



# Older Homelessness Programme Annual Review 1999/2000



## HELP THE AGED OLDER HOMELESSNESS PROGRAMME ANNUAL REVIEW

During 1999/2000 Help the Aged continued to highlight the problems encountered by older homeless people in the UK, while funding a unique programme of direct service provision in partnership with the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT). This report gives an overview of our achievements over the last year, and indicates how we hope to develop the programme in the future.

### What has been done in the past to help older homeless people?

In the past, there have been few initiatives geared directly towards the needs of older homeless people. Older people tend to be less visible and less vocal than other groups, and a low priority has been given to the impact of homelessness on both their physical and mental well being. The work of Help the Aged and partnership agencies is designed to challenge this situation and draw in additional resources to offer long term and lasting solutions.

### How is Help the Aged supporting older homeless people?

The older homelessness grant programme began in 1998. The first phase of the programme initially funded four pilot projects based in London and Leeds. Since then 16 projects have been funded by Help the Aged and HACT; additionally, a further 14 projects have been funded by Help the Aged alone. The Charity has allocated £1.3 million to the current programme of 30 projects, representing, a significant commitment to tackling older homelessness.

### What kind of schemes is Help the Aged funding?

Help the Aged funding supports a wide range of innovative and pioneering services for older people. Key areas include:

- Outreach services to ensure that vulnerable older people sleeping rough, or in temporary accommodation, gain access to mainstream statutory and voluntary services

- Resettlement and tenancy sustainment services, to help older homeless people secure and sustain their own homes, and live as independently as possible
- Preventative services and policy initiatives, to stop older people becoming homeless in the first place, due to a personal or financial crisis
- Training designed to help older homeless people gain the appropriate skills they need for independent living, as well as training professional homelessness workers to provide the best possible service for older people
- Specialist services for older people with drug or alcohol problems combined with mental health problems

### What does Help the Aged aim to achieve?

Our funding has been directed to projects that will allow us to identify and promote models of good practice and long term solutions for older homeless people. This means that as well as funding practical services, with an immediate impact, all Help the Aged funded projects will influence good practice in the future. Our grant programme makes the case for investment in housing and services specifically tailored to older homeless people.

## HELP THE AGED PILOT PROJECTS

At the start of our grant programme in 1998, Help the Aged provided funding for four pilot projects based on the findings of our research 'Homeless Truths'. These pilots consisted of:

**Providence Row, London:** a floating support worker for older people (£20,000)

**St John-at-Hackney, London:** an advice worker and co-ordinator (£21,106)

**St Boltoph's Project, London:** life skills training for recently resettled older people (£20,000)

**St Anne's, Leeds:** support and rehousing for older people in the private rented sector (£11,997)

## PARTNERSHIP GRANT PROGRAMME

The Partnership Grant Programme began in 1999 and consists of 16 projects in the UK, jointly funded by Help the Aged and HACT. The Partnership has enabled us to maximise the number of projects we could fund from donations. A major evaluation of Partnership funded projects is being carried out by the University of the West of England, with funding from Help the Aged and Crisis. Research findings and recommendations from this evaluation will be published in 2003 and will allow us to authoritatively identify and promote models of good practice. Below is a description of all Partnership funded work and the financial contribution granted by Help the Aged:

**Bondway, London:** Many projects experience difficulties in funding short-term emergency bedspaces. Partnership funding currently supports a specialist resettlement service, an ongoing needs assessment of older people using the service and an emergency bedspace for an older person. This compliments Bondway's work as a lead agency on older homelessness (£33,152)

**Thames Reach, London:** Thames Reach employs a specialist street outreach worker for older rough sleepers, who are particularly vulnerable and may have a wide range of needs. This project, lasting for three years, will improve our understanding of the approach required to help older people escape rough sleeping in our cities (£38,860)

**Age Concern Westminster, London:** Age Concern Westminster aims to prevent older people becoming homeless through advice and advocacy services. It helps older people who are in danger of losing their homes as a result of rent arrears, benefit or other financial problems. The project also plans to provide consultancy and guidance for agencies that wish to set up similar schemes in their areas (£13,950)

**Arlington Care Association, London:** Many homelessness agencies are concerned with obtaining specialist practical advice on working with older people. The Arlington Care Association will provide London agencies with support and



consultancy. Help the Aged would eventually like to see a network of such agencies providing specialist advice across the United Kingdom (£37,800)

