



European End Street Homelessness Campaign Pilot - External Evaluation Report

For the Building and Social
Housing Foundation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation of the European End Street Homelessness Campaign Pilot

1. BACKGROUND TO THE CAMPAIGN AND EVALUATION

1.1 Building and Social Housing Foundation (BSHF)

Established in 1976 the Building and Social Housing Foundation (BSHF) is an independent research organisation that works both in the UK and internationally to identify innovative housing solutions and to foster the exchange of information and good practice. BSHF believes that everyone should have access to decent housing.¹

1.2 Knowledge transfer and homelessness

BSHF has been helping to transfer lessons about tackling chronic homelessness from the USA to a European context. Running the annual [World Habitat Awards](#) (WHA) enables BSHF to learn from the most cutting edge and effective housing projects across the world and to share this more widely.

In 2014, BSHF organised a peer exchange with the WHA winner 100,000 Homes Campaign, enabling 14 homelessness practitioners from around the world to visit Los Angeles and learn from the Campaign. As a direct result, several of the participants from Europe were enthusiastic to see if it would be possible to develop a European equivalent. BSHF began working with organisations in several large European cities, as well as [FEANTSA](#) (the representative body for homelessness NGOs in Europe) and Community Solutions, who co-ordinated the US campaign, to develop an action-oriented movement.

1.3 European context

The context in 2014-15 for creating the European End Street Homelessness Campaign was:

- Homelessness, in its various forms, was increasing in most European countries. In certain countries rooflessness was increasing exponentially.
- There was growing evidence that Housing First is an effective way to tackle chronic homelessness.²
- In a number of European countries and cities rooflessness was being reduced through a Housing First approach.³
- The role of European institutions in 'ending' homelessness, and efforts to structure a social movement across this geography, was something receiving increased attention (in both policy circles and academia).⁴
- There was access to significant skills and knowledge from the 100,000 Homes Campaign, and other European organisations such as the Y-Foundation.

Homelessness practitioners and policy makers believed the campaign offered a unique opportunity to find new solutions and inspiration after years of trying to reduce homelessness yet seeing the problem getting worse. They saw that there were elements, especially around meaningful data, collective action and engaging the local community, that were new in Europe and had the potential to change the paradigm.

1 www.bshf.org

2 For example, Busch-Geertsema (2014) *Housing First Europe: Results of a European Social Experimentation Project*

3 Pleace and Bretherton (2013) *The Case for Housing First in the European Union: A critical evaluation of concerns about effectiveness*

4 For instance, FEANTSA (2010) *Ending Homelessness: A handbook for policymakers*

BSHF acted as a catalyst with the aim of working with others to pilot the campaign in Europe, sharing and extending the use of workable, adaptable solutions.

1.4 Campaign principles and goals

The long term goal set for the European campaign was to engage up to 50 European cities to develop new interventions, in line with the campaign principles, to end chronic street homelessness in those cities by 2020. This was a purposefully bold aim, intended to inspire and also create space for disrupting current processes. It was decided that cities that support and actively participate in the Campaign would all agree to a set of five principles:

- 1. Housing First:** Ensuring (or working towards ensuring) homeless people are housed in permanent, safe, appropriate and affordable housing with the support necessary to sustain it.
- 2. Knowing who's out there:** Getting to know every homeless person by name by going onto the streets to find them and assess their needs (using what is referred to as a Registry Week as the start of this process).
- 3. Tracking progress:** Regularly collecting person-specific data to accurately track progress toward ending homelessness.
- 4. Improving local systems:** Building coordinated housing and support systems that are simple to navigate, while targeting resources quickly and efficiently to the people who need it the most.
- 5. Learning from and sharing with others:** To help the campaign make the biggest difference to those who are homeless.

1.5 Pilot

In 2015 BSHF and FEANTSA selected six cities to pilot the European Campaign, working predominantly with homelessness services providers in each city. The cities selected were Barcelona, Brno, Copenhagen, London, Lyon and Madrid (later Valencia). The pilot phase was intended to run until October 2016.

