



RESEARCH



homeless link



Understanding the implementation of Housing First in England

Housing First England, November 2018

Abstract

This report presents findings from a survey and interviews with Housing First services across England, which indicates significant variability in how these services are designed and delivered. While all Housing First services share the same core philosophy and principles, a single English model of Housing First cannot be identified. This report looks at the current picture of Housing First in England and explores the different approaches in the development and delivery of services. This report will be particularly useful for those looking to develop a new or existing Housing First service.

Housing First England

Homeless Link's Housing First England project was created to promote development, and support Housing First services across England. The project aims to increase and sustain the use of Housing First in England (where appropriate for a specific client group) and promote activities that focus on leadership, research, and supporting practice.

Housing First England is jointly funded by Lankelly Chase and Comic Relief.

<https://hfe.homeless.org.uk>

Acknowledgements

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- ACTION Lincs, delivered by P3
- Cambridgeshire CEA, delivered by Cambridgeshire Local Authority
- Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First, delivered by Shelter
- Hammersmith and Fulham Housing First, delivered by St Mungo's
- North Tyneside Housing First, delivered by Home Group

Contents

Understanding the implementation of Housing First in England	1
Abstract	2
Contents	3
Introduction	4
Chapter 1: The picture of Housing First in England	6
Chapter 2: The development of Housing First services in England	13
Chapter 3: Different approaches to delivering Housing First in England	16
Chapter 4: Five case studies of Housing First services in England.....	23
Case study 1: ACTion Lincs.....	23
Case Study 2: Hammersmith & Fulham Housing First (HFHF)	27
Case Study 3: Inspiring Change Manchester	31
Case Study 4: Counting Every Adult (CEA) Cambridgeshire.....	34
Case Study 5: North Tyneside Housing First.....	38
Conclusion and key learning.....	42

Introduction

Background

Housing First is an international evidence-based approach that uses independent, stable housing as a stepping stone to allow individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage to begin recovery and move away from homelessness. Housing First provides intensive, flexible, and open-ended support and existing evidence has shown that it successfully ends homelessness for at least eight out of every ten people across Europe.¹

Housing First, as developed in 1992 by Sam Tsemberis within Pathways to Housing in New York, is based on a core philosophy that is applied across all international Housing First services. In England, this philosophy is built on the principles for Housing First in England:²

1. People have a right to a home
2. Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed
3. Housing and support are separated
4. Individuals have choice and control
5. An active engagement approach is used
6. The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations
7. There is a harm reduction approach

Unlike other supported housing models, with Housing First, individuals do not need to prove that they are ready for independent housing or progress through a series of accommodation and treatment services. There are no conditions in place, other than a willingness to maintain a tenancy. Besides facilitating access to accommodation, Housing First is designed to provide long-term, open-ended and intense support to help people with their ongoing needs.

Research suggests that the more closely services adhere to these principles, the better the outcomes for residents will be.³ Internationally however, the principles are practised in various ways within different contexts. For instance, in countries with minimal state welfare provision, Housing First services may have a greater need to employ various support specialists using an 'Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)' approach. Conversely, when operating in countries with adequate state welfare support, staff are more likely to play a 'navigating' role to support residents to access existing community services, known as 'Intensive Case Management (ICM)'. Therefore, although Housing First services across the world will be underpinned by the same core philosophies, evidence suggests that varying delivery models and approaches have developed. Other studies have highlighted the importance that services develop interventions to suit local conditions and to meet the needs of specific target groups.⁴

¹ Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) The Case for Housing First in the European Union: A Critical Evaluation of Concerns about Effectiveness *European Journal of Homelessness*, 7(2), 21-41

² Homeless Link, (2016), Housing First in England: the principles.

https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Housing%20First%20in%20England_The%20Principles.pdf

³ Ibid Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013)

⁴ Johnson, G., Parkinson, S. and Parsell, C. (2012) Policy shift or program drift? Implementing Housing First in Australia

https://www.ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/2064/AHURI_Final_Report_No184_Policy_shift_or_program_drift_Implementing_Housing_First_in_Australia.pdf

Housing First England

The principles are operationalised differently in the English context, where there exists a very different welfare system and housing market from both the US and the rest of Europe. An evaluation of nine Housing First services in England found that, with only one exception, while projects were adopting the core philosophy of Housing First and looked similar to some of the European versions, they were less closely related to the original US models in practice.⁵

To date, there has been a lack of research exploring the nature, operation and development of Housing First services in England. This research project aims to address this gap in literature by providing an overview of current Housing First provision in England and exploring variations in the delivery of services. The research is underpinned by the following three key questions:

- What is the current picture of Housing First in England?
- How do different models of Housing First develop?
- What are the differences in how Housing First services are delivered?

Methodology

The above questions were explored via the following two key methods of data collection:

- A survey of 28 Housing First services between July and September 2017, representing an 88% response rate among active Housing First services at the time of data collection. Questions addressed the following key topics: capacity, funding, needs of residents, support provision, and forms of housing used.
- In-depth case studies of five services that represented a range of delivery approaches. The case studies included interviews with frontline staff, commissioners and key partners.

Fidelity to principles of Housing First

As part of the case study selection process, all potential sites were asked to self-assess how their service reflected the Housing First England principles. Four of the five participating services completed a self-assessment form to demonstrate how they adhered to each of the seven principles.

Report structure

Drawing on evidence from the survey, Chapter 1 presents an outline of current Housing First provision in England. Chapter 2 draws on findings from the case studies to explore the factors that have contributed to the development of Housing First services in England. Chapter 3 discusses the different approaches to delivering Housing First in England and Chapter 4 presents five case studies of services currently operating in England. The report concludes with key learning points to inform the development of Housing First services.

⁵ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) Housing First in England. An Evaluation of Nine Services.

<https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2015/Housing%20First%20England%20Report%20February%202015.pdf>

Chapter 1: The picture of Housing First in England

The following Chapter uses the survey findings from September 2017 to explore current Housing First provision in England, addressing the scale and capacity of the sector, service provision, funding options, and housing used.

Key findings (as of September 2017)

- Housing First England can support approximately 350 individuals across 32 services.⁶
- Over the time they have been running, 395 individuals have been supported.⁷
- Housing First England supports people with multiple and complex needs.
- 50% of the residents had been homeless for 3-9 years, 17% had been homeless for more than 10 years.
- 61% of the services draw on social housing for accommodation, 57% source accommodation from the private sector, and 39% of the services source accommodation from multiple sources.
- Most services are still relatively new: 37% are in their first year of operation.

The scale of provision

At the time of the research, Housing First England identified 32 Housing First services across the country. The responding services (n=28) have a combined capacity for 350 individuals. Services are unevenly distributed across the country, with a concentration of services in the South East (25% of services) and the South West without any known services. Since the services vary in size, the number of services in a region are not indicative of available capacity. Although the largest number of services are based in the South East (25% of the total provision), they can support 44 individuals, while the North West can support 81 individuals across 18% of the services.⁸

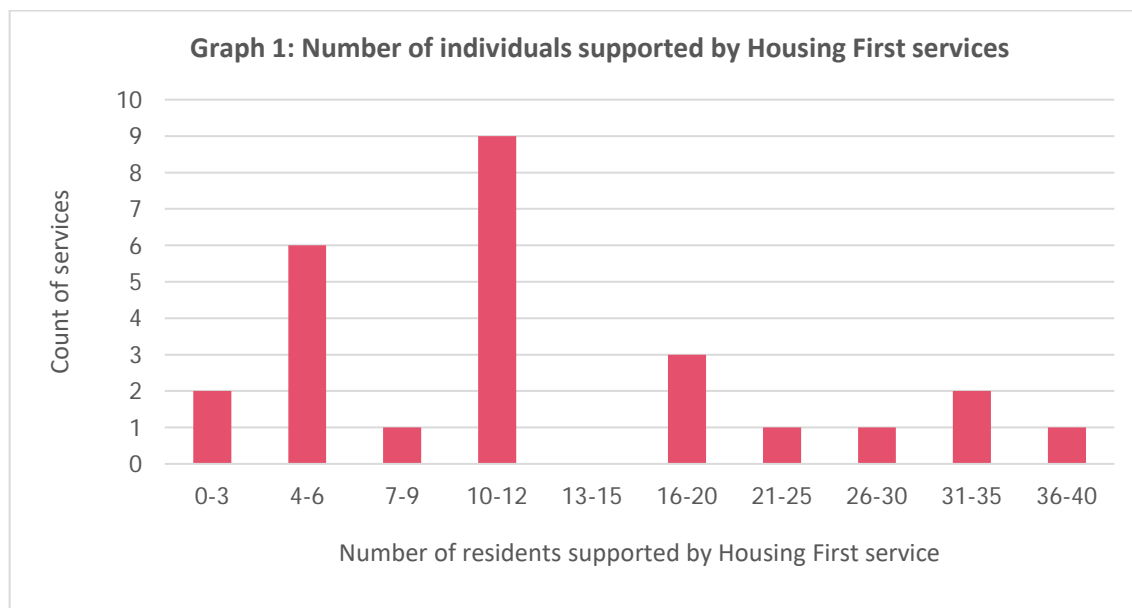
Housing First services are relatively small, with the majority of services supporting between 4-12 individuals at any one time (Graph 1). Homeless Link's online map shows where and how Housing First is currently being used in England <https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/services>, and demonstrates an continued growth in the number of Housing first services.

⁶ This is a medium estimate based on the mid-point of responses to a question that presented a range. The upper and lower ends of this range are: 315 low estimates of capacity; 384 high end of capacity. Based on 26 responses.

⁷ This is a medium estimate based on the mid-point of responses to a question that presented a range. The upper and lower ends of this range are: 330 low estimates of capacity; 460 high end of capacity. Based on 25 responses.

⁸ A map illustrating location and capacity of services by region can be found here

<https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/The%20picture%20of%20Housing%20First%20in%20England.pdf>

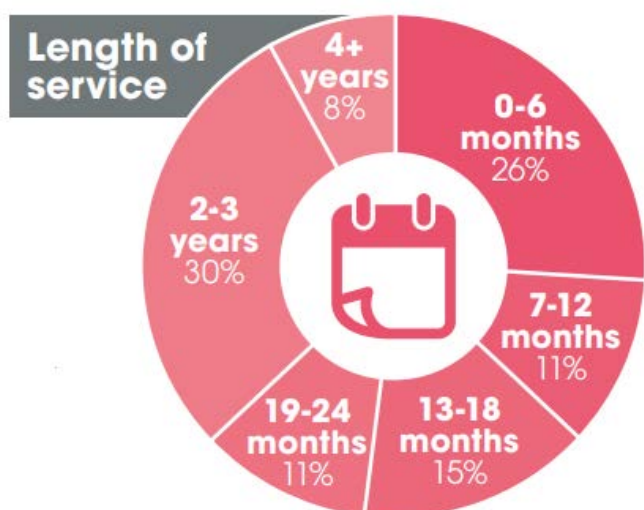


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Development of Housing First services in England

The length of time that services have been in operation, shows the development rate of Housing First in England (Graph 2). Approximately four years ago there were only a relatively small number of services, but the past two years have seen a notable increase in the development of Housing First services in England.

