesting to hear how American colleagues are responding to the pandemic and what they have learnt from previous crises – so important to connect with colleagues globally to tackle the crisis together.”

#### Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham

The series proved vital during such an uncertain time, providing critical insights into how different services were adapting to an ever-changing situation. Conversations included the importance of harnessing collaboration, evidence and data in the

COVID-19 outbreak, the COVID-19 homeless sector plan and how we can use existing disaster protocol in a pandemic.

The talks allowed us to learn from leading minds in the field, such as Linda Gibbs, Principal for Social Services at Bloomberg Associates, Andrew Hayward, Professor of Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Inclusion Health Research at University College London and Dr Neil Hamlet, Public Health consultant for the NHS. We also heard from both Viki Fox and Hannah Green, experts by experience, who discussed their lived experiences, and how we can transfer these to a crisis situation.

“Many people who are homeless, until lockdown were sleeping on the streets, and have suddenly found themselves with a roof over their heads. However, this does not necessarily mean their problems have been solved. We have to ensure that during times of crisis, such as the current pandemic, we support the wellbeing of these individuals as best we can.”

Hannah Green, Lived Experience Specialist, CHI



## Uniting to share the best knowledge and creative thinking on homelessness

In 2019, we held Impact Forums in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London, launching our strategy in all four corners of the UK. We brought together a line-up of leaders from homelessness policy and practice, people with experience of homelessness, and other parts of society, in order to discuss the field's most pressing challenges. We invited delegates to openly share, collaborate and innovate by exploring the theme 'Ending Homelessness For Good'.

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic made in-person events a thing of the past, but created an opportunity for innovation. We re-imagined our Impact Forums and our first online Impact Festival was born. The festival was an ambitious mixture of 159 speakers across 53 live events looking at what was happening in homelessness and related fields globally, and what needs to happen next to ensure we build better systems. Twenty-one of the sessions included one or more experts by experience, adding invaluable insights. So far, there have been more than 40,000 views of the festival website.



# IMPACT FESTIVAL

Centre for Homelessness Impact



“I must say that this #CHIFest2020 series in recent weeks by the Centre for Homelessness Impact has been fantastic. Congrats to Ligia Teixeira and colleagues for bringing together academia, practitioners and policymakers in such an innovative way!”

Simon Bastow, Programme Director, Master of Public Policy, LSE



“My favourite part was having the chance to think ‘outside the box’ from my kitchen table! It was good to attend from home, and I wouldn’t have been able to hear all the wide range of international and European speakers so easily had the event been run in the conventional way (pre Covid).”

Feedback, Festival attendee

“I enjoyed everyone having an equal platform – from CEOs and government ministers to those currently experiencing homelessness. I enjoyed the passion that speakers showed and the commitment to ending homelessness.”

Viki Fox, Cyrenians



**“The innovation talk was quite a revelation – we need to expect to fail more often when trying new things.”**

Rob Payne, Hope Worldwide

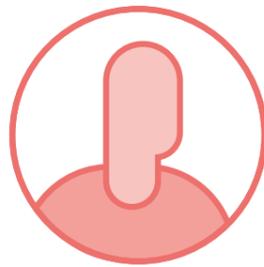
**“The festival has provided me with valuable ideas for more meaningfully engaging with people with lived experience of homelessness in relation to my work.”**



Feedback, Festival attendee

**“Another great webinar from CHI – made me think about my personal/professional behaviours in challenging stereotypes and misconceptions. A reminder about telling a story; always starting with high quality evidence!”**

Chrystalla Karvella, Homeless Link



**“Great discussions from the Impact Festival 2020. Interesting conversations around tackling the homeless crisis in the UK & US, with talks around poverty, racism, intersectionality and the importance of lived experience. ‘The time is for action now’”**

Fulfilling Lives Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham



We brought together **inspirational** and **influential** organisations from around the world to create a quality, evidence-led programme, including speakers and panellists from:



## What people are saying

“The COVID-19 pandemic has been a trying time for everyone and approaches across the globe have had to shift like never before. It was fantastic to see how quickly CHI put together their COVID response programme and I was delighted to take part in both the COVID Talk series and the Impact Festival. It was really interesting to compare the pandemic response here in the US with other countries and to what we have learnt from previous crises. We must connect with colleagues globally to tackle the current crisis together.”



Linda Gibbs, Principal for Social Services at  
Bloomberg Associates



“We’re not going to achieve what we need to achieve in local government unless we try new ways of working. The Centre for Homelessness Impact’s What Works Community pilot programme really gave us that opportunity and allowed us to bring some real expertise into learning how to do things differently, in a way that in local government we cannot normally do.”

Ali Griffin, Chief Executive,  
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council



“By focusing on What Works, the Centre for Homelessness Impact are paving the way for organisations in the field of homelessness, and beyond to make evidence-led decisions. Their commitment to helping generate new evidence and then supporting it to be applied in practice means that policymakers, practitioners and commissioners everywhere can improve their outcomes on an ongoing basis, which during a pandemic is more important than ever.”

David Halpern, CEO, Behavioural Insights Team

“I was attracted to working with CHI because I noticed how each individual who worked for and with CHI was genuinely passionate about ending homelessness for good. This same passion attracted me to CHI. A shared common goal and vision. To create change, this kind of vision is needed, from individuals to the whole collective. Through CHI’s continued efforts they’ve managed to cultivate a culture people want to be a part of, and it’s this culture that I’m happy to support.”