1.6 Evaluation

In early 2016 BSHF awarded the tender to Lyndall Stein and Linda Butcher to conduct a formative evaluation of the pilot phase.

2. IMPLEMENTING THE PILOT

2.1 Support and coordination by BSHF and others

To implement the pilot, BSHF allocated funding over a three-four year period totalling approximately £100-110,000 per year. BSHF held initial discussions with Community Solutions on how the resources that were available could be utilised to greatest effect during the pilot period. Their advice was based on their experiences in the USA and Canada, keeping in mind that the overall level of resources available were much less for the European Campaign pilot.⁵ BSHF decided to focus most on the coordination and management aspects at the early stages, and it was decided to review these resource allocations as part of the later pilot evaluation. In addition to providing coordination and management, BSHF project resources would also fund advice, and developmental training and exchanges.

2.2 Building the campaign momentum

BSHF promoted the campaign to potential cities, and worked strategically and in partnership with other relevant organisations and stakeholders at European, country and delivery levels.

A strong theme to emerge from the evaluation has been the importance not only of getting the right organisations involved, but the right individuals as well.

Community Solutions were contracted to share their knowledge and experience, both to the pilot cities and to BSHF.

2.3 Preparing and developing the pilot cities

Over the first nine months BSHF supported and developed the pilot cities to build the local knowledge of the methods employed in the 100,000 Homes Campaign, initially around the process of holding Registry Weeks. This is a way of developing a list of people by name sleeping on the streets, which also identifies their vulnerabilities. It engages a large number of volunteers to conduct surveys with people sleeping rough, and to powerfully communicate the results of this to local people and the media.

2.4 Pilot Cities

In October 2015, the six cities, along with BSHF, FEANTSA, Community Solutions and others, met for a peer exchange with World Habitat Award winners Y-Foundation in Helsinki, Finland. An early adopter of the Housing First model; it is seen as a leading exponent of this approach to housing homeless people. Whilst there, each of the six pilot cities made commitments about how they would take the work forward, with most committing to holding a Registry Week within the following six months.

2.5 Conversion from commitments to actual Registry Weeks

While 50% of the pilot cities did not ultimately conduct a Registry Week in line with the campaign principles, the three others conducted four between them: Valencia, Barcelona and London (boroughs of Westminster and Croydon).

2.6 Registry Weeks

The Registry Weeks are important to the Campaign because they can create greater urgency and

⁵ When setting up the campaign in Canada for example, Community Solutions had four full-time roles including a Director, along with support for Communications, Data/Cities, and Networking

community awareness at a local level around the issue of street homelessness, and help propel local people and politicians into action.

2.6.1 Survey

As part of the pilot development period, BSHF agreed with the cities a set of common data fields to be used in the Registry Week surveys. This was critical to ensuring that data could be amalgamated across the cities, and used to identify and deliver pan-European messages and actions. The survey is known as the VI-SPDAT, which stands for Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Pre-screen Tool.⁶ The usefulness of the data drawn from the surveys has, at this early stage, already begun to emerge, for charities and for local authority commissioners.

2.6.2 Valencia – April 2016

In April RAIS Fundación's registry week in Valencia, Homeless Meetup, mobilised over 289 volunteers who surveyed 268 street homeless people in the city. The highly significant results revealed a much higher street homeless population than was previously thought, and provided the first detailed information about the make-up of that population and people's individual needs. As a result, RAIS was able to engage Valencia's Mayor and regional government, securing commitments to a joint Housing First pilot.⁷

2.6.3 Barcelona – May/June 2016

Arrels Fundació conducted their registry week, CensSenseLlar (Survey of Homeless People) in Barcelona in June. While a previous local street count had identified the number of people sleeping rough, the survey provided far more information and hard evidence about who people were, what their needs are, and ended some long-held assumptions about where homeless individuals were from. The aim following the registry week is to create a momentum which drives a local response to end street homelessness.⁸