**M25 Group, Doncaster:** M25 Group is carrying out local research to help it understand the needs of older homeless people, and deliver the right services and solutions for clients in Doncaster (£5,200)

**Housing Project Advisory Service (HPAS), Manchester:** This well respected agency based in Manchester is examining gaps in provision for older homeless people in the North West. This research and development will include an examination of hospital discharge policies for older people and also, the specific experiences of older homeless women (£15,362)

**Salvation Army, Bristol:** Many older rough sleepers have multiple needs – a combination of drug or alcohol problems and mental health issues. However, there is a glaring lack of specialist provision for this client group. The Salvation Army in Bristol will offer specialist bed spaces for older people with multiple needs, combined with a resettlement service, which will help them secure appropriate move-on accommodation (£15,000)

**The Ark, Edinburgh:** Day centres often provide a very wide range of services for homeless people. It can be important to have a specialist member of staff to ensure that older people are able to make best use of those services. To achieve this, The Ark has appointed a specialist older homelessness worker through Partnership funding (£11,000)



**Nottingham Help the Homeless, Nottingham:** A specialist older homelessness worker linked into additional supported move-on accommodation will enhance the existing work of NHA with older clients (£36,787)

**Emmanuel House Day Centre, Nottingham:** A special evening service for older homeless people will link them into a range of services provided by the day centre (£18,405)

## HELP THE AGED GRANT PROGRAMME

Between 1999 and 2000 Help the

Aged also began funding a total of 14 projects outside the Partnership. These Help the Aged funded projects are outlined below:

**City and Hackney Alcohol Counselling Service, London:** There is little appropriate provision for older people with a combination of problems such as alcohol and mental health problems, often due to inflexible funding regimes. Help the Aged funding will provide a multiple needs outreach worker to work with and act as an advocate for this client group (£80,621)

**The Talbot Association, Glasgow:** The Talbot Association is a leading agency working with vulnerable older homeless people in Glasgow. Funding from Help the Aged contributed to the building of a cafe/bar and social area and a mini-bus for care home residents, which will allow residents from different locations to meet socially (£28,000)

**Spires Centre, London:** The Spires has developed an expanding day centre service for older homeless people. It has set up special sessions for older people and is successfully supporting people who would otherwise be isolated within the local community (£43,017)

**Shekinah, Plymouth:** It can be difficult to maintain services when project premises are being redeveloped and improved. Shekinah achieved this by employing a temporary coordinator with support from Help the Aged (£2,000)

**Alcohol Recovery Project, London:** Because of the social stigma often attached to alcohol problems, some groups such as ethnic elders are particularly reluctant to use services that can

**St Dismas, Southampton:** A specialist older persons worker ensures that older people have access to resettlement and a wide range of other support services (£39,500)

**United Welsh Housing Association, Cardiff:** United Welsh runs a range of supported housing schemes for older homeless people, as part of its Grangetown PREP scheme, based in Cardiff. A tenancy support officer for older people will enhance the service and will offer training and advice to other staff within the organisation (£37,500)

**Connection/Elmore Project, Oxford:** It is important that older people obtain continuous support, while at the same time gaining access to mainstream statutory and voluntary services. The Connection Project and Elmore Community Support provide floating support services, while bringing together local statutory and voluntary agencies to work with older homeless people (£18,000)

**Macedon Housing Association, Nottingham:** There continues to be significant gaps in services designed for older women. Macedon has a specialist care and support worker for older homeless people, and plan to provide supported move-on accommodation for older homeless women (£28,287)

**Threshold, London:** Delivers a quality housing advice service in Wandsworth designed to prevent homelessness among older people (£30,000)

**St Giles Day Centre, London:** Many older people seek resettlement and accommodation through day centres. St Giles provides post resettlement support for older people and helps them sustain their accommodation (£26,118)

support them. The Alcohol Recovery Project is addressing this through an outreach advice and recovery service for homeless ethnic elders (£36,500)

**Providence Row, London:** Many older people require ongoing support to sustain their accommodation. Providence Row has developed a local volunteer scheme, which supports older people as part of a post resettlement service and within a hostel for rough sleepers with alcohol problems (£43,420)

**St Mungo's HA – Training, London:** St.Mungo's will offer a national training package for staff of homelessness agencies to help them deliver better services that match the needs of older people (£17,000)

**St Mungo's HA – Sanctuary Project, London:** Following in the footsteps of the innovative Lancefield Street Project based in London, St Mungo's will establish a new service with a holistic approach to older homelessness by linking together a hostel, drop-in centre, outreach and resettlement service (£50,000)

