



Quick guide to establishing housing and support partnerships

Establishing housing and support partnerships

Learning from Housing First projects on how to set up an effective partnership.

Involve housing providers from the start

Housing First projects typically include a local authority commissioner, a support provider, and one or more housing providers (in some cases, housing and support are provided by the same organisation). The housing provider(s) should help to plan the Housing First project, as they will play a key role throughout the delivery of Housing First. By playing an active role in designing the project, issues and opportunities will be identified and addressed before tenants move in.

Commissioners and support providers should not make assumptions about what a landlord will be able to offer, as the number of units is not the only issue at hand. Stock (e.g. availability of one-bed and ground floor properties), allocations (e.g. nominations held by the landlord or by the council) and ongoing housing and neighbourhood management work must be taken into account when shaping the Housing First project. Any mismatch between design and implementation could disadvantage the people you are seeking to house.

Make best use of each partner's expertise

In planning the project, explore what each partner can offer and how to make best use of their expertise to benefit the people being housed. For example, social landlords can use local neighbourhood knowledge to avoid property allocations where there are existing risks around anti-social behaviour; local authority commissioners can help to secure buy-in from mental health, social services, police and treatment services; and support providers can design an approach that is responsive to people who lack trust in existing services. Take time to explore what each partner can bring to the project, and to understand where areas of expertise might overlap.

Co-create a Service Level Agreement (SLA)

This guidance is accompanied by examples of SLAs that can be adapted to create your local agreement. The SLA should be co-created by all partners in the project, to ensure that it accurately represents how the project will be delivered.

The SLA should describe why you are delivering Housing First, as well as how it will be delivered. Include a statement of principles, setting out why Housing First is being used and the ways in which it is different to other forms of supported housing. This will help new staff to gain a shared understanding of the ethos of the partnership, as well as its practical implementation.

Set out clear responsibilities and communication for operational teams

This guidance is accompanied by examples of the division of responsibilities between housing support and housing management partners. Setting out these responsibilities helps operational staff to understand their role and to have realistic expectations of staff from partner agencies.

Communication can be set out as a specific responsibility e.g. the Housing First support worker contacts the Housing Officer on a weekly basis. Given that issues and risks can escalate rapidly (e.g. cuckooing leading to abandonment), formalising communication between partners ensures the best chance of tenancy sustainment.

Secure both strategic and operational buy-in

Each partner will need to share information internally so that the partnership is embedded at both strategic and operational levels. This is especially important where operational teams will play a role in Housing First, albeit indirectly (e.g. income teams). Senior staff should look at delivering training workshops, blogs and other forms of internal communication to raise awareness about what Housing First is and how it aligns with the organisation's mission.

Ongoing communication is also valuable. In many cases, Housing First is supporting a relatively small number of people in their tenancies, so the service isn't very visible, and staff are more likely to notice occasional problems than continuing successes. Some organisations have made [films](#) featuring Housing First tenants to celebrate the significant impact of the service on individuals who previously struggled to find and keep a home. This has been valuable in maintaining buy-in among for the service at all levels of the organisation.

Actively maintain the partnership

Partners continue to meet once the project is live. This may be combined with decision-making on referrals, or a separate meeting at which learning is shared and there is a chance to review whether the SLA is being met to everyone's satisfaction.

The wider multi-agency partnership

While the housing and support partnership is fundamental to Housing First, wider multi-agency partnerships are vital to ensure the model is a success. The support provider will be actively creating and expanding these partnerships, for example with colleagues from health, mental health, drug and alcohol, domestic abuse, criminal justice, probation, police and social services.

Housing providers strengthen this work by drawing on their own multi-agency networks, both at a strategic level and through operational staff being part of multi-agency case-working to support tenants. This ensures that actions and solutions take into account both housing and support.

See this briefing on ['Adopting a multi-agency approach'](#) and SHP's 'Team Around Me' [guidance and template](#).



What we do

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

Let's end homelessness together

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