Graph 2: Length of operation of Housing First services



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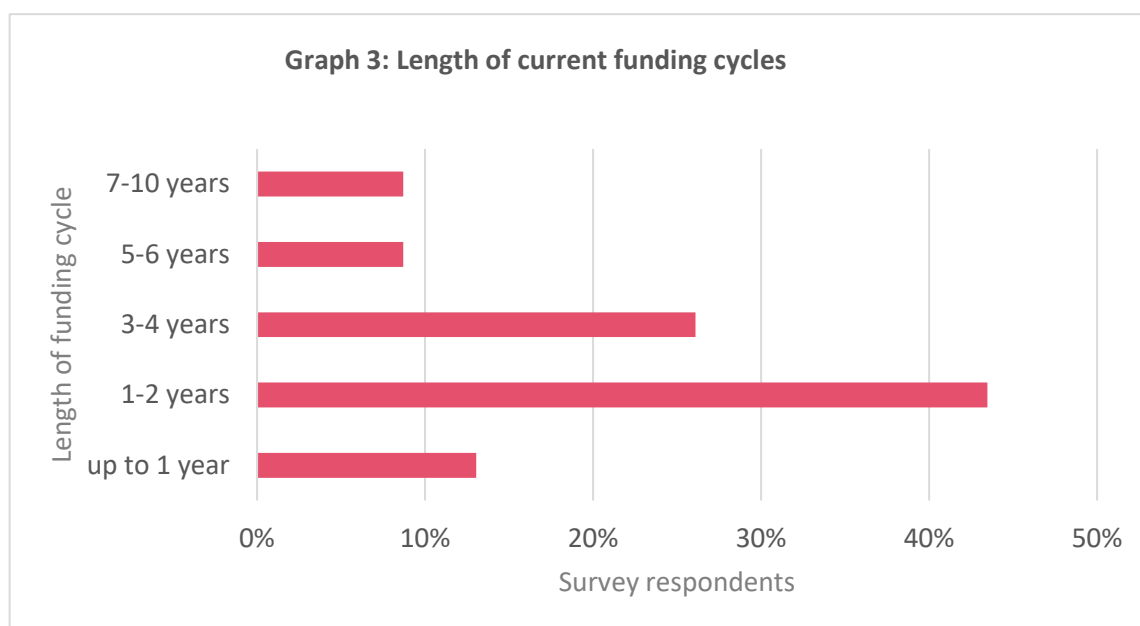
Housing First England

This data shows that – although a large evidence base demonstrates its effectiveness in ending homelessness for individuals facing long-term housing challenges⁹ - Housing First is a relatively new addition to England's response to homelessness, with many services still in their infancy. However, having successfully demonstrated positive outcomes for residents, many services have moved on from a pilot stage to become integrated within existing local homelessness service provisions.

Although Housing First is more established in other countries (e.g. Canada, North America and Finland), there is evidence of a growing momentum of Housing First in England. For example, Housing First was included in the 2017 Conservative and Liberal Democrat election manifestos. In addition, the Government committed £28 million in the 2017 Autumn budget to fund three Housing First pilots in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and the West Midlands, and Housing First is included in the Government's 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy.¹⁰ These developments show that Housing First is gaining recognition as a vital part of England's response to homelessness.

Funding

One of the key principles of Housing First, is that residents are offered open-ended support for as long as is needed. However, this is rarely matched by a corresponding offer of long-term funding for service providers (Graph 3).



N: 23

⁹ Crisis (2017) Ending Rough Sleeping: what works: An international evidence review

https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/238368/ending_rough_sleeping_what_works_2017.pdf

¹⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf

The short-term nature of funding for Housing First is a challenge for many providers who struggle to reconcile their commitment to long-term support for residents with short funding cycles. Homeless Link's research on the future funding of Housing First services explores this issue in more detail and asks how we can move towards more sustainable funding for services.¹¹

Target Group

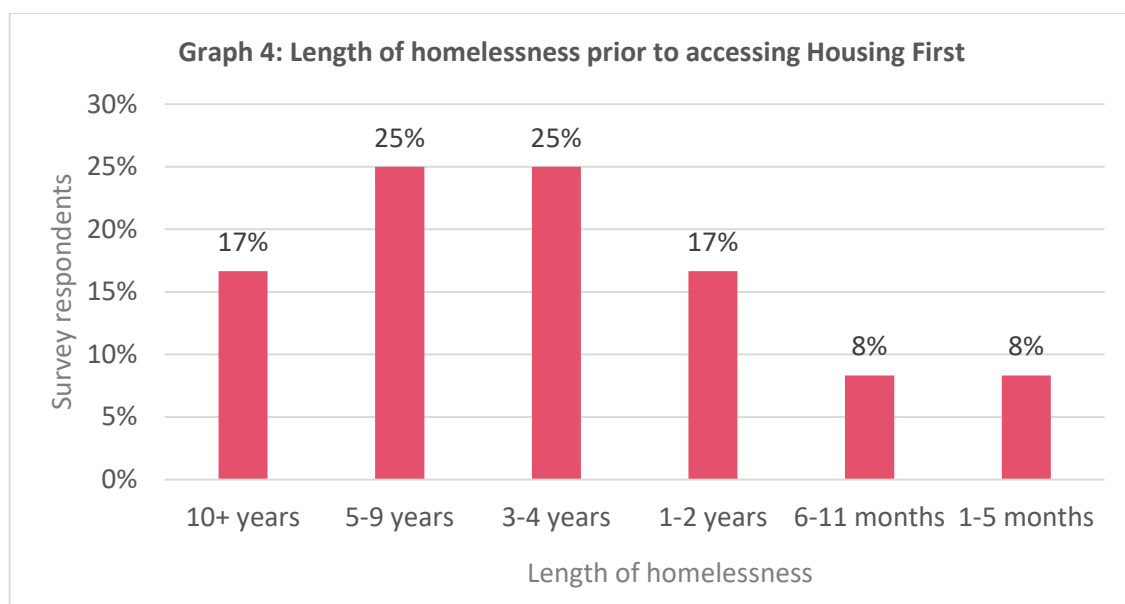
Whilst recognising that each individual is unique, and will have their own characteristics and experiences, findings suggest that people accessing Housing First services in England have similar support needs. Housing First services in England specifically target the group of people that international evidence has shown Housing First to have the most success with: those with long-term experiences of homelessness, high rates of mental health problems and drug/alcohol misuse, as well as other support needs. The actual needs of the residents upon entry to the services were reported as follows:

- 100% of the services said that 'most' or 'almost all' of their residents had a mental health issue, either diagnosed or undiagnosed
- 96% of services said that 'most' or 'almost all' of their residents had a substance misuse issue
- 88% of services reported that 'most' or 'almost all' of their residents had been in contact with the criminal justice system
- 75% of services reported that 'most' or 'almost all' of their residents had experienced violence or abuse
- 67% of services said that 'most' or 'almost all' of their residents had a physical health issue

Services in England mainly target homeless people who have experienced homelessness on a sustained and recurrent basis (Graph 4). 25% of services reported residents to have experienced homelessness from five to nine years, and 17% had experienced homelessness for more than ten years. A small number of services appear to work with individuals with comparably shorter experiences of homelessness, which indicates that Housing First can act as a preventative measure.

¹¹Rice, B. (2018) Investigating the current and future funding of Housing First in England

https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Investigating%20current%20and%20future%20funding%20of%20HFE_Aug18.pdf



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Housing First services most commonly identified their cohort as having experiences of severe and multiple disadvantage,¹² and 17 of the responding services used some definition of multiple and complex needs. 13 services also specifically targeted individuals whose needs were not met by the existing homelessness support system. Experiences of being repeatedly excluded by hostels and other services and spending significant periods of time within a housing pathway without qualifying for move-on, were additional indicators used to determine eligibility. These indicators served as evidence of an individual's suitability for Housing First, rather than fixed access criteria.

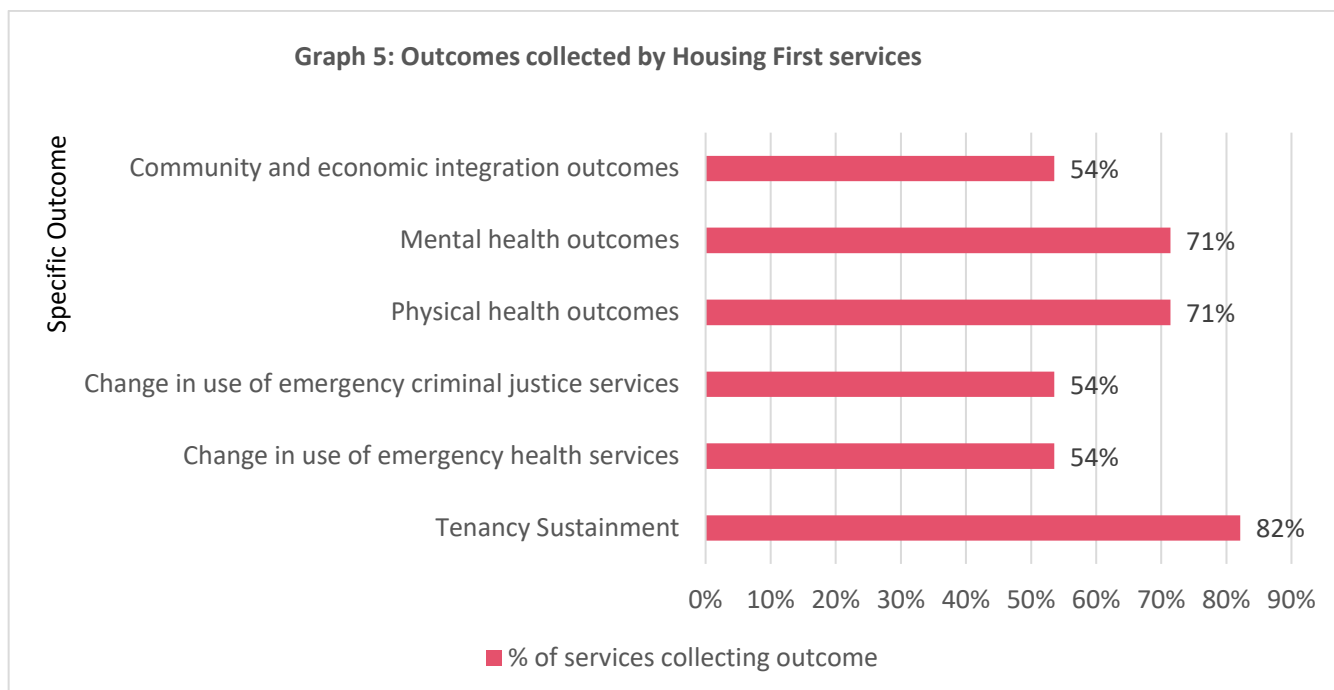
While it may be expected that new Housing First services will support a 'backlog' of people that traditional services have failed, Housing First is not meant to be a 'failure first service'. Requiring people to have been 'failed' by a traditional pathway system before accessing Housing First, would bring unnecessary harm to people and be an inefficient use of resources. In the future, with Housing First services being offered earlier in people's journey, we would hope to see the average length of prior homelessness decline. A recent report commissioned by Crisis and Homeless link explores what is needed to support the implementation of Housing First across Great Britain and provides an estimate of the size of the target cohort for Housing First.¹³ If implemented at scale tomorrow in England, this research provides a high estimate of the cohort as 29,700 people and a lower estimate 16,450.

Outcomes

The survey looked at the areas where Housing First services aim to achieve outcomes, and illustrates the wide range of issues in which services anticipate positive change among the people they support (Graph 5).

