



HOUSING FIRST IN ENGLAND

Frequently asked questions

[What is Housing First?](#)

[Who is Housing First for?](#)

[Is Housing First new?](#)

[What is the difference between Housing First and housing led?](#)

[Must a person have had unsuccessful contact with services before accessing Housing First?](#)

[Does Housing First work for young people?](#)

[Can I refer clients to your service?](#)

[How are people referred to services?](#)

[How are services funded?](#)

[Where does the housing come from?](#)

[How is the rent paid?](#)

[What types of tenancies are given?](#)

[What research is Homeless Link conducting?](#)

[Why is Homeless Link championing Housing First?](#)

What is Housing First?

Housing First is an approach to providing housing and support, which prioritises access to stable accommodation over the requirement for an individual to first address any other support needs they have. The intervention is shown to be successful for people experiencing repeat homelessness and multiple disadvantage, providing an independent home alongside intensive support that is free from conditions apart from the willingness to sustain a tenancy.

The offers of housing and support are separate, but permanent, and enable people to sustain their accommodation and begin their recovery, making improvements in their health and wellbeing.

In this country, services should be designed and delivered in line with the [evidence-based principles](#) for Housing First in England.

Who is Housing First for?

While Housing First is not a low cost option, evidence shows that it is a cost-effective approach for people with the most complex needs, and supports this cohort to achieve better outcomes than other services.

Housing First residents typically experience multiple disadvantage relating to housing, physical and mental health, contact with the criminal justice system, education and employment, and social integration. Around 58,000 adults in the UK experience multiple disadvantage; a 2015 scoping report estimated that Housing First would be appropriate for approximately 10-20% of people sleeping rough or in contact with services for single homeless people.

Due to its relatively high costs and intense levels of support, Housing First is **not** considered the most suitable option for all people experiencing homelessness.

Is Housing First new?

Housing First is not new to the UK and there are **currently over 30 active services across England**, with at least one in every region of the country and more being planned.

The first project was established by Turning Point Scotland in Glasgow in 2010. The London Borough of Camden first commissioned its service in 2010/11 and other projects were developed in 2012, when Homeless Link funded nine pilots through the Homelessness Transition Fund. In 2013, a service was commissioned by the Isle of Anglesey Council, which led to the Welsh Government recommending the use of Housing First in later guidance.

In November 2017, the UK Government announced £23 million in funding to pilot the Housing First approach in the Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, to support rough sleepers with the most complex needs.

What is the difference between Housing First and housing led?

Housing First is a defined approach to ending homelessness, which provides individuals with a permanent offer of independent, stable housing and open-ended, wrap-around support. *See the full definition above.*

Housing led refers to a range of services that aim to provide stable accommodation upfront but do not follow the principles of Housing First (although some of them may follow a few of the principles). This may mean that the offers of housing and support are not permanent and are not separate, and that the services may offer different types of housing or tenancy, lower levels of support, or place various conditions on the individuals. Housing led services may not be aimed at those experiencing the most acute, multiple needs, but be offered to people experiencing homelessness more generally.

Must a person have had unsuccessful contact with services before accessing Housing First?

Traditional homelessness provision, which requires a person to prove they are ready for housing by placing a number of conditions on them, typically does not work for the Housing First cohort. Housing First aims to reach the group for whom this support is ineffective, or who fall through the gaps in services due to lack of a coordinated approach or because their needs are too mild or severe to meet a threshold.

Many Housing First services in England focus their resources on people who have been street homeless for sustained periods, had repeated ineffective accommodation stays, or had contact with high cost public services, resulting in periods of rough sleeping.

However, there are some examples of resources being targeted elsewhere, and it is not necessary for people to have had ineffective contact with services before accessing Housing First.

Does Housing First work for young people?

There may be a case for offering Housing First to some young people but, as with adults, it should be an option available to those for whom other services are likely to be ineffective, rather than the default solution; it won't suit or be necessary for everyone. 'Housing First for youth' would need to adhere to the full [principles for England](#) in order to be classed as Housing First.

Can I refer clients to your service?

Our Housing First England project does not provide any Housing First services directly. The project is delivered by Homeless Link, the national membership body for the homelessness sector. Our aim is

to support a movement for Housing First across the country; providing advice, support and evidence to make it a viable option for anyone that needs it in England.

How are people referred to services?

Each service will have local eligibility and referral criteria. To find out if there is a service in your area, take a look at our [map of services](#) or contact your local authority housing department.

How are services funded?

There is no national policy around Housing First. Most services are developed locally by local authorities or voluntary sector providers and funded through local authority commissioning (Housing Related Support). There are a couple of examples in which other statutory funding sources such as public health, adult social care, and the Better Care Fund are used. Several services are funded by trusts and foundations with a few examples of philanthropically funded services.

We have undertaken research on the commissioning of Housing First which will be available in Spring 2018.

Where does the housing come from?

This depends on the context in which the service is operating, and the partners involved in the delivery. Just under 50% of services source housing through the private rented sector, which can be challenging when considering the Local Housing Allowance and use of Assured Shorthold Tenancies.

Social Housing seems to be a more stable and affordable form of housing, and is sourced through agreements within local authorities (i.e. social housing allocations are given for Housing First residents) or through partnerships (i.e. a service will partner directly with a social landlord or is part of a larger organisation which has its own stock). However it can be more difficult to access, with longer waiting periods, and there may be less flexibility in offering people the option of moving to a different property if needed.

More information on the use of social and private housing can be found in our research on the models of Housing First, published in Spring 2018.

How is the rent paid?

Those supported through Housing First claim Housing Benefit to cover the rent of their property. It is important to take into consideration the Local Housing Allowance to ensure that the resident will be able to pay their rent. Because housing and support are considered separately when using the Housing First approach, individuals should be able to cover the rent themselves should they no longer require, or wish to access the support. This means enhanced Housing Benefit should not be used to cover support costs.

What types of tenancies are given?

An individual should always be the tenancy holder for their home and should be given the same tenancy as anyone else in that type of property. Therefore, in the private rented sector individuals will usually be given an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. In social housing they are likely to get a 12 month introductory tenancy followed by a fixed term or assured tenancy.

What research is Homeless Link conducting?

We have undertaken three pieces of research to inform the picture of Housing First in England:

- 1) The models of Housing First in England – the delivery of Housing First varies depending on the local operating context. We have carried out in depth case studies of archetypal services

to understand why and how they developed, and what makes them successful. Due to be published in May 2018.

- 2) Commissioning of Housing First – we have collected evidence on who funds, or has the potential to fund Housing First, and have spoken to commissioners to understand what information they would need before deciding to fund a service. Due to be published in May 2018.
- 3) The impact of Housing First – we are compiling evaluations and data from services across England, and interviewing Housing First residents and others about how Housing First has affected their lives. Due to be published later in 2018

Why is Homeless Link championing Housing First?

Homeless Link believes that Housing First is the best intervention for the intended cohort, as it is evidenced to produce the most successful outcomes (in terms of tenancy sustainment, health and wellbeing and social integration) for a group whom traditional services have often failed to support.

However, we do not believe that Housing First is a panacea, and advocate a range of approaches for ending homelessness, including hostels and supported housing. It is also important to focus on prevention and on other innovative approaches to the provision and funding of services.