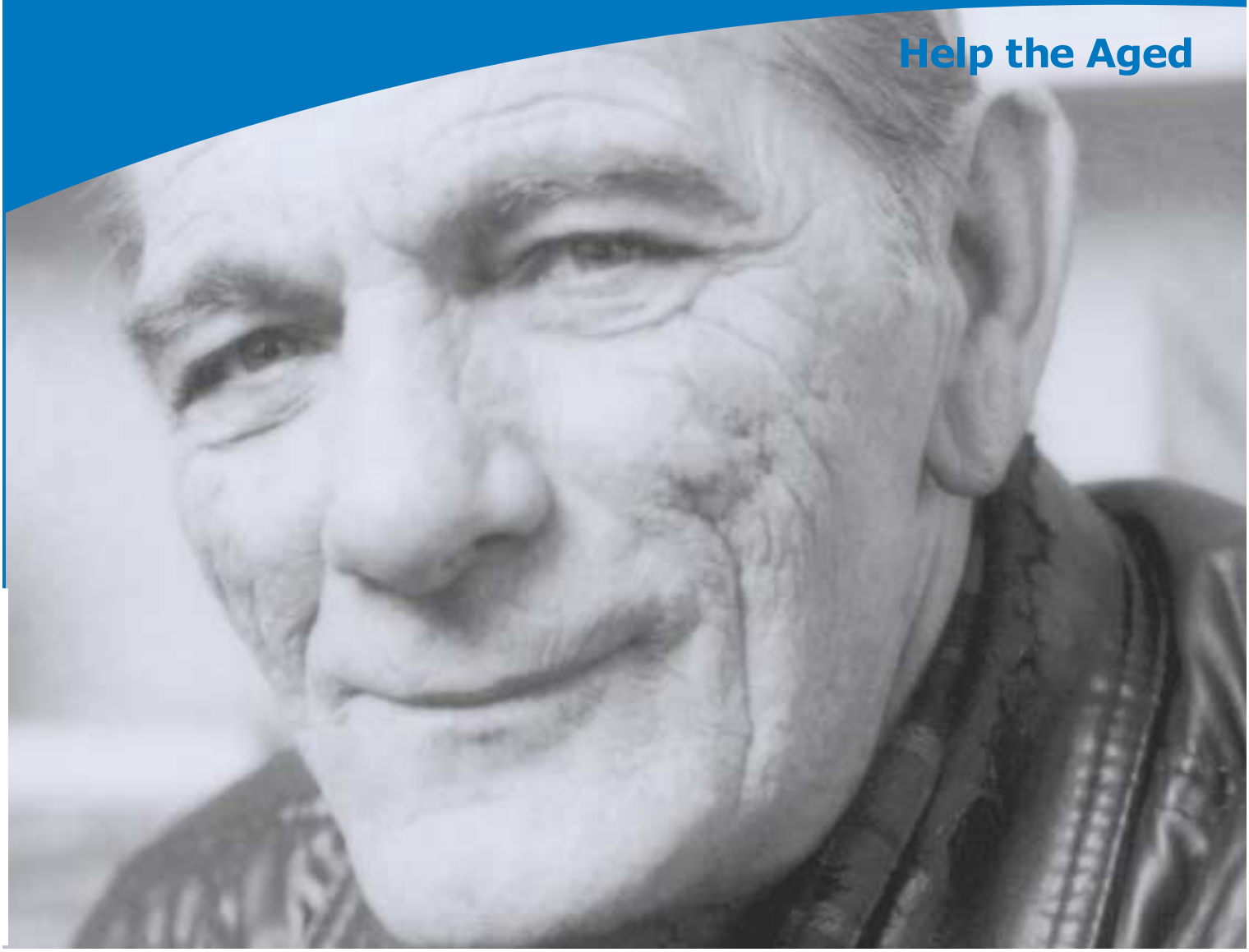
Older Homelessness Programme Review 2001/02

An annual review of the work of the Help the Aged Homelessness Programme

Help the Aged



During 2001/02 Help the Aged placed greater emphasis on campaigning and lobbying on behalf of older homeless people and gave particular support to the UK Coalition on Older Homelessness.