¹² Often defined as experiencing two or more of: homelessness, poor mental health, substance misuse, interaction with the criminal justice system. See: Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., Edwards, J., Ford D., Johnsen S., Sosenko F., & Watkins, D. (2015), *Hard Edges: Mapping Severe and Multiple Disadvantage in England*, Lankelly Chase Foundation. Available at: <http://lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Hard-Edges-Mapping-SMD-2015.pdf> About Multiple Needs, MEAM: <http://meam.org.uk/multiple-needs-and-exclusions/>

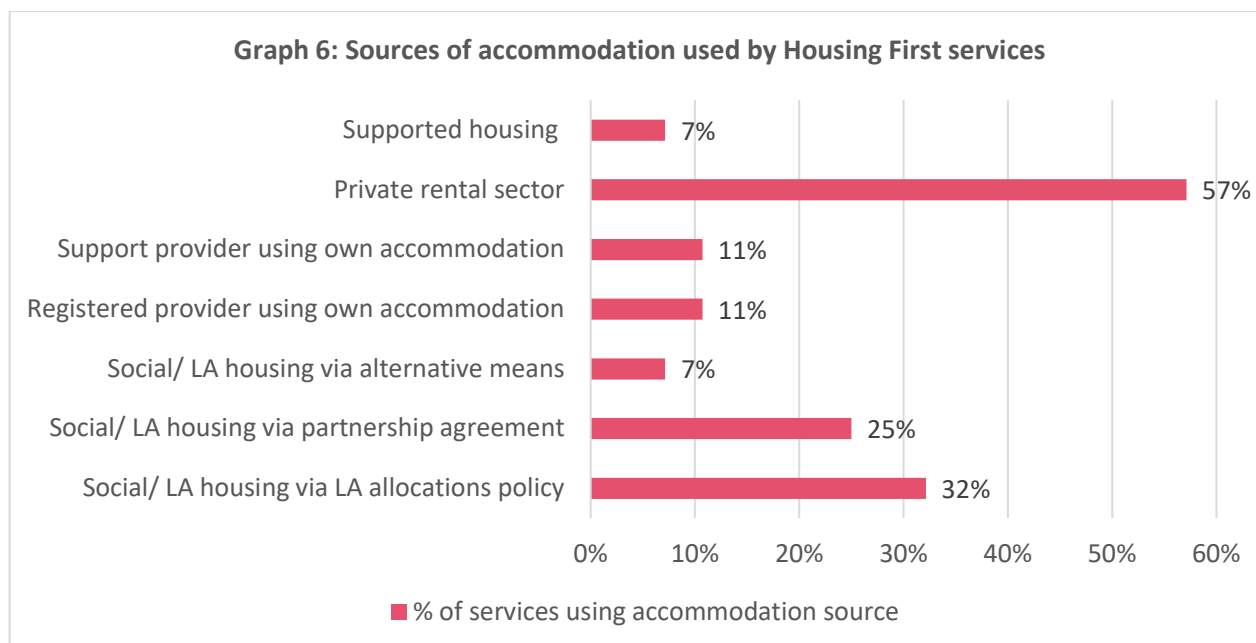
¹³ Imogen Blood and Associates (2018) *Implementing Housing First across England, Scotland and Wales*, https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239451/implementing_housing_first_across_england_scotland_and_wales_2018.pdf



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Housing

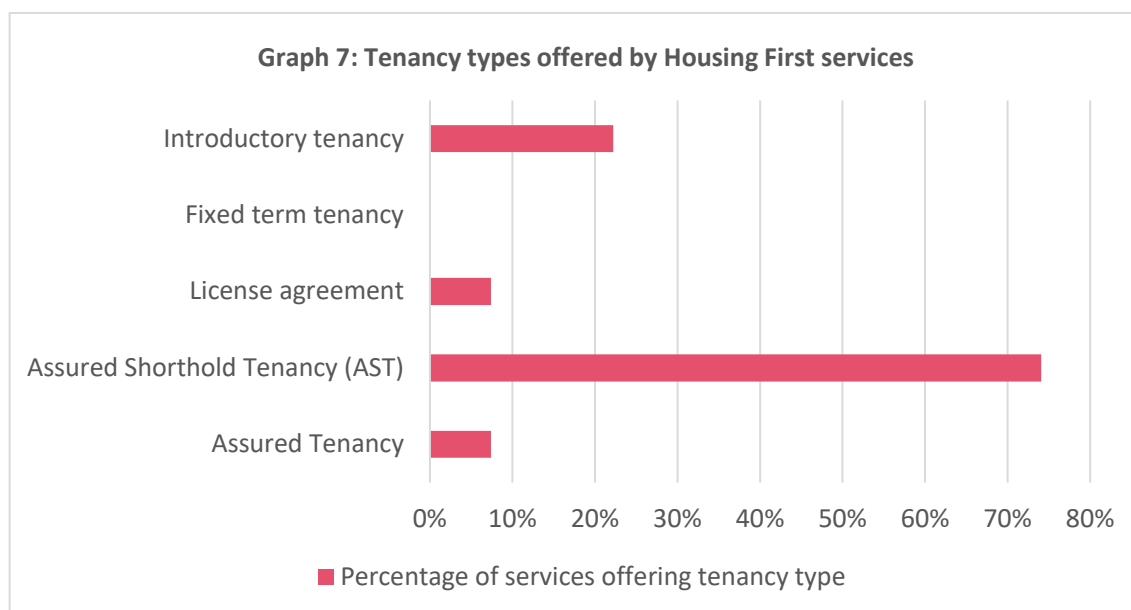
In England accommodation for Housing First is sourced via several sectors, and it is not uncommon for Housing First services to access accommodation from more than one source: 39% of survey respondents used multiple sources of accommodation (Graph 6).



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Housing First services most commonly use social housing accommodation (61%), followed by the private rental sector (PRS) (57%). Most are self-contained scattered site housing (89%), with three services (11%) offering shared accommodation. Although Housing First usually recommends self-contained accommodation,¹⁴ shared accommodation can be a positive option for those who do not want to live alone or have a companion or partner that they want to live with.

Reflecting the key recommendation that Housing First residents should be provided with the same type of tenancy as any tenant, most services help their clients to secure Assured Shorthold Tenancies (74%) (Graph 7).



N: 26

Short-term introductory tenancies for social housing residents are the second most common tenancy (22%). Although these arrangements are often followed by longer-term tenancies, the findings suggest that the use of social housing with Housing First services does not always equate to being granted a long-term tenancy.

Tenancy sustainment

50% of the services reported no evictions and a further 14% of services reported one eviction. It is important to note that Housing First services do not stop working with an individual if they are evicted or have to move from a property. Support will move with the individual; Housing First services continue to work with that person to source new and appropriate accommodation.

As explored above, the findings from the survey indicate that Housing First services can be organised and delivered in many ways. The following chapter explores the variations in more detail, and addresses the development of different models of Housing First as well as their impact on the services provided.

¹⁴ Housing First in England: The principles. Homeless Link, 2017. Available at: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Housing%20First%20in%20England%20The%20Principles.pdf>

Chapter 2: The Development of Housing First services in England

Drawing on findings from five in-depth case studies, this chapter explores the factors that have contributed to the development of Housing First services in England. The following information may be particularly helpful for those considering setting up a Housing First service.

Identifying a need

Housing First services in England have generally been set up on a local level to meet the needs of a group of people with prolonged or recurring experiences of homelessness. This group will usually be 'revolving' around or not engaging with existing homelessness services, while facing particularly acute barriers in accessing drug/alcohol and mental health treatment and other support services. All case study areas identified a lack of existing provision for this cohort, and expressed a desire for an alternative approach:

'We started with the intention of looking at how could we do things differently. We always used the line that we know that traditional models of engagement, traditional services don't work for the most vulnerable. We don't have a model in [area] or we couldn't see models anywhere else, really, that would meet those needs. We really started from that point of view, how different would services need to look? It was from there, then, that we started to look at, well, what would housing look like alongside that?' (Commissioner)

Most Housing First services in England can be understood as having emerged from community movements or local organisations, with either one person or a small group of passionate and dedicated individuals playing a pivotal role in making a case for a Housing First service in their local area. Although there is variation in the lead up to a service becoming operational, case studies suggest it can take between 1-2 years from the initial ideas and conversations to service implementation. Participating services dedicated this time to evidencing the need, learning about the Housing First approach, securing funding, and developing the necessary partnerships (see below).

The role of research

The findings suggest that data and evidence play a key role in the development of Housing First services in England. To identify and demonstrate a need for Housing First, case study participants drew upon a range of sources such as local databases of supported housing providers and data on rough sleepers collected by local outreach services. Services used this quantitative data alongside qualitative data (in the form of individual case studies) to demonstrate an urgent problem of entrenched rough sleeping and people revolving around the hostel system in their local area. This evidence was essential in getting the necessary support from funders, commissioners and external partners:

'Having that evidence base was really, really important. I think without that we wouldn't have managed to get all partners on board in the way that we did. It was really powerful ... that evidence actually jumped out in terms of the numbers ... looking at those numbers and thinking, you can't argue with them.' (Service developer)

Evidence was also important in order to understand the needs, circumstances and histories of the client group that would be supported by the service, including information on individual's wider health and social care needs. This knowledge ensured that an effective service would be designed by, for example, identifying and building the partnerships that would be necessary to meet the needs of their client group:

'Understand your client group. Understand what you're dealing with. That has been key to this. If you don't understand your client group, if you don't know who you're dealing with, how can you design a service that meets their needs.' (Service developer)

Lastly, services also spent time familiarising themselves with the underpinning philosophy and practical implementation of the Housing First approach. This process usually involved visiting other Housing First services, engaging with existing evidence and research,¹⁵ and/or taking part in further training and development opportunities (such as the Transatlantic Exchange Programme¹⁶).

Adopting a collaborative approach

Most participating services were developed and designed through a collaborative approach. Joint-working between the local authority, local homelessness service providers and wider stakeholders before a bid goes out to tender, was highlighted as being particularly important:

'Partnership means more than the pathway. A partnership means developing something in collaboration, and that's across your statutory and voluntary sector services, you cannot just commission a model like this ... you've got to use the expertise of the people that are delivering the services.' (Service developer)

Group consultations and discussions within multi-agency groups for people with complex needs were particularly instrumental within the early development of the services that were embedded within existing networks to support people experiencing multiple disadvantage (see case studies 3, 4 and 5). The MEAM¹⁷ and Fulfilling Lives¹⁸ areas were particularly well-placed to expand upon existing work with local organisations and services supporting those facing multiple disadvantage:

'It came off the back of the work we'd done with [local area] MEAM pilot ... we were part of a number of different organisations that would feed into MEAM. Sit around the table. Talk about these really complex chaotic people and look for solutions to some of the problems that they were facing.' (Senior staff member)

Developing partnerships

The findings suggest that the effectiveness of the Housing First services depends largely on the support of external organisations. All participating Housing First services engaged with a wide group of partners and external services, and the findings suggest that partnership working should be done early on in the development stages. Partnerships were built with a range of services, including (but not limited to): housing providers, mental health services, drug and alcohol services, the police, local GPs and the council's Anti-social Behaviour Team.

¹⁵ For resources and evidence relating to Housing First see <https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/resources>

¹⁶ <https://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/national-projects/transatlantic-practice-exchange/about-exchange>

¹⁷ The Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) helps local areas design and deliver better coordinated services for people with multiple needs <http://meam.org.uk/>

¹⁸ The Fulfilling Lives Programme funds partnerships of local organisations to work together to improve services for people with multiple needs <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/england/multiple-and-complex-needs>

'If you were advising Housing First services setting up, is one of the key things. I'd have that conversation before you even roll it out in the borough. Going out to them, explaining it, getting them involved ... I think those conversations with any external services are extremely important. GPs. Anyone just knowing this client is living in their own flat but they're still receiving very high support.' (Front-line staff member)

Some case study participants reported a misconception among external agencies that once Housing First residents were accommodated, all needed support would come from the Housing First team. Interviewees emphasised the importance of informing external services of the nature, aims and purpose of Housing First, and reported that this on-going partnership work took significantly more time than what they had originally anticipated:

'Sometimes clients refuse to engage full stop. But the amount of work that went on with everybody else around them and to keep people up to date still constituted a full-time job really.' (Service provider)

Defining a cohort

Defining a cohort of eligible people was important within the development of Housing First services. Individuals would usually be identified via one of two key processes: i) people already known to commissioners and/or providers as ideal candidates for Housing First; or ii) analysis of existing data such as local rough sleeping data, council records and supported housing records. Where Housing First develops as part of an existing programme for those with complex needs (such as within the MEAM or Fulfilling Lives areas), eligibility may be restricted to those supported by participating projects.

