



HOUSING FIRST HOW TO

Tips from frontline
professionals



Adopting a multi-agency approach

Our practice forums and events bring together frontline Housing First teams from across the country to share learning and best practice around a range of prevalent issues and specialisms, and help the development of Housing First services. The discussions inform this series of practical information, which outlines common experiences and recommended approaches.

Aims of this document

It is vital that Housing First provision is integrated into a wider network of support agencies in order to meet the needs of people experiencing multiple disadvantage. These individuals are usually in touch with a variety of services that have a range of experience and knowledge, but these services are often unaware of the Housing First approach and its principles. As a result, it can be difficult for Housing First teams to fully offer choice and control, and person-centred and harm-reduction approaches. For a Housing First service to be effective, it is important to invest time in building relationships with partners; increasing their knowledge and understanding to ensure practice can be as consistent as possible across a support network. This briefing provides learning from frontline practice on how to involve and work with partner agencies.

Who is it for?

- Housing First managers and staff teams
- Professionals working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage
- Commissioners.

“Housing First is a different way of working, it’s a culture change and it’s important to invest the time to bring other services along on the journey.”

Housing First worker

Engaging partners with the Housing First approach

Tips from the frontline

- Coordination is essential for effective multi-agency working. It may be that a statutory Care Coordinator is involved, but perhaps doesn’t have a strong relationship with the individual or it may be that there is no statutory coordinator involved. In this situation, the Housing First worker should act as the co-ordinator, liaising with other services and convening regular information sharing and planning meetings.
- Outside of face-to-face meetings, it is good idea to provide regular written updates to other services within the resident’s support network. This can be an opportunity to share concerns as well as good news and achievements.
- Be sure to share the positive news stories. Let your partners know that Housing First works by providing a short narrative of a resident’s journey through your service.
- Offer to carry out joint visits and help services to build relationships with residents by passing on the baton of trust you have developed.
- Make yourself known! Ask to attend team meetings, speak at local events or invite other agencies to attend your Housing First meetings. You could create leaflets or share [The Principles of Housing First in England](#) and [Fidelity Guidance](#)¹ and offer a question and answer session.
- Consider a skills swap. Your Housing First team will have lots of knowledge about complex needs and you could offer a training session with a local partner and ask that they in turn train your team in their specialism.

Successful partnership working

Over a period of time, a South West Housing First service built a very positive relationship with a manager based in the council's Housing Options team. The manager was very supportive of the Housing First service, and as a result of them keeping regular contact and sharing positive news stories, the manager started to share updates with their internal networks and became a champion of Housing First. The Housing First team gradually noticed a change in attitude from other Housing Options staff including a kinder tone of voice.

For one older Housing First resident, staff recognised that it might be beneficial to involve a specialist older person's service in their support network, but it proved difficult to persuade services to work with the resident due to the perceived risk around addiction and mental health. The Housing First team used their contacts within the Housing Options team to invite an older person's service to join a multi-disciplinary team meeting, where support and safety planning would be discussed. Following this meeting, the service agreed to accept the referral. The resident now has a support worker from the older person's service who has become an integral part of their support network.

A strategic approach

Tips from managers and commissioners

- There are often systemic blockers for Housing First residents and teams, and it is important that there is an open channel of communication to discuss these issues. Invite staff to share system barriers and problem solve together with your senior colleagues and other stakeholders.
- Securing buy-in for your Housing First service is key and it is often effective to jointly commission Housing First services across a number of sectors such as Health, Social Care, Police and Housing. Homelessness is everybody's business and Housing First is an opportunity for collaboration.
- Create a cross-sector steering group to work strategically and support operational delivery.
- Housing First should be included in the homelessness strategy of all Local Authorities² – if it is not then talk to your cabinet member for Housing.
- Where there are strategic meetings, forums and boards, ask for Housing First to be included on the agenda so that systemic barriers can be discussed in collaboration and with strategic governance.

- Most Housing First residents will be vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and neglect and should be known to safeguarding teams. Housing First teams should attend Safeguarding Adults Boards (SAB) meetings.
- Develop a charter with partners to agree key principles for working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage and use the charter to hold services to account for their actions.
- Endeavour to offer cross-sector reflective practice and training.

Further information

Housing First England

www.hfe.homeless.org.uk

Housing First England: Guidance for Support Providers (pages 15-17)

www.hfe.homeless.org.uk/resource/guidance-toolkits

SHP: Team Around Me - strengths-based model for holding multi-agency meetings

www.shp.org.uk/news/team-around-me-enabling-people-experiencing-multiple-disadvantage-to-take-control-of-their-own-support

1. www.hfe.homeless.org.uk/resource/principles-housing-first

2. Support for Rough Sleepers, Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, February 2018



What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

Let's end homelessness together

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