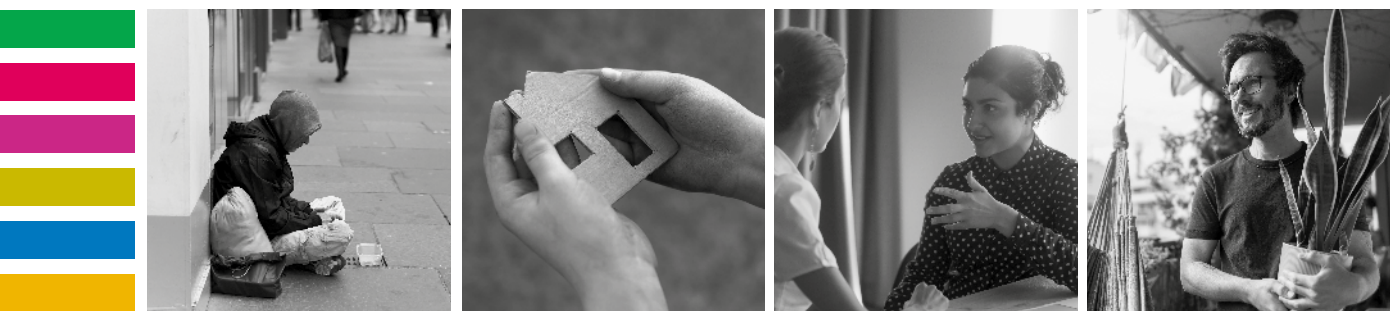


CLOSE TO HOME

Delivering a national Housing First programme in England

February 2021



Close to Home
Delivering a national Housing First programme in England
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About the Centre for Social Justice

Established in 2004, the Centre for Social Justice is an independent think-tank that studies the root causes of Britain's social problems and addresses them by recommending practical, workable policy interventions. The CSJ's vision is to give people in the UK who are experiencing the worst multiple disadvantages and injustice every possible opportunity to reach their full potential.

The majority of the CSJ's work is organised around five "pathways to poverty", first identified in our ground-breaking 2007 report *Breakthrough Britain*. These are: educational failure; family breakdown; economic dependency and worklessness; addiction to drugs and alcohol; and severe personal debt.

Since its inception, the CSJ has changed the landscape of our political discourse by putting social justice at the heart of British politics. This has led to a transformation in government thinking and policy. For instance, in March 2013, the CSJ report *It Happens Here* shone a light on the horrific reality of human trafficking and modern slavery in the UK. As a direct result of this report, the Government passed the Modern Slavery Act 2015, one of the first pieces of legislation in the world to address slavery and trafficking in the 21st century.

Our research is informed by experts including prominent academics, practitioners and policy-makers. We also draw upon our CSJ Alliance, a unique group of charities, social enterprises and other grass-roots organisations that have a proven track-record of reversing social breakdown across the UK.

The social challenges facing Britain remain serious. In 2021 and beyond, we will continue to advance the cause of social justice so that more people can continue to fulfil their potential.

Acknowledgements

We're grateful to the many organisations and individuals who kindly gave their time to take part in this research, including through case study interviews and roundtable meetings. Thanks, too, to all those who submitted a response to our call for evidence. We're particularly grateful for the contribution made by staff involved in the Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and West Midlands Housing First pilots, who participated in extended interviews and shared early evidence of the pilots' impact.

Special thanks to Brooks Newmark for his guidance on the report, and to Francesca Albanese and Jasmine Basran for their helpful observations on an early draft. Thanks also for expert advice from Rebekah Stroud, Economist at Crisis, who produced the cost benefit analysis presented in the report.

Thanks, finally, to all the Housing First tenants who told us (and allowed us to share) their stories.

We are grateful to the Wates Family Enterprise Trust for supporting the CSJ's housing policy programme.

Wates Family
ENTERPRISE TRUST

The views and recommendations in this report are those of the CSJ and do not necessarily represent those of the individuals or organisations mentioned above.

Foreword

Some moments in politics stay with you. One that stands out vividly in my memory was meeting Wayne in 2017, when I was Housing Secretary.

Wayne had spent 30 years sleeping on the streets after leaving the armed forces with PTSD. On becoming homeless, he had begun to drink heavily to self-medicate his mental health issues, and was soon addicted to heroin and crack. Outreach teams approached him repeatedly over the years, and he'd been in and out of the hostel system. He'd also managed to accumulate some 50 custodial sentences.