Feedback from the case study areas suggest that demand for Housing First services will far surpass available capacity, and external partners may seek to refer people onto the service who do not fit the criteria. To manage these challenges, the projects stressed the importance of early communication with external services around who is eligible. Findings suggest that Housing First services may wish to continue to review their cohort identification processes once they become operational:

'And I guess it's probably an extra safeguarding, checking that we're making sure that it's for the right people still, so that we're still keeping it both true to what we think it's there for, and also, that the right people are getting that offer. I suppose because it is quite a specialised offer with a lot of high intensity in terms of support and resources, and we need to make sure it's the right people who are benefitting from it.' (Service provider)

Engaging people with lived experience

Some services emphasised the importance of involving people with lived experience of homelessness and complex needs when designing and developing Housing First services. This can help inform who should be involved in partnership and what services are needed to meet people's needs. For example, following input from people with lived experience, one case study incorporated peer support as an integral part of their Housing First service:

'The work we did with people with lived experience and multiple needs, homelessness, quite often what we heard was approach was as important as resource. And peer support, advocacy is quite often not available and people felt, 'Actually, if it was somebody who'd walked in my shoes in some way, that would be really useful.' (Senior staff member, Housing First provider)

Chapter 3: Different Approaches to Delivering Housing First in England

All Housing First services in England follow seven key principles as adapted from the original Pathways to Housing approach (see introduction). Although the principles serve as an underpinning philosophy for Housing First services, they do not dictate operational specifics to delivering services. Findings from the surveys and case studies show that Housing First services in England vary in how these principles are operationalised and put into practice.

Building on findings from the case studies, this chapter explores the various ways Housing First is delivered across certain key components of service delivery including: housing, support, funding and partnership building. The discussion below may be particularly helpful for those seeking further information on the operational details and decisions involved with setting up a Housing First service.

Housing

Each participating service aimed to create new options for those facing significant barriers to accessing housing. Housing First residents are often excluded from social housing because of previous anti-social behaviour or rent arrears. The unaffordability of PRS accommodation presents a further barrier, with landlords being reluctant to rent to this cohort of people (who are often considered to be high risk).

Social Housing

All case studies used an element of social housing within their service. Access to social housing requires flexibility from allocations teams and housing providers: in each participating case study, landlords agreed to take on residents who would usually not be eligible for their housing. One provider asked every local authority in the district to review their allocation policies and consider whether exceptions could be made for certain individuals who were barred from their housing registers.

Sometimes an individual housing provider would agree to support the project, and at other times housing would be accessed via an area-wide approach to modify local allocation policies in order to fast-track access to housing for this client group. This type of agreement takes time and effort to get people on board, especially in cases where a number of housing providers are involved:

‘Certainly, we had to, basically, say that the rules and the allocation policy in [our area] would be bent.’ (Commissioner)

‘It took a long time. It was more of a hearts and minds thing. It started off on a very small level, but there were conversations for a long time about, ‘Is this what we want to do? How do we manage the risks within it?’ (Local housing access board)

The use of social housing involves both challenges and advantages. Some services spent their first months in operation trying to secure housing, resulting in delays for those accepted into the service, and potentially negatively affecting the client/support worker relationship. When using social housing it can also be more difficult to move people on if there are issues with that particular tenancy for the resident.

The make-up of social housing can also bring unexpected challenges. In some areas, because of the scarcity of one-bedroom accommodation, those qualifying for a one-bedroom property through the traditional pathway

usually have high needs, meaning that Housing First residents may be housed in an area with a large concentration of people with high and complex needs. Some services however turned this particular challenge to their advantage, and found that allotting properties to people with similar profiles as general needs tenants - but with intensive support available to them - could be seen by landlords as a benefit of providing units to Housing First:

'In a way, it's more supportive because you know you've got a go-to person that you've already met. If you do have any issues, the tenant and I both know who that person is ... By the stage they are housed by us, they have already got to know their support people. They know what does and doesn't work for them, what they do well, what they struggle with. You have a history, already, when you get to meet them.' (Social landlord)

Despite the challenges, services reported clear benefits in using social housing for Housing First which, compared to PRS accommodation, provided better standards of accommodation, greater security of tenure, and additional services from social landlords:

'We are just better landlords, aren't we? I'd say that, but obviously you have got a long-term tenancy ... We are going to do repairs. Our rents are cheaper in the longer-term. Actually, if you can go through the entire journey into employment, then you have got more chance of sustaining that. I am not going to end your tenancy at the end of next week and serve you with a Section 21.' (Local Housing Access Board)

Private Rented Sector (PRS) Accommodation

Compared to social housing, PRS accommodation has some important benefits, such as flexibility to move people on where necessary and, in some cases, faster access to accommodation. For these reasons, case study services felt they could also benefit from having access to some PRS accommodation and - where not already in place – aimed to include it within their service. Some services reported that using a mix of housing tenures when delivering Housing First services can enhance resident choice:

'That's one of our biggest areas of learning. Although our intention was absolutely right to have social housing, and you'd think we were doing the right thing, actually, we need a greater range of options for people. That will have to include, in the future, the private rented sector.' (Commissioner)

The use of PRS housing obviously has its limitations, such as insecurity of tenure and, at times, poor quality accommodation. Accessing PRS can be difficult because of structural barriers such as a general reluctance of landlords to accept tenants with complex needs, fees and deposits, and a lack of accommodation at the Local Housing Allowance rate.

Case study participants emphasised a need for flexibility and creativity when negotiating the challenges of sourcing housing. One organisation arranged access to the PRS by leasing properties and then renting directly to residents.

'We will explore several options. That might be a high-needs clearing house property, there might be properties that we have that might be suitable, it might be out of borough, it might be a different pathway. I am very, very, keen that we are creative with that, we do think outside of the obvious – not just back into the pathway because they can't cope in their own home. How do we make this tenancy work for this person? It is that never giving up, I think that's really key for the Housing First approach – and the worker.' (Service provider)

Providers using their own accommodation

An approach that has helped bypass many of the challenges discussed above, is to embed Housing First services into an organisation that provides both support and accommodation (see case study 5). This approach can incentivise landlords to make tenancies work and gives greater flexibility in moving people within the housing stock. Some services felt that the need to move people much more frequently than originally anticipated was a key learning point in their Housing First pilot:

'What we find often with the MEAM type of client is that we manage to get them housed somewhere, they will be fleeing, or moving away certainly from, you know, whether it's peers or partners, but somebody who's a risk to them. Then they tell them where they are, and then do you have to move again? When that's a local authority tenancy that's really difficult. [Provider] are so much more flexible with that, "So, this isn't working. So what can we do?"'
(Commissioner)

Services exploring this approach should however take steps to ensure adherence to Principle 3 (Housing and Support are separated) of the principles for Housing First in England.¹⁹ Research indicates that the more closely services adhere to these principles, the better the outcomes for residents will be.²⁰ Providers delivering both support and accommodation need to consider carefully how support and housing will be separate to ensure that: i) the offer of support stays with the resident if they move out of their property or the tenancy fails; and, ii) that support workers are not put in a challenging position of navigating preferences of their employer and resident.

Funding

Case study services are funded via various sources such as local authority budgets, trusts and foundations, and MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond (SIBs). Most services were not designed to respond to a funding opportunity, but instead the need for a Housing First service was first identified with funding then being sought. Some services expressed concern that payment by results funding could challenge the staff-to-client ratio if outcomes were not achieved:

'Because your model is dependent upon what outcomes you achieve, you then, if you're not hitting those outcomes, then you potentially have to re-profile, which then may potentially have an impact upon the levels of staffing you can provide.' (Senior staff member, Housing First Provider)

Depending on local funding streams, commissioner priorities and existing service provision, services pursued different approaches to obtain funding. Some local authorities took a flexible approach within contracts, allowing new Housing First projects to use existing resources or embed themselves within existing service provision before the start of new funding cycles. Commissioners and developers emphasised the need for creativity and flexibility when setting up a Housing First service:

'Nobody had any new resources, so we all just came to the table with what we've got and then looked at how we could use that differently. So, we had the housing support contracts, so we had to work within the current framework because people had contracts, but since

¹⁹ <https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/principles-housing-first>

²⁰ Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) The Case For Housing First in the European Union: A Critical Evaluation of Concerns about Effectiveness https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2013/np_and_jb.pdf

then obviously we've rewritten those contracts in a big way.' (Local authority, coordinator and commissioner)

Embedding services within existing funding allocations and/or service provisions may allow them to start off relatively quickly. The findings do however suggest that planning a service at the beginning of a commissioning cycle will provide an opportunity to engage with a range of service providers, which is key in understanding the need for the service and to help agencies work together more effectively. Homeless Link's recent report of the current and future funding of Housing First, explores the current funding landscape and how it can be diversified and strengthened in the future.²¹

Support

Housing First support services are typically organised in one of two ways. As explored below, the findings of this study indicate that there is a third distinct hybrid model of Housing First support operating in England, which is defined here as 'Intensive Case Management plus'.

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT): in the ACT model support is provided via multi-disciplinary teams of specialists (e.g. mental health nurse or substance misuse specialists) and other professionals. This approach tends to be used in areas with limited access to wider mainstream support (e.g. health and drugs and alcohol services). This approach is particularly relevant in the United States, where 'welfare state' support is minimal.²²

- Only 7% of the Housing First services in England operate an ACT service (2 respondents) (see case study 1).

Intensive Case Management (ICM): ICM teams look like an intensive floating support service and are found in areas where there is wider support provision. ICM teams act as navigators, supporting their beneficiaries to access and engage with existing mainstream services (when the client is ready). ICM is the model most commonly used in the UK; due to the range of other public services available there is less need, and funding, to provide the ACT model.²³ Housing First caseloads are 5-7 clients to each worker.

- 79% of Housing First services in England apply an ICM approach (22 respondents).

ICM, with enhanced support from coordinated services (ICM plus): This is another model of Housing First support provision that is being used in England. In this approach, support staff operate within established networks of organisations focussing on multiple disadvantage e.g. in MEAM and Fulfilling Lives areas. The service may not have its own specialist workers as in ACT, but it is embedded within broader services that can be drawn upon to provide a wide range of support for residents (see case study 3 and 4).

- 11% of Housing First services in England operate an ICM plus approach (3 respondents)

The benefits and challenges relating to these different support models are discussed below.

²¹ Rice, B. (2018) Investigating the current and future funding of Housing First in England

https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Investigating%20current%20and%20future%20funding%20of%20HFE_Aug18.pdf

²² Homeless Link (2017), Housing First: Guidance for support providers. Available at:

<https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Housing%20First%20Guidance%20for%20Providers.pdf>

²³ Ibid Homeless Link (2017)

Partnerships in practice

As mentioned in the previous chapter, building relationships with other organisations can be considered to be at the heart of the Housing First model:

'I think nearly everything we do is relationship-based. The better we know each other, the more we sit round the table, the more we can talk openly, the more it works out. The more they share the working out, the more people are likely to want to do it. Nearly everything we do is at that model, really.' (Local Housing Access Board)

The findings suggest that coordination with a range of different external services requires careful management, and that this may present certain challenges for Housing First services. The organisation and practical operation of these partnerships depends on a range of factors, such as the extent to which various parties are involved in the early development of Housing First services, and local contextual factors (e.g. the services which exist in an area and any funding cuts they may be experiencing).

Case study areas reported that enhanced relationships with other services not only facilitated access to services for Housing First residents, but also stimulated wider cross-organisational learning and improved understanding of the needs of people with complex needs:

'It's had an impact on not just our work with [Housing First] which, as we've explained, a lot of the stuff that we do now, we just weren't doing before as an organisation. But, I think the thinking seeps into everything else you're doing as well.' (Partner)

Findings from the case studies indicate that Housing First services in England establish partnerships with other services in three main ways:²⁴

1. Clear, specific partnerships with local services

This approach usually involves a small number of services working together within various commissioning arrangements, such as directly contracting a service to work with Housing First clients. This arrangement was usually associated with the ACT model of support (see case study 1), but was also used by services using the model of ICM plus.

In areas where this approach has been put into practice, Housing First residents seem to have particularly good access to external services as well as targeted assistance to ensure they are receiving tailored and personalised support:

'Having [seconded roles] within the team that can facilitate the route into those services, I think that is pivotal to the work that we're doing with our clients. [Staff member] is able to see the [local drug and alcohol service] system, to then be able to say, "Oh, an appointment's been booked in and it's at, such and such a time," or can go directly to workers, because he knows those workers to be able to speak to.' (Staff member, Housing First provider)

²⁴ These approaches are not mutually exclusive, two services used a mixture of the first and second approach.