Help the Aged continued to fund its programme of direct service provision in partnership with the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT). It also funded new projects and commissioned a major new initiative for older homeless people in East London. This report gives an overview of the work of Help the Aged on older homelessness and identifies its key priorities for the coming year.

What is the extent of older homelessness?

It is very difficult to obtain accurate figures about the extent of older homelessness. A recent study in London found that there were 834 people (over 50) sleeping rough in London at some time between April 1999 and March 2000.

However, the majority of older homeless people are trapped in inappropriate temporary accommodation because of a lack of long-term housing and support to allow them to move on. It is estimated that there were 21,040 older people (over 50) living in hostels in England and 26,940 hidden away in bed and breakfast hotels in England and Wales.

Overall, Help the Aged believe that there are around 48,000 older people who are unofficially homeless in England and Wales.

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 its partnership agencies is designed to challenge this situation and draw in additional resources that 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. Help the Aged is currently funding 9 projects in partnership with the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT) and 12 projects on its own. Help the Aged has allocated £1.3 million to projects over the course of the programme.

Although most of the projects supported under the current programme come to an end in 2004, Help the Aged is hoping to extend its work beyond this period. In future it is likely to target specific service areas and commission work based on evaluations of the existing grant programmes.

What kind of schemes is Help the Aged funding?

Help the Aged funding has supported 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 identity 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.

Background to the Partnership Grant Programme

At the start of our grant programme in 1998 Help the Aged provided funding for pilot projects based on the findings of our research 'Homeless Truths'. Help the Aged, the Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT) and Crisis formed a partnership to tackle older homelessness. The Partnership Grant Programme began in 1999 and currently supports 9 projects in the UK, with joint funding from Help the Aged and HACT.

The programme has enabled Help the Aged to maximise the number of projects it has funded from donations. Below is a description of currently funded Partnership projects:

Age Concern Westminster, London:

Age Concern Westminster aims to prevent older people becoming homeless through an 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 UK (£37,800).

Connection/Elmore Project, Oxford:

It is important that older people obtain continuity of 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).

Emmanuel House Day Centre, Nottingham:

A special evening service for older homeless people links them into a range of services provided by the day centre (£18,405).

Framework Housing Association, Nottingham:

In 2002 Macedon Housing Association and Nottingham Help the Homeless merged to form Framework Housing Association. Framework has a specialist care and support worker for older homeless people and continues to provide supported move-on accommodation for older homeless women (£28,287).

St.Giles Day Centre, London:

Many older people seek resettlement and accommodation through day centres. St.Giles is providing post resettlement support for older people and helping them sustain their accommodation (£26,118).

Thames Reach Bondway, London:

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

Two Saints Housing Association, 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. The service is enhanced by a tenancy support officer for older people offering training and advice to other staff within the organisation (£37,500).

Over the life of the programme the Partnership has also funded the following organisations: **Bondway Housing Association (London), M25 Group (Doncaster), Housing Projects Advisory Service (Manchester), The Ark (Edinburgh) and the Salvation Army (Bristol).**

Partnership evaluation of services

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 help us to identify and promote models of good practice.

HELP THE AGED GRANT PROGRAMME

Outside the Partnership Help the Aged is currently funding 12 projects. These projects are outlined below:

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

CAN Northampton:

Funds have contributed towards the costs of buying a 4 bedroom house to resettle older homeless men with multiple needs (£15,000).

City and Hackney Alcohol 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 is funding a multiple needs outreach worker to work with and act as an advocate for this client group (£80,621).

Cyrenians Cymru, Swansea:

There is an acute shortage of appropriate move-on accommodation for older homeless people in Wales. Our funding is contributing toward a supported housing scheme for older homeless people with a dedicated support worker (£24,289).