The depths of this crisis made the story that Wayne told me that much more remarkable. When we met, he described to me how he'd moved into a flat in London through one of the few available Housing First schemes at the time, and sustained his tenancy for 20 months. He'd stopped using drugs, and given up the prolific shoplifting that had funded his habit. He'd voted for the first time. He'd even got a cat.

In short, Wayne said, he "felt like a part of society for the first time ever".

Wayne's background might be shocking, but it's also tragically familiar. The lives of the most entrenched rough sleepers are frequently marked by early experiences of trauma, as well as substance dependency, family breakdown, poor health and sometimes criminality. For this group, the path to stability is a steep and often treacherous hill to climb.

As Housing Secretary I was determined to turn the tide on rough sleeping, and give this profoundly vulnerable group of people an opportunity to get their lives back on track. Difficult problems sometimes require drastic solutions, which is why I began to look at replicating the Housing First model and rolling it out across the country.

The idea was to take the existing 'treatment first' policy, and turn it on its head. The state would house rough sleepers facing the most serious challenges – such as mental health issues and addiction – without conditions, save for the willingness to maintain their tenancy. When they felt ready, we would then apply the intensive, personalised support needed to turn their lives around in a more stable environment.

Although this requires a significant investment upfront, similar schemes around the world have demonstrated that it works. I saw this for myself in Finland, where Housing First is rolled out nationally and rough sleeping has been all but eradicated. Because participants have reduced contact with homelessness, health and criminal justice services, it will save the taxpayer money in the long run.

Because of this, three years ago I persuaded the Treasury to fund three large-scale pilots in Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands. The pilots have already helped more than 550 people off the streets and into permanent homes, with many more to follow. As many

as 88 per cent of individuals supported by the pilots have sustained their tenancies, with an independent evaluation showing that those with a history of numerous failed tenancies are now staying put.

We must now finish the job. Redoubled efforts to support rough sleepers facing the most profound challenges will be critical to meeting the Government's ambitious target to end rough sleeping once and for all. That's what makes this report from the Centre for Social Justice both significant and timely.

A national Housing First programme would build on the foundations of the regional pilots – and the Government's ambitious efforts to provide accommodation during the pandemic – to deliver 16,500 homes and transformational support. It's an opportunity to give some of the most vulnerable people in our country a second chance, and welcome them back into society.

Four years on from meeting Wayne, I learn from his Housing First support workers that he has made excellent progress, developing the skills he needs to live independently: "He's come a long way, and is really proud of where he's at now – as are we."

We too have come a long way in addressing rough sleeping since 2017, and have a great deal to be proud of. But there is still much to do. No one should be forced to sleep on the streets. With programmes like Housing First, they won't have to.



Rt Hon Sajid Javid, MP for Bromsgrove

Chancellor of the Exchequer, 2019–20

Home Secretary, 2018–19

Housing Secretary, 2016–18

Executive summary

Rough sleeping has a devastating impact on people's lives, and the Government has made a bold and welcome commitment to end it. Building on the foundation of the Rough Sleeping Initiative, the Everyone In programme has protected tens of thousands of people from the dangers of rough sleeping during the pandemic. This has saved lives and will enable many people who had not previously engaged with services to leave rough sleeping for good.

The pandemic has made clear that the problem of rough sleeping extends far beyond its most visible forms. While the last national count identified that around 4,000 people slept rough on any one night before the pandemic, more than 30,000 people at risk of rough sleeping have been helped since March 2020. This includes many people whose homelessness was hidden from view, and whose precarious sleeping arrangements – in a homelessness shelter, on a friend's floor or sofa, on public transport – were no longer tenable once the pandemic struck.

While thousands of people helped by Everyone In are now on a pathway to a settled home, we are still seeing a flow of people new to rough sleeping coming onto the streets. Sadly, some of those initially offered emergency accommodation have also returned to the streets. These are often people who face multiple challenges such as serious mental health issues, a history of trauma and drug or alcohol dependency.