2. Housing First embedded in wider network of services

In this approach the Housing First service is embedded into existing networks that support people experiencing multiple disadvantage, where services will work together to meet the needs of excluded individuals (see case study 3, 4 and 5). This approach seems to offer flexible and regular access to services, and helps keep wider organisations accountable for the services they have committed to provide. This arrangement is generally adopted by ICM plus services:

'I think because MEAM was established and everybody signed up to it, we found it a lot easier in [region] than I have anywhere else. A lot of that flexibility and a lot of that buy-in was already in place by the time we got to Housing First.' (Staff member, Housing First provider)

How regularly external services engage in network-related activities will affect Housing First residents' access to treatment and support. Where in one case study the mental health service did not attend the network meetings, access to these services for Housing First residents remained a challenge.

3. Partnerships led by Housing First support worker

Within this approach the Housing First service has no specific partnerships with other external providers. Coordinating support from other services largely depends on the relationships that the individual Housing Support worker creates. This approach is most commonly seen in services with a ICM approach to support. Case study findings suggest that services using this approach may face challenges in engaging with external organisations, with certain services remaining difficult to access.

Within this approach the support worker's knowledge of the local area and his/her ability to build relationships with external organisations will be especially crucial to the project's success. Regardless of how support is organised, Housing First services emphasised that relationship building is key to negotiating access to wider services. It is therefore important that project resources – in terms of staff time - are allocated accordingly and that steps are taken to build partnerships at a strategic level. Some case studies reported Housing First staff can use their specialist skills and experience to build mutually supportive relationships with different organisations:

'We've got such good relationships, and because we help out so much. Like this morning my first half an hour was giving advice to someone about someone who is not one of my clients. We give so much advice to services; they know they can just call us, and we'll help as best we can. So I think that way we get that back with certain things.' (Service provider).

Size of Service

The size of Housing First services in England varies considerably (see chapter 1). Case study services highlighted certain challenges of operating a small service, such as in relation to building the necessary partnerships with external services and ensuring that people are aware of and willing to work together with the Housing First service:

'If we could say, "Well we've got a caseload of however many clients. Can we make an arrangement with the drug service to do more satellite support or whatever?" ... There aren't really formalised arrangements, I don't think, with those services, which would be quite useful, actually.' (Frontline worker)

Services reported that when operating with only one staff member, residents' choice of support worker will be limited, which may in turn be problematic in certain situations (e.g. where it is more appropriate for a woman to have a female support worker). Operating with only one member of staff can also jeopardise the continuity of support if a staff member is ill, on holiday or moves on from the service. Continuity of support is an essential part of building trusting staff/client relationships:

'In that period between [support worker] departure and my starting, I think that fed into her narrative of being abandoned by services. That led to a bit of a downward spiral, perhaps, I think, of disengaging with other services, and then becoming more chaotic ... I think if we had another member of staff so it wasn't just one, that would help with the continuity of support.' (Frontline worker)

For services with only one support worker, the Housing First project could possibly be embedded within a larger service, which would then increase the service's access to other resources such as management and supervision structures (see case study 2).

Chapter 4: Five Case Studies of Housing First services in England

Case study 1: ACTion Lincs

ACTion Lincs (Assertive Community Treatment in Lincolnshire) is a Housing First project launched in September 2017 that is run by a local homelessness service provider, P3. The project supports 120 people with complex needs across both rural and urban areas in Lincolnshire, and is one of the few Housing First services in England adopting an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) support team. The service is also unique in being funded by a Social Impact Bond.

Context

The ACTion Lincs service was developed in response to the significant increase in rough sleeping across Lincolnshire, where the estimated number of rough sleepers increased by nearly 200% between 2012 and 2017.²⁵ A large number of rough sleepers were concentrated in Lincoln City Centre, where a night shelter and other services are available, which increased the visibility of homelessness. Commissioners were aware of the growing problem, and local homelessness organisations voiced concerns that the existing response was inadequate.

Homelessness organisations also reported that people using their services were presenting with increased severity and complexity of needs, and faced significant barriers in accessing housing and other external services. Lincoln City is a university city, and private sector landlords generally rent their properties at a significantly higher rate than the area's Local Housing Allowance Rate (set at £56 for a shared room). P3 staff reported that these factors altogether formed the 'perfect storm,' and generated commitment from all partners to address the situation. A key challenge for this service was setting up a regional-wide but district-specific adaptation of the Housing First model; it was reported that there are slight operational differences for each district and client.

Service Development

The initial idea for Housing First in this area came from a P3 staff member who visited Housing First services abroad as part of the Transatlantic Exchange Programme,²⁶ and felt inspired to try something similar. P3 and the local authority then worked in close cooperation to design a Housing First service underpinned by an ACT support model. Collecting evidence played a key role within the development of the service, with The Avenue²⁷ providing in-depth data on the level of entrenched rough sleeping, and the needs of individuals affected. This evidence also played a key role in getting the necessary partner organisations on board:

'This room, we spent hours and hours and hours locked in this room and working through that data, but we had such a strong evidence base. We'd never submitted a bid with such a strong evidence base before that.' (Service developer)

²⁵ <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/rough-sleeping/rough-sleeping-explore-data>

²⁶ <https://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/national-projects/transatlantic-practice-exchange/about-exchange>

²⁷ The Avenue is an online database used by all housing support providers in Lincolnshire

Because getting external partners on board would be key to the project's success, the developers also explored the barriers that wider agencies faced in supporting people with complex needs:

'There was a real disconnect, a misunderstanding about each other, so we've done a lot of work on that ... there was a real feeling that people would go into housing via maybe the housing register or other routes and then just be left. I'm talking about your mental health, substance-misuse services ... there was a real reluctance from those partners to actually engage with the most vulnerable and complex cases because they were saying "Well why should we? We're just left holding the cases".' (Service developer)

This then played a key role in developing streamlined treatment pathways for the Housing First cohort (discussed below).

Funding

This service is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government's Entrenched Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond (SIB) and is contracted by the county council. This is the first SIB Housing First service in the county and represents a different way of commissioning and delivering services:

'Traditional funding opportunities usually create that traditional culture of going out to the market to see what it can offer, you will always get the same type of thing.' (Local authority)

The development stage involved some careful negotiation with the MHCLG on the needs and circumstances of the client group and the implications for how the service would operate practically. For example, the initial intention that self-certificates would be required to evidence every outcome, was withdrawn on the basis of a more accurate understanding of the client group. Interview participants stressed the importance of involving services experienced in homelessness and in working with people with high and complex needs when developing a Housing First service:

'If you're going to develop a model that genuinely leads to that service transformation or change, we as local authorities do not have that expertise. We absolutely don't. If we just sat as local authorities and tried to write that bid we wouldn't have been successful because we needed P3's expertise in terms of homelessness, dealing with that client group, but also around social investment ... if we hadn't had worked with them from the start and it'd been a partnership, we wouldn't be where we are now. I'm absolutely certain of that.' (Local authority)

Rather than go out to full tender, the local authority set up a contract variation with P3, who were considered to have the local knowledge and experience to take the project forward.

Housing

In response to the challenges faced in securing housing, the service uses a wide mixture of tenures and housing arrangements. With the PRS reported to be unaffordable in 6 of the 7 districts, P3 asked local authorities with available housing stock to allocate units to the project. These local authorities preferred not to make exemptions for their housing register but did agree to lease accommodation directly to P3. In non-stock holding districts, P3 formed similar leasing arrangements with housing associations. In two districts, PRS accommodation is used but this is relatively rare due to high rental costs. In a few areas Housing First clients are housed directly by the local authority.

Support

This service is unique because it is one of the few Housing First services in England that operates with an ACT support model, aiming to bring services to the individual rather than expecting the individual to go to the services.

Local evidence on rough sleeping was used to build partnerships and secure two secondments into ACTION Lincs: an experienced local mental health nurse and a substance misuse worker. These staff members manage their own caseloads from within the Housing First cohort and continue to receive training and supervision from the organisation from where they have been seconded. The availability of these roles within the Housing First team brings knowledge and experience that benefits the wider team and provides rapid pathways into the wider mental health and substance misuse provision.

The mental health nurse can immediately assess any resident and make recommendations directly to the Mental Health Trust. This process bypasses the standard triage system that often takes time and has historically been difficult to access for those experiencing multiple disadvantage. The substance misuse worker can also bypass the regular pathways and conduct assessments with residents and then book them in directly with a worker at the mainstream service. These steps eliminate the need for residents to attend group sessions and assessments (which P3 had identified as a barrier to access). The resultant close links between the services of these seconded positions have led to an agreement with other staff within the Mental Health Trust and substance misuse services to work more flexibly with the wider Housing First client group by, for example, offering outreach services.

Key Partnerships

Partnership working stands at the heart of this service. For example, P3 has worked closely with local authority leads to address barriers that residents face, for example, by reaching an agreement on social care assessments taking place within 28 days:

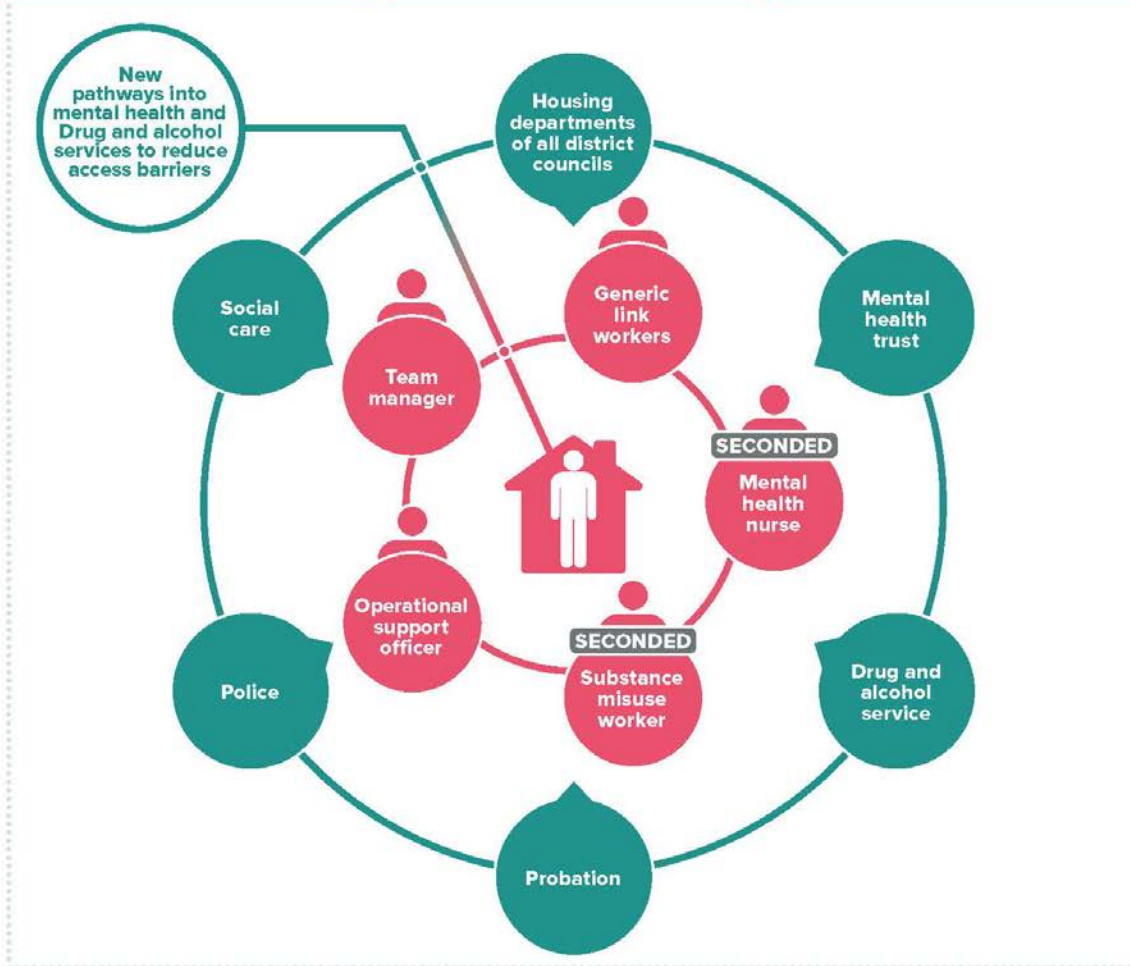
'It's easy to band the 'partnership' word around isn't it? ... What the SIB has done, for the first time I think in Lincolnshire, is bring something to the table because it brought an opportunity to do things differently that was resourced.' (Service Developer)

The Police are another important partner in this service. Once operational, the service realised that County Lines²⁸ were particularly prevalent in the local area, and that Housing First clients were particularly vulnerable to this specific form of exploitation. As a result, the service has recently developed to include an operational support officer directly within the team. The operational support officer builds close relationships with the residents, whilst putting plans in place to ensure they are protected and safeguarded.