Derbyshire Housing Aid, Derby:

There is a lack of specialist housing advice for vulnerable older people. Our programme has contributed to the appointment of a dedicated housing advice worker for older people and in future Help the Aged will be looking for further opportunities to support this area of work (£12,000).

Fireside Project, Birmingham:

The Fireside is a day centre based in the city centre, catering for a high percentage of older homeless clients. Our funding has contributed towards the appointment of a new Deputy Director with responsibility for developing specific services for older clients. Particular emphasis will be placed on enhancing their resettlement service (£16,411).

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).

Providence Row, London:

Many older people require ongoing support to sustain their accommodation. Providence Row Charity has developed a local volunteer scheme, which supports older people as part of a post resettlement service (£43,420).

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).

St.Martin's Social Care Unit, London:
Some vulnerable older homeless people have difficulties in accessing emergency accommodation and ongoing resettlement support. Help the Aged is funding St.Martin's Social Care Unit to ensure that older rough sleepers are guaranteed emergency bed spaces and ongoing support in gaining permanent accommodation (£23,700).

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

Over the course of the programme Help the Aged also funded older homelessness services for: **Shekinah (Plymouth)** and **Riverpoint (London)**.

Commissioned projects - East London Meaningful Occupation Project

In addition to projects funded under the grant programme Help the Aged has recently commissioned St. Botolph's Project to deliver a new initiative, the East London Meaningful Occupation Project. Help the Aged, with the support of Zurich Financial Services Community Trust is establishing an exciting new project for vulnerable isolated older homeless people.

The scheme will facilitate access to a wide range of daytime and evening activities designed for homeless and isolated older people. It will be tailored to meet the requirements of individual clients and will make direct contact with older people through local homelessness services. The new project is likely to be up and running by May 2002.

Future of the Help the Aged grant programme

Help the Aged is hoping to extend the older homelessness grant programme while putting more emphasis on commissioning new work. The current programme comes to an end in March 2004. Before then Help the Aged is hoping to raise further funds for new work based on the results of both its action research programme and the partnership evaluation, currently 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 pressing for more specialist services and accommodation among mainstream providers.

UK Coalition on Older Homelessness

The UK Coalition on Older Homelessness was officially launched in December 2000 at the House of Commons, with the Housing Minister in attendance. It was set up to lobby for the recognition of the specific needs of older homeless people in the UK. Members includes Shelter, National Homeless Alliance, the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless, the Northern Ireland Council for the Single Homeless, the Salvation Army, St.Mungo's HA and Thames Reach Bondway HA.

The Coalition will seek further support for its policy objectives over the coming years and is determined that the problems experienced by older people should be given a higher profile.

What has the Coalition achieved?

The Coalition successfully raised the profile of older homelessness on several fronts. During the passage of the Homelessness Act the Coalition and Help the Aged pressed for increased recognition of vulnerable older people as part of the legislative framework.

More specifically it responded to the Government's consultation on definitions of 'priority need', contained in the homelessness legislation. Additionally, it was invited to comment on the draft guidance to local authorities on the development of local homelessness strategies.

Over the coming year the Coalition hopes to develop its own guidance on local strategies for older homeless people. The Coalition made representations to the Greater London Authority on the need for an older homelessness strategy in the Outer London Boroughs.

The Coalition also intends to continue pressing for the recognition of older homeless people as a distinct group under the new Supporting People funding regime, due to be implemented in 2003.

Coalition Newsletter and Web Site

So far four 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 hope to improve the quality and regularity of the newsletter to encourage older homelessness services to communicate with each other and share their expertise. Help the Aged has helped to expand the range of information available on the UK Coalition website (www.olderhomelessness.org.uk), including a range of books and reports all available free online. The website will be relaunched in April 2002 and will include a new section looking at specialist service models designed for older homeless people.