Housing First must be at the heart of the Government's strategy to end rough sleeping

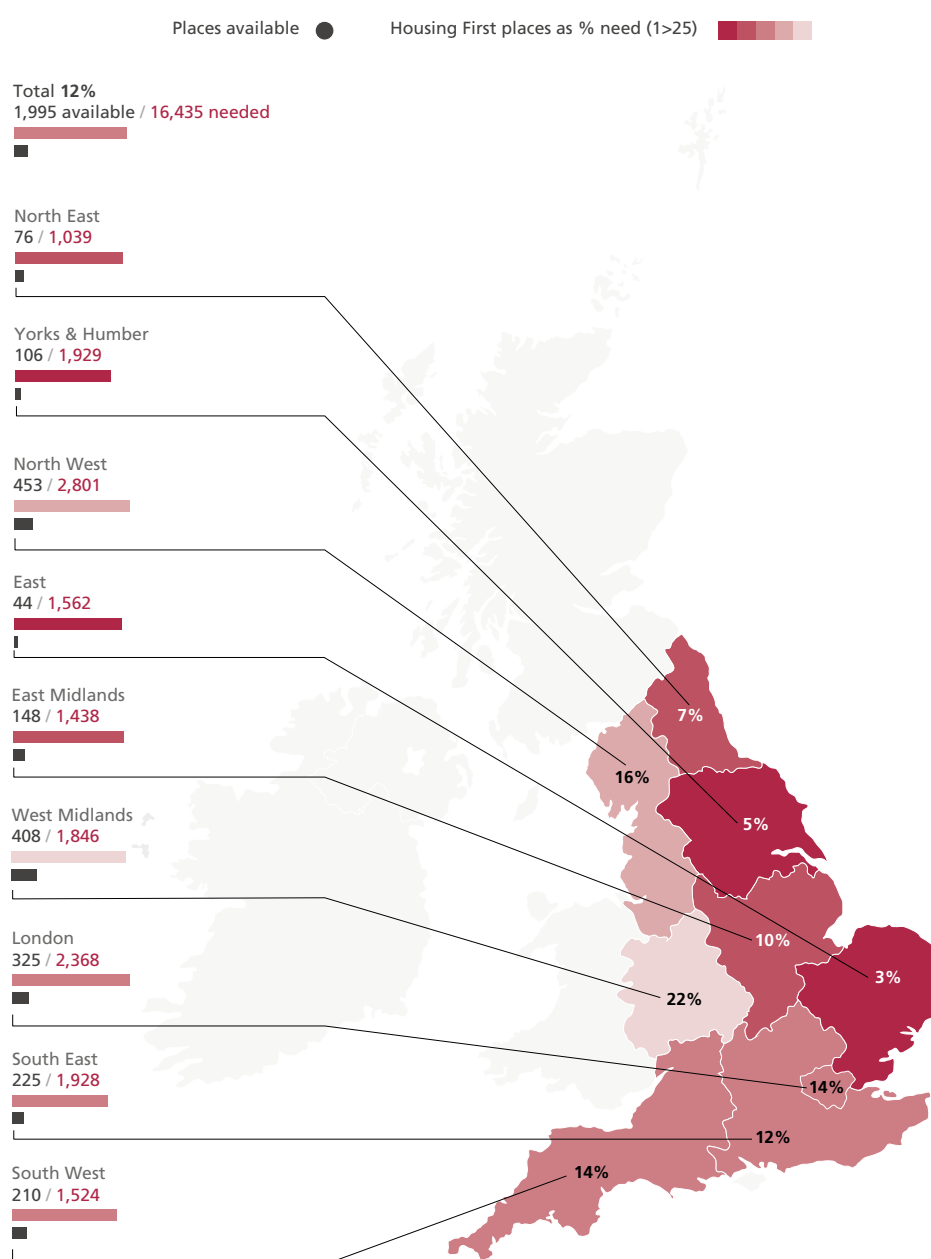
Housing First is an effective way of tackling and preventing rough sleeping for people whose homelessness is compounded by these types of challenges.¹ Instead of asking people to move into temporary accommodation and demonstrate their 'tenancy-readiness', Housing First provides ordinary settled housing alongside intensive, person-centred support. A Housing First place is offered without conditions other than an individual's willingness to maintain their tenancy. There is mounting evidence that this unconditional approach helps people with the most complex needs achieve better outcomes than services with conditions attached.²

1 Housing First is sometimes described as a philosophy that applies to everyone experiencing homelessness, but it is also a distinct service model targeted at people with high and complex needs and delivered in accordance with defined principles. This report is concerned with Housing First as a distinct, targeted service model.