Gabriel Imevbore, Board Member, YMCA Birmingham





“Since CHI’s inception, there has been a strong commitment to bring different stakeholders around the same table. They have invested in building skills and capacity around creating an evidence-led end to homelessness. The Centre is passionate about asking the important and often difficult questions, and then evaluating the answers as rigorously as possible. In many ways their values overlap with ours at BIT, with a strong focus on using the evidence on ‘what works’ to create social impact.”

Eva Kolker, Senior Advisor, BIT



“It was fantastic for East Ayrshire Council to be able to work with the Centre for Homelessness Impact on the What Works Community pilot. It really allowed us to challenge ourselves and gave us the space to ask the important but often difficult questions. The pilot helped East Ayrshire solidify our vision of early intervention and homelessness prevention.

“It was a way for us to really challenge ourselves, and we learnt that it’s only by experimenting and running evaluations that we can translate our ideas into evidence. I’m very excited about the learning that has come from the programme, and where that will take our local authority in the future.”

Elena Whitham, Deputy Leader of East Ayrshire Council

# There's still more to do!

Looking at our three pillars, it's clear that we've made great progress so far – and we're well placed to build on our achievements.

1

We've made evidence more accessible with our EGMs, which have been used nearly 7,000 times. It's a shocking fact that for almost all common interventions used with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, the sector does not have evidence to tell us what works. These maps have enabled us to identify where we need to generate new research. The latest edition of our map of effectiveness studies now includes nearly 400 entries, 173 more than the first. We'll continue to add to this number, bringing together evidence from databases, journals, websites and other sources. We've introduced into the homelessness sector the idea of systematic reviews, combining information from multiple studies on the subject to identify common themes. We're already working on plans to extend these sources of information.

2

We've worked with three local authorities to create pilots to help them to implement policies that are based on this evidence. Our Intervention Tool provides busy policymakers and practitioners with a one-stop shop so that they can quickly and easily understand the various processes that impact on decision-making. As we work to support those working on the ground, we'll continue to bring more evidence to bear on everyday problems so that our pilot schemes will encourage others to adopt an evidence-based approach.

3

CHI has mobilised change-makers who themselves are acting as evidence evangelists. At the online Impact Festival this summer sessions ranged from a memorable performance from Cardboard Citizens, through to personal learning events, to discussions with some of the country's leading economists. This year we published our first book with Policy Press, *Using Evidence to End Homelessness*, in which contributors argue for a new movement that embraces data and evidence and a 'what works' approach to end homelessness effectively. Having built up this momentum we'll continue to recruit more partners and build more relationships to bring a wider range of knowledge, experience and perspectives.



The campaign to end homelessness for good is being led by people who are passionate about their work. The vast majority of them have practical experience of what works on the ground – and what doesn't. For too long policymakers and those on the frontline of delivering services have been without comprehensive, easily accessible evidence of what works and what doesn't.

But now, action to end homelessness, like many other aspects of the social sciences, has the opportunity to benefit from the kind of methodological tools and data discipline that have driven medicine and other sciences.

As a member of the What Works Network of 13 independent centres, along with NICE, we're working with a wide variety of partners to gather that data in field trials and to evaluate it through a set of typologies and methodologies. It can then help these partners to identify and implement best practice.

Just as this evidence-based approach has revolutionised medicine, leading to enormous improvements, we believe that it can do the same in the campaign to end homelessness.

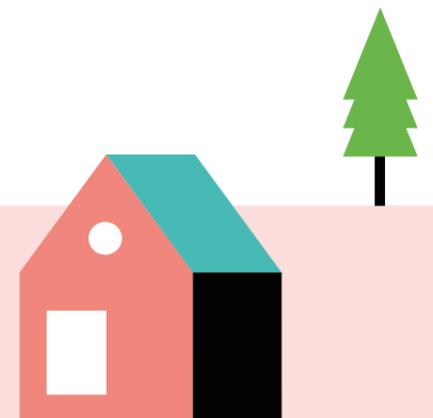
We're constantly looking for new partners and exploring new opportunities to scale our work. Although more than 85% of the studies included in our implementation map are from North America and fewer than 5% from the UK, the trend is moving in the right direction. We've seen an increase of more 50% in the UK since we created the map in 2018. We're working to capitalise on this surge in contemporary research alongside a growing commitment from all involved to an evidence-based approach to end homelessness.

We know from the work that we've done so far with councils and policymakers that there is a real and growing thirst for the kind of evidence that we're able to bring to the table. We intend to use the momentum that we've generated in what has been a very difficult year to continue to provide all of those working to end homelessness permanently with more of the evidence that they need.

## The future

Reflecting on our work so far, we are pleased with the progress we have made despite much of it having been carried out in the shadow of an international public health crisis. Our greatest concern now is that the economic and societal fallout of the pandemic threatens to exacerbate homelessness.

This is why our focus must be on what works, pushing for greater experimentation and creativity in our approach and changing the culture and behaviours around the use of evidence and data. By doing this we can ensure that any experience of homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurrent.





**Centre for Homelessness Impact**  
**[www.homelessnessimpact.org](http://www.homelessnessimpact.org)**

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ISBN 978-1-914132-00-1

CHI | Registered Charity Number: E&W1183026; SC04950

Company Number: 11732500