2.6.4 Westminster (London) – July 2016

The central London borough of Westminster held their registry week, Westminster Homeless Action Together, in July. The first UK volunteer community survey of its kind of people sleeping rough, a group of homelessness charities plus over 300 volunteers encountered 461 people sleeping rough on the streets, with 267 surveys completed. The local partners - charities, local authority and housing associations - are now looking at committing to actions which will help the most entrenched rough sleepers into housing, and services where relevant.⁹

2.6.5 Croydon (London) – August/September 2016

In August/September more than 100 volunteers headed out onto the streets of Croydon as part of the CR Zero 2020 Connections Week to gather information about who is sleeping rough locally and what they need to successfully move into accommodation. The volunteers spoke to 64 rough sleepers, 42 of whom completed surveys. The local partners held a community debrief and since then have been working with a range of politicians at different levels to take forward actions and build on the public commitments made, as well as with the local community.¹⁰

2.7 Communications

6 A "supertool" that combines the strengths of two widely used existing assessments: the Vulnerability Index, developed by Community Solutions, and the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, developed by OrgCode Consulting. Source: <http://www.orgcode.com/product/vi-spdatt/>

7 <https://www.bshf.org/our-programmes/homelessness/the-campaign-so-far/valencia-spain/>

8 <https://www.bshf.org/our-programmes/homelessness/the-campaign-so-far/barcelona-spain/>

9 <https://www.bshf.org/our-programmes/homelessness/the-campaign-so-far/westminster-uk/>

10 <https://www.bshf.org/our-programmes/homelessness/the-campaign-so-far/croydon-uk/>

As a pilot that was adapting a model with limited funding, there were minimal resources available for external communications. As a result, during the pilot the primary focus of communications activity was at the local level. BSHF's communications role included using blogs, compiling feedback and news from pilot cities, as well as using social media such as Twitter, for example, to spread the tweets from campaign cities to BSHF's own networks. During the pilot this helped to empower cities to create and promote their own messages. Using more discrete mechanisms such as meetings and individual contact, BSHF was able to play a role in supporting cities' involvement and reinforcing positive messages. The downside has been that the branding and overarching European nature has occasionally been lost and BSHF's own commitment has occasionally been hidden or understated.

Overall, at city level, there was some very good media coverage, including local and national media. Where encouraged and supported by the local lead organisation, social media was a particularly effective method as it was picked up and used by volunteers – many of whom were young and/or well-versed in social media already.

Some of the Registry Week data presented challenges from a communications point of view e.g the high level of migrants on the streets in some cities. But this is part of the truth of street homelessness and a future plan around any challenging findings would benefit the Campaign overall by enabling a pro-active approach to, for example, relevant partnerships¹¹ and communications messages.

In general, much of the data and the facts uncovered by the survey are positive tools for change, underpinned by the sharing of learning and experience between cities.

2.8 Impact and outcomes of the campaign to date

On people who are homeless

- Involvement of hundreds of people who are street homeless in something new and positive to help themselves and others in future
- Engaging with new faces and people who had no agenda and weren't getting paid
- Better connection to the local community
- Information about locally available services/places/support
- Speaking with someone who had time to talk, and wasn't driven/limited by commissioned outreach targets
- Vouchers and incentives
- Active, central involvement of homeless individuals as peers, with a positive impact on individuals sleeping on the streets as well as volunteers and staff

On the public

- 1000 mostly new volunteers of high quality, skills and commitment were involved
- Involving the public in being part of the solution was totally inspiring. These were often diverse groups of people who were happy to sit on the ground, talk to homeless people, wanting to be part of making change
- Volunteers become ambassadors whose attitudes have been transformed
- Social media spreads messages beyond known or the usual networks and contacts

¹¹ In the UK for example this could be the Refugee Council.