2 Keenan, C. et al. (2020) *Accommodation-based programmes for individuals experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness: A systematic review and Network Meta-Analysis*. Campbell UK & Ireland, Queen's University Belfast, Centre for Homelessness Impact

The Government has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring Housing First is part of the response to rough sleeping. With its £28 million investment in three city region Housing First pilots and through the Rough Sleeping Initiative the Government has demonstrated its understanding of the difference that the Housing First approach can make to those whose homelessness is compounded by other significant disadvantage. But while we've seen a welcome rise in the number of Housing First places in England, there is potential for its impact to be far greater. The latest evidence shows that while at least 16,000 people would benefit from the approach,³ so far only around 2,000 places are available across England.⁴

ES Figure 1: Regional distribution of need and places for Housing First



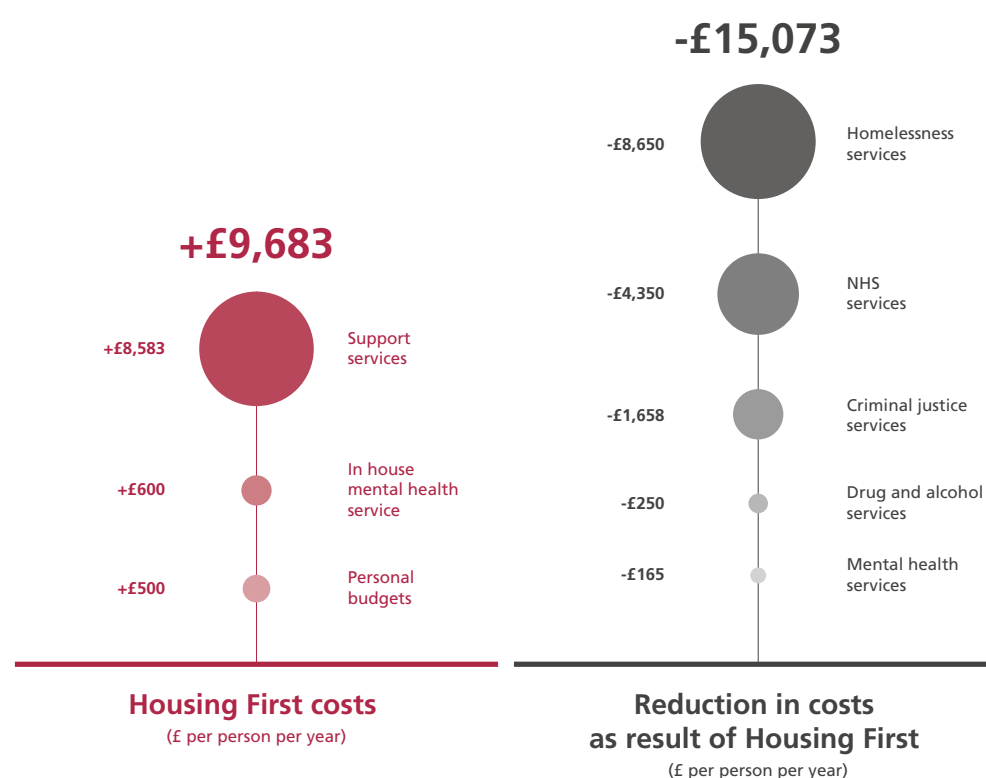
3 Blood, I. et al. (2018) *Implementing Housing First across England, Scotland, and Wales*. London: Crisis

4 Homeless Link (2020) *The Picture of Housing First in England*. London: Homeless Link

Evidence from the UK and abroad shows that Housing First works in ending and preventing rough sleeping for the vast majority of people with high and complex needs.⁵ Typically over 80 per cent of Housing First tenants retain their tenancies,⁶ with 88 per cent of those housed by the city region Housing First pilots by September 2020 doing just this. Stable housing and intensive support provide an essential platform for people to seek treatment for serious mental health issues and substance dependency, and this in turn reduces the impact that Housing First tenants might otherwise have on the criminal justice, emergency health and homelessness systems.

This means that as well as improving quality of life for individuals, Housing First is cost effective for the taxpayer. Where an estimated £9,683 is spent annually on average per Housing First client, £15,073 is saved on other bills including homelessness services, the criminal justice system, NHS and mental health services, as well as drug and alcohol support.

ES Figure 2: Costs and spending reductions for Housing First



Delivering a national Housing First programme

The clock is ticking on the Government's welcome and ambitious commitment to end rough sleeping by 2024. While the Rough Sleeping Initiative and the Next Steps programme have significantly boosted the resource available to support rough sleepers, the Government

⁵ Mackie, P. et al. (2017) *Ending rough sleeping: what works? An international evidence review*. London: Crisis

⁶ Ibid

must be even more ambitious to transform the lives of the rough sleepers facing the most profound challenges if it to meet its target. As a money-saving intervention with proven effectiveness for this group, more Housing First places are urgently needed.

