

Housing and Economy Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 7 June 2018

Housing First - Overview

Item number	7.6
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	ALL
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Executive Summary

This report provides the Committee with an overview of Housing First following a recommendation of the Update Report Following the “Sleep in the Park” Event presented to Committee on [22 March 2018](#).

The Housing First approach involves providing provides permanent, settled, individual accommodation before the need to engage with support or transitional housing arrangements. A range of Housing First models have been adopted including the US, Europe and in the UK.

Housing First offers benefits as part of an integrated homelessness strategy that includes preventative services to meet the diverse needs of mostly single homeless people.

Housing First - Overview

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the contents of this report.

2. Background

- 2.1 Housing First has been developed as an alternative to the approach in which people experiencing homelessness first engage with short-term residential and treatment programmes.
- 2.2 Permanent housing is hereby offered only after a person experiencing homelessness can demonstrate that they are “ready” for housing, also known as the ‘step’ or “treatment first” approach.
- 2.3 Initially developed in the US in the 1980s, it has developed elsewhere notably Scandinavia and more recently in the UK and Scotland.
- 2.4 Recent Scottish Government reports on Homelessness have advocated Housing First is made available nationwide and some local initiatives are already being developed notably the Social Bite 600 Homes programme with the Corra Foundation.
- 2.5 A number of homelessness charities and third sector partners are also actively promoting the Housing First approach.

3. Main report

- 3.1 Housing First developed in the US as a response to perceived failings in improving the life chances of adults with very high and complex needs. It came from a realisation that people were often failing to complete all the tasks necessary to move between one step and the next.
- 3.2 In addition, some would be excluded due to strict rules on abstinence from drugs and alcohol and being required to participate in psychiatric treatment. Instead new ‘Supported housing’ services in North America did not require abstinence from drugs or alcohol, and they did not expect full engagement with treatment as a condition for being housed.
- 3.3 In part Housing First arose from the recognition of the high cost associated with repeated long-term use of homelessness services, demands on health and social

care services and contact with the criminal justice system and existing services were not ending homelessness for a group of these people.

- 3.4 Housing First has since developed in Europe including Scandinavia as well as now starting to be used in the UK and Scotland where there is growing interest. Some early projects are in place including Glasgow. More recently Social Bite have engaged with the Council to develop a Housing First approach with 275 properties set aside through the EdIndex partnership.
- 3.5 Housing First prioritises the right to a home above and before the obligation to engage with housing support services or transitional housing arrangements based on the concept that a homeless individual or household's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing, and that other issues that may affect the household can and should be addressed once housing is obtained.
- 3.6 Housing First seeks to move homeless people into permanent housing as quickly as possible with on-going, flexible, and individual support as long as it is needed on a voluntary basis, emphasising choice and self-determination of service users as an essential element and using a harm reduction approach.
- 3.7 In summary the core principles of Housing First are:
 - Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements;
 - Consumer choice and self-determination;
 - Recovery orientation;
 - Individualised and service user driven support; and
 - Social and community integration.
- 3.8 The following models have been developed:
 - Accommodation: Generally scattered housing has been preferred. Some congregate housing with on-site support has been provided where residents are offered units within a single housing project or site. This is not generally favoured as it is closer to traditional supported hostel type accommodation; and
 - Support: An intensive case management approach is the model generally favoured. Engagement is not a requirement for participation. Housing, treatment, and support are separated. Someone using Housing First is not required to show treatment compliance, or changes in behaviour, once they are housed. Support is provided using an intensive floating service, which visits people at home, or at agreed venues, and provides case management, practical and emotional support. A harm reduction approach is employed.
- 3.9 Research generally backs Housing First as a successful solution to homelessness. The main results have been found to be:

- High rates of housing retention among people with high and complex needs, typically achieving sustained housing for at least one year for around eight out of every ten people Housing First services work with;
 - Potential for savings and a more efficient use of resources;
 - High satisfaction based on living in their own self-contained flats on a permanent basis, support delivered as long as they need it, being accepted as they are they and able to be open and honest about the use of drugs and alcohol without fears of being evicted as a consequence ; and
 - Some improvements in substance abuse and mental health, though less positive results for overcoming worklessness, financial problems and loneliness.
- 3.10 Care is necessary when comparing different models. US and Scandinavian models for example may not be directly comparable due to different operations, resource levels and operational context. UK (Scottish) harm reduction programmes and more flexible services emphasising greater service user choice may offer comparable results to Housing First with people with high and complex needs.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Greater understanding of the Housing First model.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no direct financial impacts arising from this report.
- 5.2 Should the Council wish to adopt this service model then further analysis is required of funding methods. Research shows significant savings can be made to public services.
- 5.3 Many studies have shown that the savings made from Housing First services are not generally made from housing and/or homelessness services, but from a combination of services including health, police, criminal justice and social care services.
- 5.4 In delivering a Housing First service there may be increased costs initially in the provision of homelessness services, as some of the people who will receive these packages may not currently be accessing homelessness services.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 This report follows the recommendations of the update report following the “Sleep in the Park” Event presented to Committee on 22 March 2018.

7. Equalities impact

7.1 There are no direct equalities impacts arising from this report

8. Sustainability impact

8.1 There are no direct sustainability impacts arising from this report.

9. Consultation and engagement

9.1 There has been no external consultation or engagement in producing this report.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Housing First Evaluation | Heriot-Watt University
<https://www.hw.ac.uk/schools/energy-geoscience-infrastructure-society/research/i-sphere/homelessness-social-exclusion/housing-first-evaluation.htm>
- 10.2 University of York review of a range of Housing First research from across the UK, Europe, and America https://www.mungos.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ST_Mungos_HousingFirst_Report_2018.pdf
- 10.3 Scottish Government Local Government and Communities Committee Report on Homelessness
<https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/LGC/2018/2/12/Report-on-Homelessness#Foreword>
- 10.4 Chartered Institute of Housing – Housing First in the UK and Ireland
http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Scotland%20Policy%20Pdfs/Housing%20First/CIH0220-PDF-B_Housing%20First_RV_13112017%20FINAL.pdf
- 10.5 Housing First Guide Europe <http://housingfirstguide.eu/website/>
- 10.6 Housing First in Permanent Supportive Housing Brief - HUD Exchange
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-First-Permanent-Supportive-Housing-Brief.pdf>
- 10.7 Glasgow Homelessness Network Seminar May 2017
<http://www.ghn.org.uk/shien/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/05/Housing-First-Report-1.pdf>

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11. Appendices

11.1 None.