- A demonstration of real 'people power'
- The power of new faces - the volunteers defied stereotyping
- People want authenticity, to be better people – they got this
- The blue jackets with campaign branding in London were highly effective, creating a sense of common purpose and identity
- Increased potential for local campaigns to link with the business community

On the professionals

- Intended to be disruptive, the Campaign helped some people who had been working in this area for a long time, who were frustrated by the lack of progress, to break or change the rules. It gave some people hope and a way out of the routine and their comfort zone – and to have an excuse to take others with them.
- Homelessness agencies learned things that they didn't know.
- Where commissioners have been supportive and involved and seen the results, the drivers for making changes is even stronger.

On the organisations/sector

- Better information and data to act upon
- Learning from and working with other countries and cities brought benefits
- New ways of working with street homeless people, many of whom have not wanted to engage or are cynical about homelessness services
- improved working relationships, collaboration and links – amongst agencies
- Positive view from the Councils/commissioners/politicians in some cities
- New, dynamic, game-changing use and engagement of volunteers
- Has changed ways of thinking for some
- Others have used their involvement in the Campaign to drive or support organisational change or development
- The positive engagement and visibility of local people as volunteers and much of the media coverage is likely to have a positive impact on public opinion
- New or additional resources have been brought in to the sector
- Actions by homelessness organisations and partners have greater potential to make an impact on major political figures as they transition into new roles

On BSHF

- BSHF has a stronger presence in the field of homelessness internationally
- BSHF has developed or furthered their relationships with a wide set of international stakeholders
- BSHF has strengthened its reputation through the way staff at all levels have supported and responded to partners and stakeholders.

3. KEY LESSONS/FINDING

3.1 Theory of Change

Before commencing the pilot, BSHF developed a theory of change, modelled on the development of the US campaign. This starts with the long-term goal, and then highlights the preconditions needed to achieve this goal. It then outlines a set of activities intended to create the preconditions, and indicators to tell them if the preconditions are in place. This theory has been important in providing a bigger picture of change, whilst allowing BSHF to adapt and respond to emerging opportunities as they arise.

BSHF hoped that the evaluation would tell them if change is occurring in the way they envisaged in the theory of change, and the external evaluators found that the pilot period has not been long enough to determine firm answers to every single evaluation question. However, for most of the questions there are clear findings that make a strong case for the continuation and expansion of the Campaign.

Evaluating the actual impact on those who are homeless is a timing issue. At the time of this evaluation it is just months on from the first Registry Week and some outcomes, like housing placements, are too early to measure. It is suggested that a follow up evaluation of pilot cities, one year after their Registry Week was held, is carried out to determine outcomes at that point.

The work done to date in campaign cities means that there is now a baseline to measure from or compare with in future.

The findings identify there is a European model, clearly based on learning from the USA but more relevant and fit for purpose in Europe, that is emerging and warrants further development.

Overall, the feedback and initial outcomes and impact are positive and show that the Campaign has been disruptive in different ways.