The CSJ is therefore calling on Government to deliver a national Housing First programme and dramatically increase the number of Housing First places in England. Housing First should become the principal approach for people whose homelessness is compounded by multiple disadvantage.

Delivering a step change in the supply of Housing First places will mean reforming the way Housing First is currently funded and delivered to provide:

- Sustainable funding for long term and open-ended support, as well as an increased supply of homes that people on the lowest incomes can afford.
- Adequate time for set up and mobilisation, enabling local delivery agencies to put in place the partnerships, staffing and operational systems that underpin effective delivery of Housing First, involving housing providers, health and mental health agencies, adult social care teams and criminal justice services.
- National stewardship for the programme, involving the range of government departments that would benefit from it, including MHCLG, DHSC, the MoJ, Home Office and DWP.
- A 'high-fidelity' approach that adheres to the principles established by Housing First England to safeguard the effectiveness of the scheme.⁷

Government should start planning for scaling up at the earliest opportunity, ensuring that a national Housing First programme has maximum impact in ending rough sleeping before the end of the parliamentary term.

⁷ Homeless Link (2017) *Housing First in England: The Principles*. London: Homeless Link

Key recommendations

Recommendation 1

Provide sustainable funding for a national Housing First programme

- The Government should build on the foundations laid by the Rough Sleeping Initiative and Housing First pilots and commit an annual budget of £150.3 million for three years to deliver 16,450 Housing First places in England. Analysis presented in this report shows that these costs would be more than offset by savings in health, criminal justice services and the homelessness system. We find that every £1 released by HM Treasury for the programme would save £1.56 in these areas. Even so, the Government could consider a further increase in the Stamp Duty Land Tax surcharge for overseas buyers to offset the up-front costs of the programme.

The Housing First funding programme should:

- Encourage multi-agency commissioning and the use of multi-agency assessment panels to consider eligibility for Housing First;
 - Enable the delivery of both generic Housing First services and services targeted at particular groups including care leavers, survivors of domestic abuse and prison leavers;
 - Map out a vision for the longer-term future of Housing First funding and delivery, taking into account the cost benefits of Housing First across the full range of relevant statutory services, long term trajectories of support need, and the scope to reduce flow into Housing First services through wider preventative activity.
- The Government should create a joint MHCLG, Department of Health & Social Care, Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Department for Work and Pensions fund, backed by an outcomes monitoring framework reflecting the objectives of all contributing departments.
 - The national target for delivery of places to 2024 should be refined to take account of local assessments of need and locally agreed targets as these become available. These should be produced in accordance with a nationally agreed methodology.

Recommendation 2

Increase the supply of social and privately rented homes for Housing First

- To increase social housing supply in the short term, the Government should bring forward its £12.2 billion Affordable Homes Programme and harness the low costs of borrowing to enable housing associations and councils to acquire and build an additional 50,000 social rented homes a year over the next two years. Combined with increased supply from the private rented sector (see below) this would contribute significantly to the need for 16,450 one bedroom Housing First places, while ensuring not to displace wider social housing supply.
- As an immediate first step Government should review its approach to Housing First delivery through the RSAP as follows:
 - Instruct Homes England and the Greater London Authority to work with housing providers to identify options that will enable the renewal of time limited tenancies in homes funded through the first tranche of RSAP where feasible so that Housing First tenants are not automatically required to move to alternative accommodation;
 - Refocus the second tranche of the RSAP so that providers can bid to deliver permanent homes using open ended tenancies for people eligible for Housing First support through the RSI.
- To support the delivery of a new national Housing First programme, Government should provide ring-fenced funding to significantly expand a reformed RSAP, delivering permanent homes for Housing First as well as others moving on from rough sleeping. This must enable councils and housing associations to increase the supply of one bedroom homes, including accessible properties, at a level commensurate with the number of Housing First placements into the social housing stock. This provision should encompass acquisitions and tenure conversion, as well as new build, to maintain the supply of additional homes during any post-pandemic downturn. A key principle for this programme should be that the number of Housing First clients moving into social housing is matched by additional social housing provision.
- To ensure Housing First applicants can access social housing, Government should encourage local commissioners to prioritise partnership working with housing associations, ALMOS and council run housing services to agree how to manage housing applications, nominations and allocations as part of the set up process for new or expanded Housing First services, as well as addressing how Housing First tenancies will be managed. Delivery arrangements for Housing First should specify how access to social housing will be enabled including by:
 - Prioritising nominations and allocations for Housing First applicants;
 - Using direct lets where appropriate to work around barriers created by eligibility restrictions or practical challenges using Choice Based Lettings systems;
 - Reviewing allocations policy and systems to address eligibility and access barriers, ensuring that the individual circumstances of Housing First clients and others in housing need are taken into account through the application and allocations process for social housing.
- To maximise the role of private renting in providing housing options for Housing First services Government should ensure that a national Housing First programme includes further funding to establish or expand provision by social lettings agencies and other types of help to rent scheme. This should build on the learning from schemes funded through the RSI.