It will help to promote best practice and will influence local authorities and others in commissioning new services. Over the coming year there will be further enhancements in the website to make it more relevant to both practitioners and policy makers.

'Partnerships for Prevention' - Coalition National Conference

In December 2001 the Coalition held its first national conference in Birmingham 'Partnerships for Prevention', facilitated and supported by Help the Aged. Key note speakers included Paul Burstow MP, Kathy Bee (DTLR - Supporting People Team) and Carmel Conefrey (Local Government Association). The conference explored various models of service provision designed to prevent older homelessness. It also helped to identify some of the key challenges ahead to ensure the needs of older homeless people are being fully addressed.

Coalition research consortium

The Coalition sent up a research consortium to address the serious gaps in information about older homeless people. The Coalition is particularly concerned to develop a more accurate picture about the number of older homeless people in the UK and to encourage greater efforts to collect this information. The consortium will seek funding for a specific research proposal, which it hopes will be initiated towards the end of 2002.

Help the Aged 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 have included: Bondway, Providence Row, the Spires Centre and City and Hackney Alcohol Service. We now plan to publish a survey of the views of older homeless people on current service provision in 2002, which will be followed by the detailed findings of our action research in 2003.

The University of the West of England and Bristol University have carried out a major research project looking at the experience 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 protect the rights of older people.

Help the Aged will be publishing the results of research initiated by the Housing Projects Advisory Service (HPAS) looking at gaps in provision for older homeless people in the North West. This work examines hospital discharge policies, primary health care, sheltered housing, and the experience of older homeless women.

Framework Housing Association recently published an investigation into older homelessness in Nottingham, with the support of Help the Aged. It is hoped that this timely piece of research will have a direct impact on the development of local homelessness strategies in Nottingham.

Help the Aged and Partnership Events

In September 2001 Help the Aged and HACT ran their second special seminar designed for homelessness projects across the UK, funded by HACT and Help the Aged, to bring them together to share information and expertise. We hope to organise similar events over the coming year.

Publications

Most Help the Aged publications on older homelessness are now available through the Coalition website at www.olderhomelessness.org.uk.
These publications 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 - **available free on website**).

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 - **available free on website**). This publication is currently being updated.

Outside In, Tackling the Social Exclusion of Older Homeless People - our early response to the work of the Social Exclusion Unit. (April 1998 - **available free on website**).

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 - **available free on website**).

Changing Lives for Good? - report of the Help the Aged campaign conference held in April 1999 looking at effective ways of working with older people around the themes of outreach, resettlement, prevention, multiple needs and user involvement (August 1999 - **available free on website**).

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 - **available free on website**).

Response to the Housing Green Paper - Help the Aged response to the Government consultation paper on housing and homelessness (July 2000 - **available free on website**).

Response to Government consultation on Priority Need - UK Coalition response to Government the Government's consultation on 'priority need' groups under the homelessness legislation.

UK Coalition on Older Homelessness Information Pack (January 2002, free).

For printed copies of any of our publications please write to Jenny Havis, Help the Aged, 207-221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ (including a large stamped addressed envelope).

Further Information

If you would like further information about the work of the Help the Aged Older Homelessness Programme or the UK Coalition on Older Homelessness contact Joe Oldman at Help the Aged, 207-221 Pentonville Rd, London N1 9UZ or email joseph.oldman@helptheaged.org.uk.

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Help the Aged

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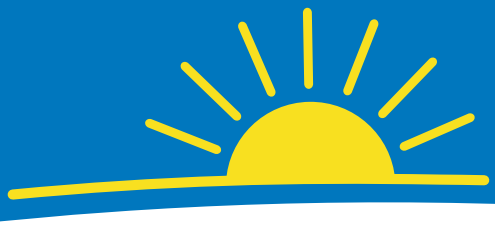

Help the Aged

Working for a future where older people are highly valued, have lives that are richer, and voices that are heard.

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