Evaluation questions	Main findings
a) What were the motivations of participants (and their organisations) to become involved in the campaign?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting contacts from other cities with shared goals • Learning about to address a growing or entrenched problem in their city • Being able to share and solve problems together • Being inspired by the peer exchange and what happened in the USA • Understanding that the right data could be used in real time as a driver for change to more quickly improve the lives of those sleeping rough • Timeliness of opportunity, which in some cases supported organisational change that was going on
How has the campaign (and BSHF activities) shaped the thinking and actions of participants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped to form professional relationships, some of which resulted in joint work • Helped to change thinking or approach – e.g. one participant realised on the training that 'counting' was not enough – if you don't know who people are or what they want or need, then you can't help them so well or make the changes needed (to organisation or services) • Registry Week visits meant they could learn from others, see things in practice, which influenced their own Registry Weeks • It provided people with inspiration and confidence that they could do things differently, and bring others along, which they then acted upon
What activities are taking place in the cities that are attributable to their involvement in the campaign?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registry weeks: Valencia, Barcelona, Westminster, Croydon • Brno: more bespoke action targeted at families • Valencia Housing First pilot with Mayor's backing • Westminster meeting of agencies on post-Registry Week commitments, input into council rough sleeping strategy • Croydon/Westminster – meetings with the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the national government's Department for Communities and Local Government to discuss campaign and potential wider use
To what extent are we creating the preconditions set out in the theory of change?	<p>The initial signs are very promising, with positive results in each active city, and benefits to some that were less active. It is too early to say in terms of quicker housing for those who are street homeless, as the delivery phase of the campaign is still in the early stages. However, there is learning to date, identified in the full report, that has been or can be used to strengthen the preconditions/theory of change where necessary. There is also a European model that is emerging with adaptations relevant to context.</p>
What more could the campaign do to help the cities reduce, and ultimately end, street homelessness	<p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly stated longer-term commitment to the Campaign, who will run it, and role BSHF/others will play • Resources available and who they are for (included in part in 'Campaign Offer' & annual support programme) • Continue sharing, learning & exchange opportunities • Look at best fit and value-added collaboration with relevant strategic partner(s) & initiatives • Identify/secure additional resources as needed depending on future agreed plans • Support cities' ability to influence and implement locally – potential for bespoke support fund to aid partners' needs that fall outside core support programme • Communications plans that link between central body and cities to continue to build profile and the movement

4. RECOMMENDATIONS for BSHF & NEXT STEPS

The evaluation of the pilot and the level of interest that has already been shown by new cities have demonstrated that there is now potential for expansion of the Campaign across Europe and further development of the model to a European context. There are various ways these developments can be achieved depending on the resources available, the external environment, and the intended scale up of the Campaign. Whichever is adopted, each would need to contain certain core elements for successful delivery at whatever scale they operate.

Five core elements of any potential delivery model

1. Good, accessible, up to date information on the campaign, resources, achievements
2. Ability to provide or commission capacity building based on needs and gaps
3. Data collection, use, analysis and updating
4. People and partner management and coordination
5. Fundraising and sustainability

4.1 Option One – BSHF remains the coordinating body

By allocating £110,000 per year up until 2020 (excluding internal management and back office costs) BSHF could gradually expand to a limited number of cities (based on 10-12 joining per year, with a minimum of 8 converting to action), and continue to coordinate and support the campaign with effective management and use of resources.

4.2 Option Two – BSHF in Partnership

There is scope for BSHF to share the responsibility for the Campaign and find an organisation with shared goals and necessary skills/expertise to work with. This would potentially require a similar amount of investment from BSHF as in Option One, but with an equivalent amount of resources brought in by the partner organisation – helping to establish an equal level of commitment and ownership by the partners. The resulting £220,000 per annum could double the potential for activity and expansion, and the increase in resources would make it more feasible for the campaign to achieve its goals within the specified timeframe.

4.3 Option Three – Identify and part-fund another lead body

This approach would focus on the identification and funding of a lead body other than BSHF and could provide the basis for the largest scale up of the campaign with resources of at least £250,000 per year, involving and supporting the greatest number of cities. BSHF could make a commitment at the same level of up to £110,000, for a fixed period, with a condition that extensive additional funds of at least £140,000 per year are raised within deadlines. At this level of resourcing, the programme and outcomes are likely to reflect what is set out for Option Two. However, if resources in excess of £250,000 are secured there is scope to scale up the programme and number of cities proportionally.

4.4 Next steps

As the catalyst and funder of the pilot, BSHF holds the critical role in determining what will happen next with the European End Street Homelessness Campaign. There are clear benefits and risks related to each of these three options, which are addressed in detail in the full evaluation report, developed for consideration by BSHF management and to inform the decision-making of its board of trustees.