- To improve access to private sector tenancies for Housing First services, Government should:
 - Commit to continuing to invest in LHA so that it covers the bottom third of rents (30th percentile) for at least this Parliamentary term. This will give landlords, Housing First services and their clients certainty and security that Housing Benefit will cover the cost of rent, and maximise the supply of housing available to scale up Housing First;
 - Exempt people sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation from the benefit cap. This will be of particular benefit for Housing First clients in high pressure housing markets, where the cap has prevented renters from benefitting from LHA rates at the 30th percentile. It will help improve the range of housing options for services where affordable housing is most scarce.

Recommendation 3

Provide national stewardship

- A Housing First Programme Director should be appointed within MHCLG to steer the development and implementation of a national Housing First programme;
- Oversight of delivery should involve representation from MHCLG, Department of Health & Social Care, Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions as well as engagement with representatives of local government and sectors involved in the delivery of services at local levels, including the social housing sector and the homelessness service sector;
- The Housing First programme should be fully aligned with the Government's wider strategic approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping, including with the RSI and RSAP. Housing First funding streams from RSI and the RSAP should, in due course, be brought within a single consolidated Housing First funding stream to provide consistency of approach and longer-term certainty of funding;
- A national implementation plan should shape the delivery of funding, and should include:
 - A shared vision for Housing First, grounded in a high-fidelity approach, and a commitment that Housing First will become the principal approach for people whose homelessness is compounded by multiple disadvantage;
 - A standardised national framework for monitoring outcomes including housing stability and prevention of eviction, health and well-being, anti-social and offending behaviour, and progress towards training or employment. Outcomes data should be published and publicly available;
 - National and linked local targets for delivery of Housing First informed by bottom up and top down analysis of need. Local needs assessments should be delivered and targets set by local homelessness partnerships in consultation with national agencies and in accordance with a commonly agreed methodology as described in chapter 4;
 - Proposals for phasing the roll out of Housing First, combining realism about what can be delivered in the short-term with long-term ambition. In terms of the geographical distribution of places, this might in the first instance be focused on areas with the highest rough sleeping levels, while consolidating pre-existing services. At a local level, delivery plans should take account of the time needed to develop partnerships, protocols and operating systems, and build understanding of the Housing First model with local politicians, relevant agencies and the wider community;

- An assessment of housing supply requirements for Housing First and how these will be addressed at national and local level making use of both the social and private rented sectors and formulated in partnership with Homes England, the GLA/London Mayor and City Region Combined Authorities where appropriate (see chapter 5);
- Identification of workforce development needs and how these will be met in partnership with local authorities, housing and homelessness sector membership and representative bodies. This should include growing the workforce of people with lived experience to provide peer support;
- A commitment to sharing learning and to co-production with people with lived experience, underpinned by transparency about what is and is not working, with input from government advisors, sector led communities of practice and co-production panels that draw on the experiences of people who have been homeless;
- Proposals for a research and evaluation programme that captures:
 - The cost benefits of Housing First services, including by comparison with business as usual models;
 - The longer-term trajectories of support need of Housing First clients and outcomes achieved by services;
 - The examination of how Housing First can better improve outcomes in relation to health and substance dependency and solutions for the minority of people with high and complex needs who do not sustain Housing First tenancies.

As the programme is rolled out, Government should work with local delivery partnerships to develop:

- A national quality assurance framework that supports local delivery agencies to ensure fidelity to the agreed vision for Housing First. This might include:
 - The development of materials and processes to support self-assessment, peer review and performance benchmarking;
 - An accreditation framework focused on assessing fidelity and outcomes, drawing on learning from the fidelity evaluations of the city region pilots and engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness;
 - A training academy, with accredited qualifications for Housing First roles.
- Communication and engagement programmes that raise community awareness of the experience and drivers of homelessness and rough sleeping, how homelessness is being addressed locally and how local agencies and individuals can play a part in this. The voice of people with lived experience should be at the heart of this activity.