²⁸ <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/832-county-lines-violence-exploitation-and-drug-supply-2017/file>

LINCOLNSHIRE
Housing First England ACTION Lincs

<p>LEADERSHIP Steering group/partnerships</p>	<p>HOUSING Social housing, private rented sector and service's own accommodation</p>	<p>FUNDING SIB funded – MHCLG, contract awarded by local authority</p>
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Models for Housing First services

Case Study 2: Hammersmith & Fulham Housing First (HFHF)

Hammersmith and Fulham Housing First is run by St Mungo's, a leading UK homelessness charity and supported housing provider. The service has adopted one of the most common approaches of delivering Housing First; through Intensive Case Management. This case study also provides a good example of the benefits, challenges, and limitations of using social housing.

Context

The service was set up after recognition by the council that *'there was a small but not insignificant number of people who were still not doing well in hostels'* (Commissioner). These were individuals who re-accessed the same hostels in the borough, thereby making it clear that something was not working and highlighting the need for a different approach.

Service Development

A local commissioner first explored the idea of a service in Hammersmith and Fulham after attending a Homeless Link seminar where case studies of existing Housing First services were presented. The commissioner then made a business case to develop the service locally, which involved engaging with existing research and bringing necessary partners on board:

'I spent quite a bit of time thinking about how we would do it locally, reading the research, reading the case studies, and talking to other boroughs and other councils. Most concerns were from housing – how would we deal with people quickly if things started to go wrong? ... I had to do quite a lot of selling it, internally, to other officers.' (Commissioner and Developer)

Because the local authority wanted to establish the service quickly, they invited a provider who knew the local area (i.e. St Mungo's) to submit a proposal. Due to the size of the pilot, the service was embedded within the local supported housing system; with the Housing First worker based at a local hostel. When St Mungo's won the bid, they had only six weeks to make the service operational. Although this proved to be challenging for the hostel, staff reported that they were already using similar philosophical approaches to Housing First within their work (e.g. a commitment to deliver a psychologically informed environment²⁹). There have been benefits to services being embedded within this wider service, such as access to a 24 hour phone service and staffing cover when the Housing First worker is absent.

Funding

The project is funded by the local authority's Housing Related Support budget. There is a close relationship between the local authority commissioner and St Mungo's, along with a high level of political support for Housing First in Hammersmith and Fulham.

Housing

The service values local authority housing because it provides affordable access to high quality accommodation. The local authority also plays an active role in ensuring that housing is sustained and that problems are addressed quickly (which could be more difficult if using PRS):

²⁹ <https://www.homeless.org.uk/trauma-informed-care-and-psychologically-informed-environments>

'Having the Council and the Commissioner so on board and involved and being able to respond to things that happen within those tenancies – be that anti-social behaviour or somebody's benefits have stopped, or something is broken. We're able to get a much faster response, or even just know about it, than we would have in PRS ... having the Council and that social tenancy, they're invested. They want that tenancy to work for this person.'
(Provider)

The use of social housing has however brought some challenges, such as long waiting times for an appropriate property. Staff report that significant delays between an individual being accepted onto the service and then being housed, can negatively impact their relationship with the client. A reliance on social housing can also limit an individual's choice in regard to their home, which is reported to conflict with the principles of Housing First:

'Within that [choice], there will be restrictions [e.g. location and distance from support services] ... again, there are practicalities around giving people complete choice and control at the moment. Wherever possible, we want to be able to do that – 100%.'

Despite these challenges, whenever possible the service tries to ensure that housing is allocated according to an individual's needs and circumstances.

'We focus on finding suitable referrals and then trying to find suitable flats that sort of fit with that person, whether that be ground floor or an area that's going to suit them better. This person at the time had a dog, so they managed to house him near a park. It was a quite personal list.'

In light of these various challenges, the service is attempting to diversify its housing supply and is presently exploring the possibility of engaging the Private Rented Sector.

Support

This is a very small service, with only one funded worker who is based at a local hostel. The service focuses on utilising and building on existing positive professional relationships and connections. For example, one resident worked very well with a particular worker at the local day centre, and staff reported that *'automatically, that became a coordinated effort and we'd sit down and would have regular meetings and unpick how we could support her.'*

In addition to coordinating external services to meet the needs of the residents, this service draws on the resources available at the hostel:

'By linking it to another contract, there was a circle of support for that worker and an identified line manager, but a line manager who was embedded in Hammersmith and Fulham, not just, perhaps a remote worker based in a head office. The knowledge they would have locally was based on local knowledge, in terms of managerial support and peer support from other colleagues.'

Key Partnerships

When developing the service, the local authority drew upon asset-based community development theory and involvement to inform their thinking of who would be involved and/or affected by a Housing First service, such as: homeless people, the wider community, general stakeholders, local policing teams, ASB teams, and external services. The focus was on trying to understand the community and predict anti-social behaviour and problems before they developed.

Housing First England

Besides facilitated access to social housing, this service has no formalised agreements with wider partners to work flexibly with residents or develop new pathways into services. Access to these services depends on the relationship between the Housing First worker and the staff of other services (i.e. mental health, substance misuse), with negotiation skills forming an important part of the role. The Housing First worker has dedicated significant time and effort to advocacy work in order to engage stakeholders and explain the nature and purpose of Housing First. This has involved attending peer meetings at the local Community Mental health service and approaching local GP surgeries with a high number of homeless people accessing them.

'I've been building on pre-existing relationships, because before doing the Housing First work, I've worked in the borough for two years and so I already sort of know the people at the services. So, there's not something that has been set up explicitly as Housing First. It's more appealing to individuals' discretion to get extra allowances made.' (Front-line worker).



LONDON

Hammersmith & Fulham Housing First



LEADERSHIP
Local homelessness
service provider



HOUSING
Local authority



FUNDING
Local authority



Models for Housing First services

Case Study 3: Inspiring Change Manchester

Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First is a Big Lottery Fulfilling Lives³⁰ programme lead by Shelter, a national housing and homelessness charity. A key part of this service involves drawing on the services commissioned within the Fulfilling Lives programme and team.

Context

Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First was developed against a background of growing public and political concern about the rising levels of homelessness and particularly visible rough sleeping in Manchester. The context in which the Housing First service is operating, includes the recent development of the Manchester Homelessness Charter, which is a partnership of concerned organisations, people with lived experience of homelessness, and local authority representatives dedicated to tackling homelessness in the city:

'Everybody else, including lots and lots of people who have experienced homelessness, came together to say actually, "We want a Charter that brings everyone together, so it becomes a joint mission to end homelessness in Manchester." Which is great. That coincided with us deciding to do Housing First, so we didn't throw it in to make it a big thing within the Charter. I think the fact that was happening changed the external environment, so the cynicism that we got sometimes when we started talking about Housing First melted away a little bit ... the Charter, as it was launched and grew, kind of, it's a bit of a social change movement. It made the environment much more positive and better.' (Service Developer)

Service Development

The Housing First service was developed as part of the Fulfilling Lives programme two years after its onset, when experts by experience and the city council identified a gap in the availability of suitable housing for people facing multiple disadvantage.

A fairly long lead-up to the project then followed, with two years of research, visiting existing Housing First services, raising interest in the project, and securing resources. Evidence and engagement from people with lived experience played a key role in this service's inception, and a project team was set up around the development and to ensure adherence to the principles:

'That had as wide a group as we could possibly think of, of people who may want to influence it and who wanted to get their buy-in ... So it had police, Mental Health, housing associations, private landlords, people with lived experience, the people you've seen today, so providers, Mental Health. I'm running out of people. Peer mentors. It was like you literally couldn't fit everyone round the table. ... We had two rows of people, plus anybody from the core group who are ex-service users as well. So, it was quite a wide group.' (Service developer)

Following this development stage, the funder (Big Lottery), Shelter, and the Fulfilling Lives' strategic group agreed that the programme would fund the proposed service. It seemed to fit in well with the ethos and approach of the Inspiring Change Manchester programme which promotes a person-centred and relational

³⁰ https://inspiringchangemanchester.shelter.org.uk/fulfilling_lives

Housing First England

way of working. In addition, the Inspiring Change Manchester programme had access to resources, such as a specialist staff team and various external networks, which would benefit Housing First:

'So rather than create something separate than the Inspiring Change programme and the model we had for engaging and working with people, we thought, "Actually because it's such a good fit, what we're going to do is design a Housing First pilot within the programme".'
(Service developer)

Housing

Due to the challenge of finding suitable and affordable PRS properties that clients are happy with, and in order to provide individuals with choice and control over their housing, the service decided to use both PRS accommodation and social housing:

'So, we obviously needed social ... to have that comparison. And we knew, theoretically, it would be better because of the security of tenure that people get and the response to repairs and that type of thing. But obviously, if you do it you can't just say the theory and you need to know that it works in practice.' (Provider)

PRS accommodation is brokered by a dedicated Housing First Development Officer who sources and negotiates with private landlords, and the service drew on existing contacts in the initial pilot period. Social housing is accessed through an offer originally made by the Manchester Housing Partnership Access board for properties, which was a pledge that they had made in response to the Homelessness Partnership. Individual tenancies are arranged directly with housing providers. This housing arrangement means that the team can offer residents a range of housing options and is able to move people when a tenancy does not work out.

Support

In this Housing First service, Intensive Case Management, is provided by a specialist team of Housing First workers. The Housing First workers draw on other services that sit within the Fulfilling Lives programme, including a DIY skills assistance and peer mentors who, with support from the Housing First worker, are partnered with individual residents to provide flexible support:

'So it wasn't that we had to suddenly introduce a whole new way of working, because we were already doing it, and we had done it for 15 or so clients, looking back over the last year or so anyway. So it was just a question of taking that model that we were already doing and building from it.' (Provider)

An employment, training and education programme (ETE) service also provides residents with a range of activities, and plays a key role in improving well-being and integration for Housing First residents who may struggle with social isolation. The service is underpinned by underpinned by person-centred support, and the range of services involved are key in meeting the full range of an individual's needs:

