



Housing First England

Scaling up Housing First in the post-lockdown phase

Joint statement from Housing First England Housing Advisory Group

"That front door gives me an identity and I can't tell you how strong that feeling is."

- Housing First resident

We warmly welcome the Government's recent commitments to providing safe housing for those who have been residing in emergency accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the pledge to roll-out 6,000 supported move-on units.¹

The current phase of the response offers a unique opportunity to ensure that people with multiple disadvantage, many of whom are residing in hotels, never have to return to the streets again. As a group representing social landlords and local authorities in England, we stand ready to support the scale-up of Housing First as a solution for these individuals.

We are calling on Government to ensure that a national scale-up of high-fidelity Housing First is at the core of these and wider plans to end rough sleeping. As a priority, this must include an immediate offer of Housing First support for people who need it and are have been living in emergency accommodation as a result of COVID-19.

Housing First is an internationally recognised and evidence-based approach to ending homelessness for people who experience multiple disadvantage. It provides a stable home along with unconditional, personalised and intensive support for people whose homelessness is compounded by issues such as mental health difficulties or substance dependence.

Housing First has been operating in England since 2010 and we've seen how it can achieve significant outcomes for people for whom little else has worked. Research shows that Housing First ends homelessness for at least 80% of people with high and complex needs;

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. 24 May 2020. 6,000 new supported homes as part of landmark commitment to end rough sleeping <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/6-000-new-supported-homes-as-part-of-landmark-commitment-to-end-rough-sleeping>

improves anti-social behaviour; stabilises or reduces substance misuse and reduces use of emergency and criminal justice services.²³

Housing First means an opportunity to maintain the remarkable progress achieved with so many individuals in hotels, some of whom are engaging with services for the first time. The wrap-around support offered means that even before a suitable settled home is found, the individual benefits from the Housing First pathway and trust is being built.

Research commissioned by Crisis and Homeless Link suggests that 16,500 people in England need a Housing First approach to end their homelessness.⁴ However, significantly fewer people are currently receiving it.⁵

What needs to change?

Recommendations for Government

We are ready to back the national scale-up of Housing First, in any way we can. However, in order to do this, we need Government support. We call on the Government to:

1. **Commit long-term funding for the support services needed to enable 16,500 Housing First tenancies over the current Government term.** Government should drive the Housing First agenda by providing a long-term commitment to fund support for those receiving a Housing First offer, along with a broader commitment to funding floating support for those who are at risk of homelessness already living in tenancies. Long-term commitments will give many more social landlords the assurance needed to work with Housing First and encourage local authorities to embed high-fidelity provision.

In recognition of the crucial role played by non-homelessness providers in delivering Housing First, commitments should be cross-departmental in order to facilitate effective multi-agency collaboration at the local level.

2. **Ensure there is a supply of suitable homes to meet the scale of need for Housing First and wider housing-led provision to tackle homelessness.** This should include funding commitments to rapidly increase the supply of housing available to people moving on from homelessness, including exploring options for tenure conversion and market acquisition to boost the supply of one bed social rent homes. Access to the private rented sector should be improved by making additional funding available to local authorities, implementing a national rent deposit guaranteed scheme and making essential reforms to the welfare system.

Recommendations for social housing providers

While Government leadership and investment is critical to meet the scale of need, social landlords who are already providing homes for Housing First have shown that there is more the housing sector can do right now. Resources allowing, we call on all social housing providers to support the expansion of Housing First provision at a local level by:

1. **Working with commissioners** through housing and homelessness partnerships to understand the scale of need locally and agree an allocation of tenancies for

² Bretherton, J and Pleace, N. 2015. Housing First in England An Evaluation of Nine Services.

https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Evaluation%20of%20nine%20services%20in%20England_0.pdf

³ 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

⁴ Blood, I., Goldup, M., Peters, L., Dulson, S. (2018) *Implementing Housing First across England, Scotland, and Wales*. London: Imogen Blood and Associates, Homeless Link, Crisis.

⁵ The Housing First England website shows approximately 70 projects with many supporting an average of 10 residents. See: <https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/services>

commissioned Housing First services.

2. **Making the case** for a long-term funding framework for sustainable support provision.
3. **Working jointly** between Local Authorities and Housing Associations to increase flexibility in allocations practices outside of usual procedures and using a person-centred approach.
4. **Adopting and sharing learning** and positive practice on the delivery of homes for high fidelity Housing First.