Introduction

The CSJ has long been an advocate of Housing First. In 2017 we published *Housing First: Housing-led solutions to rough sleeping and homelessness*.⁸ This set out the case for Housing First as a cost-effective, evidence-based response to tackling homelessness for people experiencing the greatest disadvantage. The city region pilots subsequently funded by Government are demonstrating great potential. While it is still relatively early days, staff delivering the pilots in the Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands report that the intervention is already having a positive impact on levels of rough sleeping. Importantly 88 per cent of people housed by the pilots have sustained their tenancies. Many have long histories of rough sleeping compounded by experiences such as past trauma, mental-ill health or substance dependency, but the tailored, intensive support provided by Housing First has enabled them to sustain a settled home.

The Government has made a bold and welcome commitment to end rough sleeping by the end of this parliamentary term – 2024, now less than four years away. All the evidence tells us that Housing First should play a central role in Government's plans to end rough sleeping. The Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the importance of providing settled, self-contained housing to keep people safe – and Housing First does just that. The pandemic has also helped to uncover the extent of rough sleeping and hidden homelessness, with more than 30,000 people provided with emergency assistance between March and November 2020. Everyone In has ensured that many people who had not previously engaged with services now have a roof over their heads, many still awaiting settled homes. Sadly though, some have returned to the streets, and charities report a continuing flow of people facing rough sleeping. For many, their homelessness is driven by multiple disadvantage – and interventions such as Housing First will be essential to prevent a further return to the streets.

While people with a history of rough sleeping are an important target group for Housing First, it can also play a preventative role for groups of people with high and complex support needs who are particularly at risk of homelessness including survivors of domestic abuse, people leaving prison and care leavers. When used in this way Housing First can protect more people from the damaging impacts of rough sleeping on individual life chances.

Housing First is not just about ending and preventing homelessness. By ending people's homelessness, Housing First unlocks a wider range of potential benefits both for individuals and for society as a whole. These include improvements in people's health and well-being and reduced contact with criminal justice services. Scaling up Housing First provides an opportunity to enable many more people to realise these benefits.

8 Gousy, H. (2017) *Housing First: housing-led solutions to rough sleeping in England* London: Centre for Social Justice

There is a huge literature supporting the case for Housing First, but less written about the logistics of implementation. With this report we have turned our attention to what a national Housing First programme should look like.

The report draws on early lessons emerging from the three city region pilots, based on discussions with staff from all three areas. We have also had the benefit of feedback provided by the ten agencies responding to our call for evidence – including national and local agencies – and discussions with agencies involved in delivering Housing First around the country. And we have spoken with colleagues delivering Housing First at scale in Finland, Scotland and Ireland to see what we would learn from their approach.

The focus of this study is on scaling up Housing First to increase its impact in ending rough sleeping. But this does not mean that Housing First is the only intervention needed to ensure the Government meets their 2024 target. Housing First is just one part of the broader strategic response needed to tackle rough sleeping – with a wider range of options needed for people with more moderate support needs, for those for whom Housing First is not suitable and for those who have no recourse to public funds and limited access to housing assistance. It was not within the scope of this study to address the wider range of interventions that are needed to tackle single homelessness, but these have been identified elsewhere.⁹

Housing First is sometimes described as a philosophy that applies to everyone experiencing homelessness as well as a distinct service model for a specific group of people.¹⁰ It is worth noting that this report is concerned with Housing First as a distinct model, delivered in accordance with defined principles and targeted at people with high and complex support needs, rather than as a broader housing-led approach to tackling homelessness.

As housing and homelessness policy are the responsibility of the devolved national administrations, this report is focused on scaling up in England. We do however draw on learning from elsewhere in the UK.