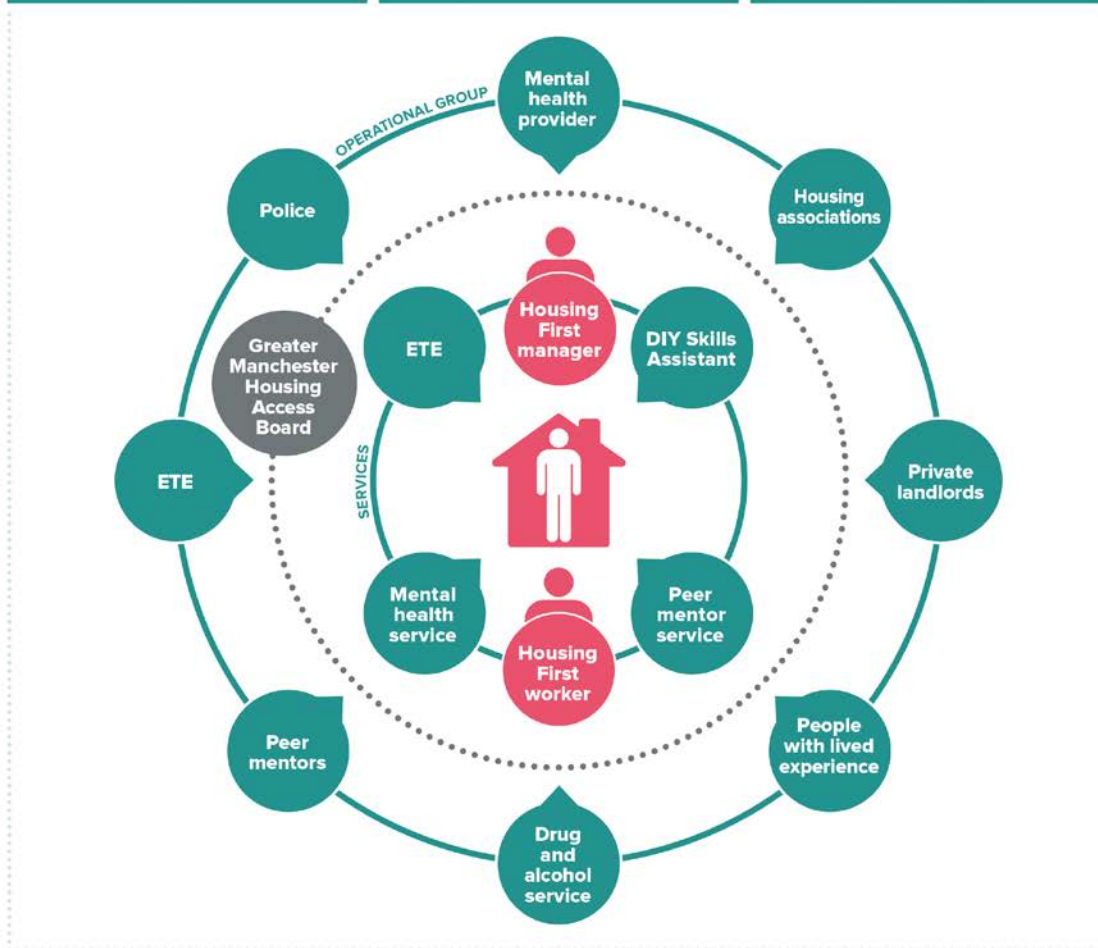
'I think Housing First and this model actually, across ICM as a whole, does give us the flexibility to be able to try out new things, and be a bit different ... I do think that this model allows us to focus more on the personal attributes of the people and their own lived experiences, rather than trying to fit people within a box.' (Frontline staff)

Partnerships

In addition to the commissioned services, Inspiring Change Manchester works in partnership with a wider network of local services to support people facing multiple disadvantage. The project group includes

representatives from probation, police, and mental health services, whilst working to ensure there is accountability in terms of fidelity to the model and progress for those housed through the project.

MANCHESTER
Inspiring Change: Manchester Housing First



Models for Housing First services

Case Study 4: Counting Every Adult (CEA) Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire's Housing First is part of Cambridge Council's Counting Every Adult (CEA) service supporting those facing multiple disadvantage. This Housing First service uses a coordinated support model, which focuses on helping residents draw on a wide network of local services brought together through their local Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) partnership.

Wider Context

In 2008 Cambridge City Council, a local Housing Association (CHS Group), and a street outreach service partnered to provide a service for people with multiple and complex needs. This service offered intensive support management within self-contained 'training flats' provided by CHS, working with small caseloads and a personalised approach.

Cambridgeshire became a MEAM approach area in 2011, when local services partnered to coordinate interventions for those with multiple disadvantages who are often excluded from mainstream services.³¹ The CEA team was created, and the Housing First service was later developed within this environment; where services were already committed to working flexibly and cooperatively to support people facing multiple needs.

Following the adoption of the MEAM approach, the complex needs service (CEA) changed from intensive case support to a more coordinating role, which is the support approach also used in the Housing First service.

Service Development

CEA initially aimed to develop a service that offered mentoring to professionals who worked with people with complex needs and challenging behaviours. However, when CEA realised that very few professionals worked with this cohort, focus was shifted towards coordinating support provision:

'Our role tended to be far more relationship building with the individual, and then bringing in the support as required for their needs. That's when it went more from the mentoring of other services to the coordination, because there was nothing in there. The envisaged model was the mentoring and professional support for frontline workers. As it turned out, you can't mentor or professionally support a frontline worker if no workers are involved.' (Service developer)

The developers then felt that Housing First would be a good continuation of the already existing model.

Funding

Cambridgeshire is unique in its provision of Housing First. No specific funding is allotted to run the Housing First element of the CEA service and at the time of the research there were no specific staff members employed on the project. Instead, CEA staff ensure there is Housing First support by coordinating and drawing upon a wide network of local services involved in MEAM (see below).

³¹ For more information on the MEAM approach, see: <http://www.themeamapproach.org.uk/>

In 2018 funding was secured to expand the programme to 10 units. Cambridge City Council provided £50,000 funding to employ a dedicated Housing First project manager to co-ordinate and expand the project specifically in the city council, which would operate under the same principles and approach as the original model. The original model (described above) continues to also operate across Cambridgeshire.

Housing

Housing is sourced via a relatively small local social housing provider, who CEA reports is both “socially minded” and “forward thinking.” Residents are initially offered a short-term tenancy in a training flat, and move on to longer-term social housing once a property has become available. Housing First residents have a high priority band for social housing across Cambridgeshire. Once tenants move onto a longer-term tenancy, the training flat becomes available for another Housing First resident. Given the significant barriers to accessing affordable one-bed properties and the reluctance of social landlords to rent to Housing First residents, this approach was adopted to ensure that the service can continue to support new people.

Support

Rather than support workers, CEA project workers are coordinators who focus on facilitating access to external services. The team does however operate a very flexible approach and will provide support where there is no contracted alternative, or where no service exists to provide the needed support:

*‘We’ll then, obviously depending on who we’re working with, it could be someone who is banned from everywhere, so we’ll try and negotiate ways round it, to try and look for a different pathway because these people don’t fit the mainstream pathway. So, coordinate the correct services because you’ll find that someone might have five services involved. Some of them don’t even know that other services are involved. They don’t talk to each other sometimes. So, I try to get everybody together, so we’re all working for the same thing.’
(Frontline worker)*

When the service begins working with a new resident, CEA project workers will dedicate time to getting to know resident’s needs and preferences. This person-centred planning allows coordinated support to be put in place, which depending on an individual, may include a group of different professionals and services. The CEA network will then come together with the individual, and the support required from each partner will be sought. A significant part of the frontline worker’s role involves building relationships with external services, often on an informal basis, as this can help speed up referrals and encourage external services to work more flexibly with people.

‘I think a lot of the role is it’s really important we build good relationships. We’ve got a really good relationship with services, so if I’m cycling around town visiting people – I will if I get chance. I don’t do it as much as I’d like to because [we’re] just so busy, but we’ll pop in and be like, “Hello, how are you. Just come to say hello, fancy a cuppa?” Just to keep that really good relationship going.’ (Frontline worker)

The support is then monitored through regular CEA meetings, coordinated multi-agency meetings for individual residents, and regular communication between CEA staff and the staff of external services.

Partnership Working

The CEA network (underpinned by a MEAM approach), is pivotal within the support that is coordinated for Housing First residents, as it ensures access to a wide variety of services and that support is arranged for residents in line with the issues they want to focus on. The service believes that its focus on coordination

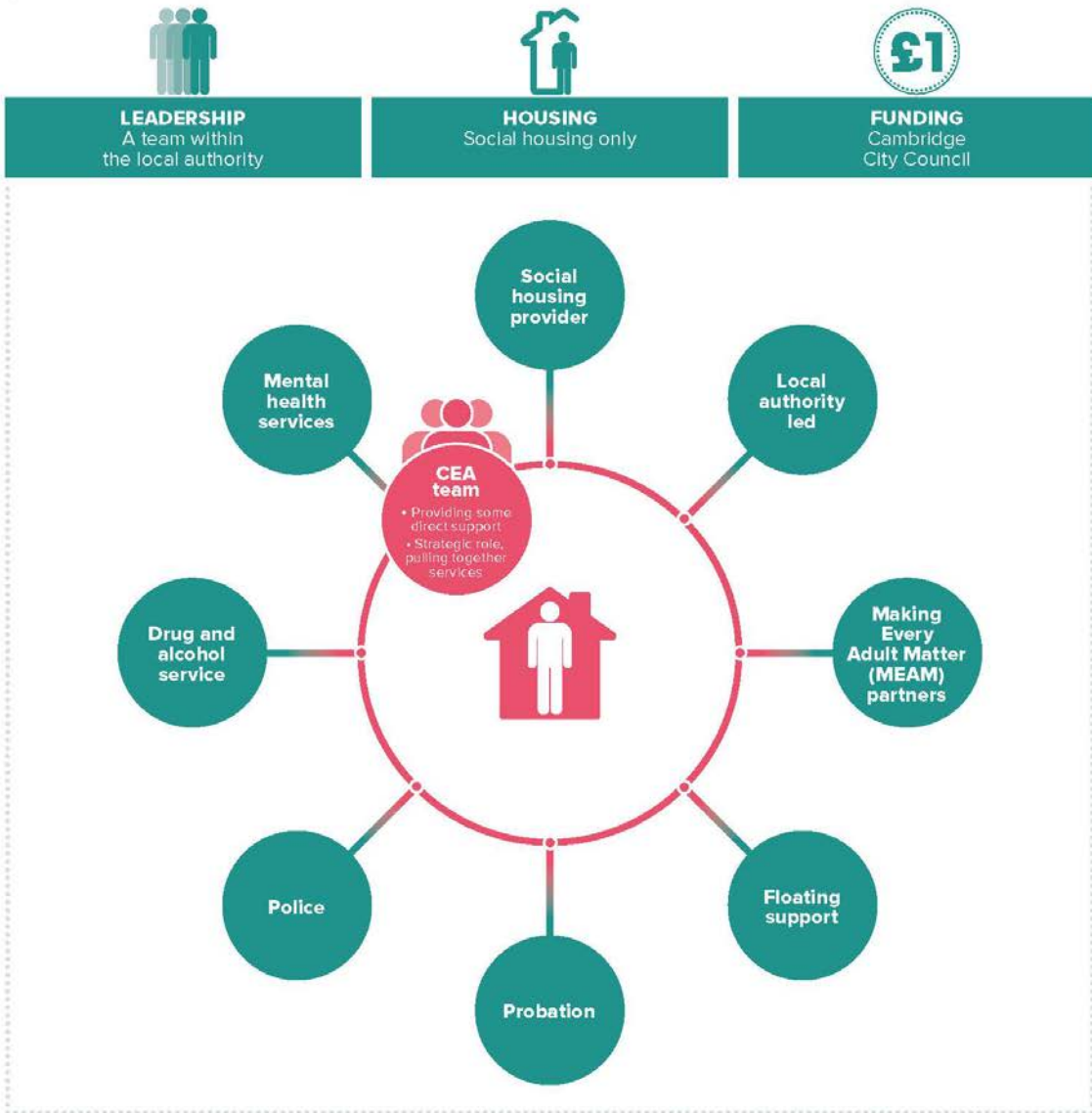
provides residents with access to a wider range of resources and skills than an individual support worker could provide:

'I think it's better to have intensive – I think probably from a few different people, so you've got different experiences, different skills, and different types of people. I think as well the people that we work with are so hard to engage, I think the more they can engage with and get to know other professionals and think, "Oh actually that's okay," I think that's probably better for them than it being just me.' (Frontline worker)



CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Counting Every Adult (CEA)



Models for Housing First services

Case Study 5: North Tyneside Housing First

The local Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)³² coalition designed North Tyneside Housing First. This service differs from many others across the country, with the support provider, Home Group, housing residents in their own properties.