**West London Mission, London:** West London Mission hopes to employ a specialist older homelessness worker, linking two existing projects and engaging with a wide range of local agencies (£30,000)

**Nottingham Help the Homeless, Nottingham:** Funding will provide basic fittings and equipment for move-on accommodation specifically designed for older homeless people (£11,000)

**Riverpoint, London:** Riverpoint is currently building a new centre offering modern day facilities and short term accommodation which will be accessible to older homeless people. Funding will contribute towards the construction of this new centre (£50,000)

**Haven (Tyneside) Ltd, Newcastle:** Haven Tyneside has appointed a specialist outreach worker to ensure that older homeless people in temporary accommodation have access to the right services. Older people will also be able to follow training courses as part of a tailored resettlement package (£27,945)

**Cyrenians Cymru, Swansea:** There is an acute shortage of appropriate move-on accommodation for older homeless people in Wales. Our funding will contribute towards providing a supported housing scheme for older homeless people and a dedicated worker within the organisation (£24,289)

**St Anne's Shelter and Housing Action –** St Anne's provides a specialist resettlement service through their own 'Over 55's Accommodation Project' in Leeds. They are also delivering and developing a new resettlement service to older people in Sheffield (£192,482)

### **The Next Stage**

The older homelessness programme comes to an end in March 2004. Before then Help the Aged hopes to raise further funds to commission new work based on the interim results of both our action research, and the Partnership evaluation being completed by the University of the West of England. At the same time, we are promoting the need for better access to existing services and the need for more specialist services and accommodation among mainstream providers.

## **POLICY AND PRACTICE**

### **UK COALITION ON OLDER HOMELESSNESS**

Help the Aged, HACT and Crisis initiated a new UK lobby group to work on behalf of older homeless people. Membership of the group includes national and local agencies concerned with tackling older homelessness. Members include Shelter, National Homeless Alliance, the Salvation Army, Age Concern, the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless, the Northern Ireland Council for the Single Homeless, St Mungo's HA and Bondway HA. The Coalition will seek further support for its policy objectives over the coming year and is determined that the problems experienced by older people should be given a higher profile across the UK. The Coalition has asked politicians and policy makers to sign the following statement.

'Despite recent Government initiatives many older people continue to sleep rough or suffer from being trapped in poor, insecure and inappropriate accommodation. Older people over 50 are the most adversely affected by homelessness in relation to both physical and mental health, yet paradoxically they often face the greatest difficulties in gaining access to vital services. The needs of older people are often ignored because their experience of homelessness is less visible than other groups and they lack the voice and representation required to highlight their specific interests and issues.

We, the undersigned call on all levels of government and both statutory and voluntary agencies in the UK, to recognise the distinct plight of older homeless people and to join us in taking sustained action to tackle and prevent this unacceptable situation.'



Further details on the Coalition can be found on a new web site [www.olderhomelessness.org.uk](http://www.olderhomelessness.org.uk) or you can email the Coalition at [info@olderhomelessness.org.uk](mailto:info@olderhomelessness.org.uk).

## CAMPAIGNING AND POLICY

While primarily supporting the UK Coalition, Help the Aged has also focused on campaign themes related to the older homelessness grant programme. Over the last year we have promoted issues around outreach and resettlement services for older people. Our current campaign is concerned with how vulnerable older people can sustain their accommodation over the long term, by securing the right kinds of care and support. In the future we will highlight the particular problems faced by older people in the private rented sector. Help the Aged has also responded to Government consultations on a range of issues to ensure proper consideration of the problems facing older homeless people.

### **Nottingham Older Homelessness Initiative**

Help the Aged and HACT are working with three homelessness agencies in Nottingham to develop a model of the partnership provision and campaigning in the area. Individually Nottingham Help the Homeless is being funded to provide high support bedspaces and specialist support workers. Emmanuel House Day Centre is offering a specialist evening service for older people which will also link them into a range of other services within the Day Centre. Finally, Macedon Housing Association will provide a specialist support worker and specialist bedspaces for older homeless women.

### **National Training Initiative**

Training is a key issue for Help the Aged and

St Mungo's HA to ensure that managers and staff working in the homelessness sector have the skills and knowledge to work with older people. This is vital for a proactive approach and tailored services that work for older people. Help the Aged is working in partnership with St Mungo's HA to develop an older homelessness training package that can be delivered nationally.

## RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Help the Aged is carrying out a pioneering action research programme to ensure that the views of older homeless people influence improvements in the services they use. The Older Homelessness Research Officer works closely with individual projects to help them identify what older homeless people think of the services they offer and how they can be developed and improved. Projects participating in this work include: Bondway, Providence Row, the Spires Centre and City and Hackney Alcohol Counselling Service. We plan to publish a survey of the views of older homeless people on current service provision in 2001, which will be followed by the detailed findings of our action research in 2003.

We recently commissioned the University of the West of England and Bristol University to carry out a major research project looking at the harassment of older people in the private rented sector. This work will be completed in 2002 when we hope to make a series of recommendations about how we can combat this problem and protect older people. This work will be preceded in 2001 by a broad campaign looking at the issues facing older private tenants. Next year we also plan to commission research into the needs of older homeless women and to identify gaps in service provision.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### **Older Homelessness Newsletter**

So far three specialist newsletters have gone out to over 800 homelessness organisations. The newsletter has identified specific areas of homelessness policy of relevance to older people and has explored campaign themes such as resettlement and street outreach work with the help of experts in these fields. In future we will improve the quality and regularity of the newsletter, which we hope will encourage older homelessness services to communicate with each other and share their expertise.

## Conferences and Events

In April 1999 Help the Aged ran a national conference on older homelessness, 'Changing Lives for Good?'. Delegates from homelessness services made a number of recommendations, which Help the Aged has successfully incorporated into its current work. In September 2000, Help the Aged and HACT funded and ran a special seminar designed for homelessness projects across the UK, to bring them together to share information and knowledge. We hope to organise similar events over the coming years.

## Older Homelessness Directory

A questionnaire was recently sent out to 900 homelessness agencies across the UK, to begin to examine the extent of service provision for older people and to identify gaps in this provision. Help the Aged will produce a directory of older homelessness agencies to help develop a network of projects working with older people. The identification of this network will strengthen our campaign and our call for more resources to be invested in this sector.

## PUBLICATIONS

Older Homelessness Programme publications available from Help the Aged include:

**Homeless Truths: Challenging the Myths about Older Homeless People** – a research study which assesses the scale of the problem and the characteristics of older homeless people and recommends ways to meet their needs (February 1997, £8.00)

**Coming Home: A Guide to Good Practice** – featuring 16 projects throughout the UK working with older homeless people, complete with a list of others doing similar work, an introduction and critical features of such work (November 1997, £8.00)

**Outside In, Tackling the Social Exclusion of Older Homeless People** – our early response to the work of the Social Exclusion Unit (April 1998, free)

**Rhetoric into Reality** – outlines the action research approach taken by Help the Aged as part of our agenda to improve services and prevent older homelessness. Specifically examines action research undertaken within three projects working with older homeless people (June 1999, free)

**Changing Lives for Good?** – report of our campaign conference held in April 1999. The conference looked at effective ways of working with older people around the themes of outreach, resettlement, prevention, multiple needs and user involvement (August 1999, free)

**Older Homelessness Newsletter** – gives a regular update on the grant programme, as well as discussing practice and policy issues around services for older homeless people (Issued three times a year – free)

**Response to the Housing Green Paper** – Help the Aged response to the Government consultation paper on housing and homelessness (July 2000, free)

**UK Coalition on Older Homelessness Information Pack** – details of the new UK lobby on older homelessness (November 2000, free)

**Action Research Bulletin** – interim bulletin on our action research programme (December 2000, free)

**Directory of Older Homelessness Projects** – details of projects working with older homeless people (November 2000, free)

For copies of any of our publications please write (including a large stamped addressed envelope) to Krishna Parmer;  
Help the Aged  
207-221 Pentonville Road  
London N1 9UZ

## SUPPORTING THE PROGRAMME

If you would like to support the campaign by making a donation, please contact Liz Stacey by telephoning 020 7278 1114 or by writing to her at Care Services Division  
Help the Aged  
207-221 Pentonville Road  
London N1 9UZ

### Further Information

If you would like further information about the work of the Help the Aged Older Homelessness Programme, or if you are a homelessness or housing project and would like automatic notification of developments in our grant programme, again please contact;  
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### Thank you

Thank you to all Help the Aged donors who have responded to our appeals and made the older homelessness funding programme possible.



**Help the Aged**

Patron HRH The Prince of Wales

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