Context

North Tyneside MEAM coalition is a partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies that is committed to designing and delivering coordinated services for people with multiple needs. This group initially identified a key gap in the availability of support and accommodation for vulnerable individuals with complex needs who struggled to meet the conditions of a typical housing pathway:

'They're meant to move through this lovely linear path, which on paper looks really nice. But we know with people with chaotic and multiple needs they don't follow a linear approach. They'll bounce from here to there to everywhere.' (Frontline staff)

Homeless women will often stay in all kinds of concealed and marginalised situations where they face considerable risk rather than access (male dominated) services.³³ The North Tyneside MEAM coalition reported that by the time women did approach their services, they would generally present with higher and more complex needs, which then made identifying housing solutions particularly difficult. The coalition wanted to develop something bespoke for this cohort, and subsequently developed the Housing First service. The service however quickly identified a need to extend the offer to men, and from the outset offered the service to both men and women.

Service Development

Home Group was identified as an ideal housing provider for the proposed service, having previously accepted everyone who had been referred through the MEAM service. Being aware of the flaws of other housing services - such as insecurity of tenure and the unwillingness of landlords to work with people with complex needs - Home Group was eager to deliver the Housing First pilot:

'With private rented you get your unscrupulous landlords, who after two months of chaos they want to boot them out. We were trying to work with a lot of people in private rented through some of our floating support because at the time we had a large floating support service as well ... we thought, "we're a landlord. Let's do it. Let's have a go and put our name to it." We said "Right. We understand there's going to be chaos. We know that there's going to be damage to the properties. We know there's going to be a high level of anti-social behaviour. Instead of us preaching to landlords, let's be the ones, the other landlords that do it".' (Provider and developer)

Home Group designed the Housing First contract in collaboration with the local authority and provide both the support services via their support team, and the housing from their general needs stock. Home Group has recently restructured, where support services and general needs property services are now administered under joint management, which in turn has significantly improved communication between the two teams.

³² <http://meam.org.uk/the-meam-approach/>

³³ Homeless Link (2017) Supporting women who are homeless. Briefing for homelessness services, Available at: https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/siteattachments/Supporting%20women%20who%20are%20homeless%20March%202017_0.pdf

'I think it's about trusting each other because a customer service general needs mindset isn't the same as a support mindset. It's about bridging that gap between the two and working together. I think the best way that a support provider can do that is to be really ... working closely with them. Doing a lot of job shadowing. Getting them in here. Getting them to understand "Actually, these are people, and understand the story behind people, because sometimes as a housing manager you don't see the whole story.' (Service developer)

Funding

The service is funded by the local authority as part of a pooled contract for supported housing. Although this service now has a longer-term contract in place, they were initially funded on the basis of two consecutive six-month contracts, which impacted the continuity of support. Staff highlighted the importance of stable funding arrangements in facilitating positive and trusting staff/client relationships. Staff report that in this service client engagement has improved since a more stable support team has been in place.

'I guess what you would get is if you only have short term funding, if they're employed specifically for that period, if they don't know whether they're going to be extended, then they potentially would leave for something more permanent, whereas now, all of our staff are permanent and we've been quite static since March ... where there were a lot of staff changes and what that meant was the Housing First clients would have three or four support workers at different times which causes issues around building those relationships and having trust, which then impacts on engagement.' (Service provider)

Housing

As the lead contractor for supported housing in the area, Home Group are uniquely placed to provide high quality accommodation for Housing First residents and to ensure tenancies are sustained. By acting as both landlord and support provider, Home Group can offer a tenancy for life while simultaneously putting the Housing First principle of individual choice and control into practice:

'I think having that approach with, "We don't want anything from you. This is your home. Pick your wall colour. Pick this. Pick what furniture you want." She said, "Nobody's ever – I'm normally moved in an it's a dump. People walk away from me." I think that a real positive for us being the landlord was that we could offer that as well. There's that hook to getting people to trust us.' (Service provider)

Home Group has however met various housing-related challenges. Many of their properties have two or three bedrooms, and because of the Spare Room Subsidy (i.e. bedroom tax), it has at times proved challenging to secure properties that can be covered by Housing Benefit.

Support

The service started off with a dedicated Housing First worker and Housing First manager. Finding that the needs and support levels of some of the Housing First clients were no different from those accommodated in their other services, Home Group eventually integrated the Housing First support team back into their supported housing service. Although having two support workers dedicated to Housing First was beneficial, the service reported that reintegrating the support element into their main service introduced added flexibility and choice:

'You may get a different response because you don't always react well to one person. We're able to give people a lot more choice now of who they want to work with. If they do want to disengage with somebody, we can assign them somebody different.' (Service provider)

Key Partnerships

North Tyneside Housing First was keen to use the existing partners within the MEAM coalition, which includes probation, police, mental health services, drugs and alcohol services, and the voluntary sector. The service's place within the MEAM partnership has given it local profile and embedded it within existing structures and processes that focus on partnering and promoting closer cooperation of providers for those facing multiple disadvantage. There are clear benefits to operating in an area where formalised relationships and pathways to external services have already been established. For example, the local drug and alcohol service have agreed to work flexibly with Housing First residents (e.g. by offering one-to-one rather than group sessions). In order to minimise access barriers and improve client engagement, Home Group intentionally houses Housing First clients near these services:

'Moving into Housing First, I knew we weren't going to be on our own out there. I knew that we could just pick up the phone because those relationships had been established. Everybody referred in would come through MEAM, so there would be that agreement that we will all work together and do our little bit for the client.' (Provider)

Staff report that MEAM has had a very positive impact on local service's willingness to work with people with complex needs and the way in which services in North Tyneside operate.

'The benefit of having MEAM is that you get everyone round the table and get information that you wouldn't necessarily have ... we need as much information as possible to be able to provide the support that's necessary, but also to make sure that we keep staff safe whilst keeping the client safe. And make sure as well, in terms of location, where we're going to place them and things, so without MEAM, I think it would make it a lot more difficult to do that.' (Provider)



TYNESIDE

North Tyneside Housing First

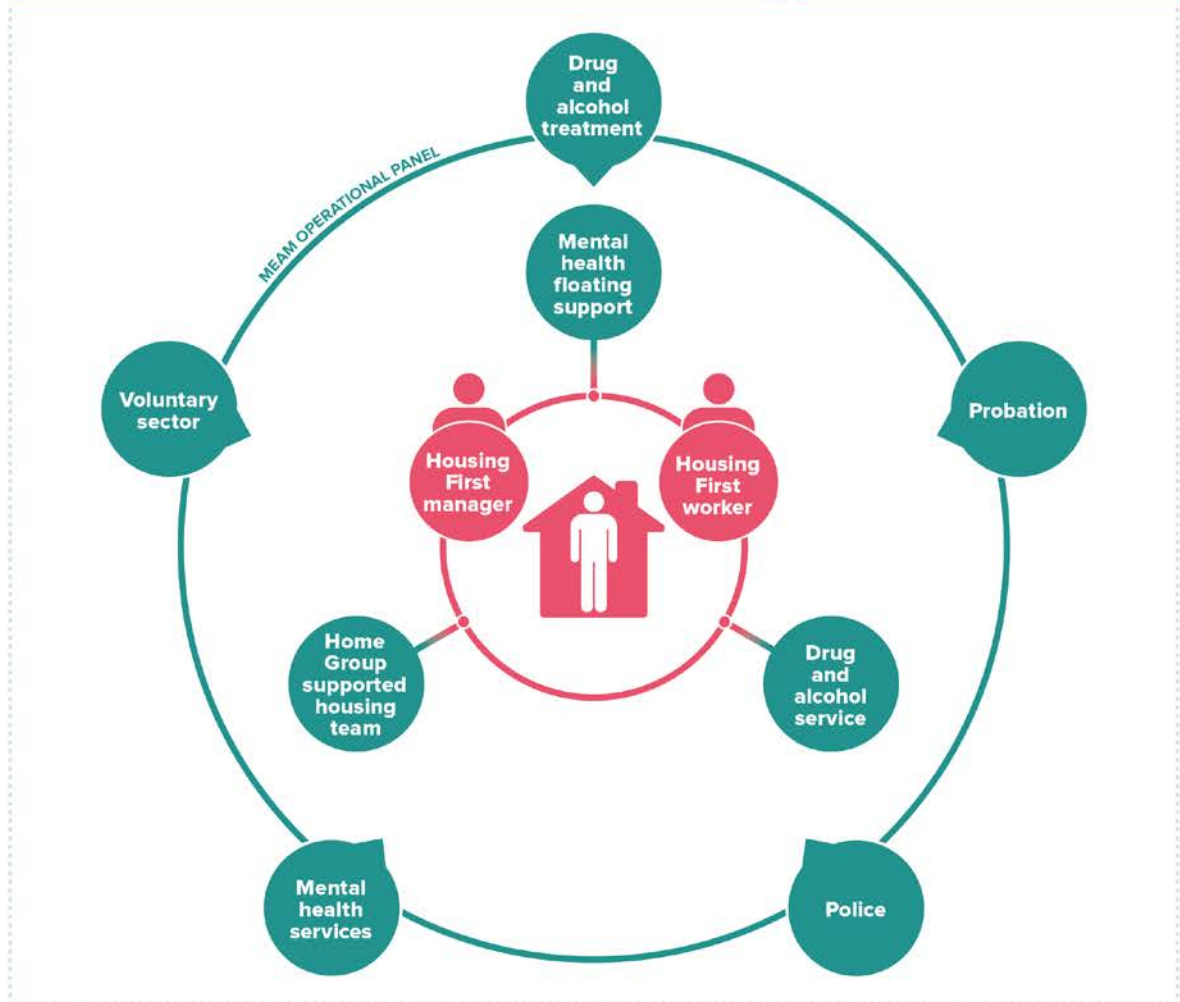


LEADERSHIP
Local supported
housing provider

HOUSING
Provider's own
accommodation



FUNDING
Local authority



Models for Housing First services

Conclusion and key learning

This research has shown that within their local contexts, services in England are finding many different ways of delivering Housing First in accordance with the principles for England. Various local structural, cultural and organisational factors will affect the way in which Housing First is implemented, and it is therefore not possible to identify a single model of Housing First in England.

Services differ in the way in which people are housed, how support is organised, how the service is funded, and the partnerships that are formed. Although emerging services need to choose the most appropriate approach for their local context, participating case study areas did share some key learning points which may help inform considerations when designing and delivering Housing First services:

Laying the foundation

- Prior to implementing a Housing First service, adequate time should be given to evidencing the need, learning about the Housing First approach, and developing the necessary statutory and operational partnerships.
- Understanding the needs, circumstances, and histories of the client group is vital in designing a service that will truly be effective. Engaging people with lived experience, as well as consulting the existing evidence base, may prove helpful within this process.
- Local authority commissioners should work collaboratively with local service providers in the design of Housing First services.

Partnership working

- Partnership working should be recognised as an integral part of the daily operations and activities of a Housing First service. To meet the diverse needs of residents, services should dedicate resources, time, and attention to building and maintaining links with various external partners.
- When developing a Housing First service, providers may wish to explore the barriers that external services face in supporting people with multiple and complex needs.
- New services should explore opportunities to work together with existing local multi-agency structures that support people with multiple and complex needs. Under certain circumstances Housing First could be embedded within these networks.
- Housing First services may wish to explore how the MEAM approach could support their work (meam.org.uk)

Housing

- Strong links and formalised service level agreements between the housing and support provider are essential in ensuring that the needs of residents are met and that tenancies are sustained. Where possible, agencies may wish to explore opportunities for job shadowing, sharing best practice, and joint team meetings.

Housing First England

- Some of the services recommended allocating properties that are sufficiently dispersed so that very vulnerable people are not housed next to each other.
- Wherever possible, housing should be allocated that is in reasonable proximity to external services, with this being key to enabling the resident to engage with them when they want to.
- Services will need to be creative in finding ways to source housing (e.g. asking local authorities to review their allocation policies).

Support

- Housing First should be seen as a specialist service, and adequate resources should be allocated to recruiting and retaining a highly skilled and experienced staff team.
- Services should aim for continuity of support and consistency of support workers. When functioning with only one support worker, the provider may wish to explore the possibility of embedding the Housing First service within a larger organisation.



What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness agencies and the wider housing with health, care and support sector. We work to improve services through evidence and learning, and to promote 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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