⁹ Downie, M. et al. (2018) *Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain*. London: Crisis

¹⁰ Homeless Link (2020) *Developing Housing First: The 'non-negotiables'*. London: Homeless Link

part one

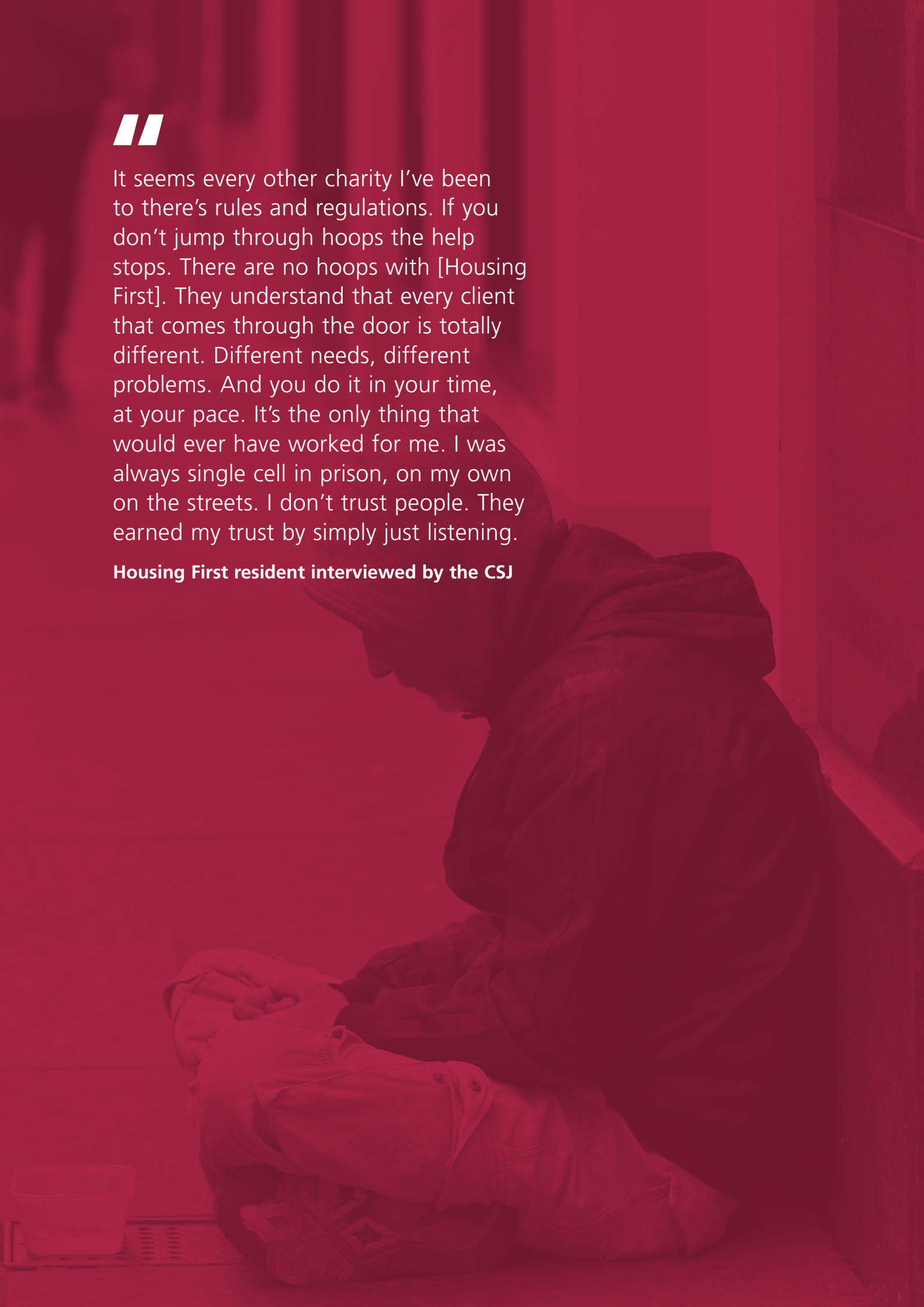
The case for a national Housing First programme

The Government is piloting Housing First as one element of a wider strategy to end rough sleeping. Part 1 of the report looks at the effectiveness of Housing First and the role it is playing in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping both in the UK and other countries. We outline trends in rough sleeping in England, the steps Government has been taking to tackle it, the way this has changed during the pandemic and the unmet potential for Housing First to help the Government deliver its ambition to end rough sleeping. We argue that Housing First should be at the heart of the Government's strategic response to ending rough sleeping, alongside a wider range of interventions tailored to meet the wide spectrum of individual needs. Without a commitment to scale up Housing First the Government risks jeopardising the achievement of its target to end rough sleeping by 2024.

//

It seems every other charity I've been to there's rules and regulations. If you don't jump through hoops the help stops. There are no hoops with [Housing First]. They understand that every client that comes through the door is totally different. Different needs, different problems. And you do it in your time, at your pace. It's the only thing that would ever have worked for me. I was always single cell in prison, on my own on the streets. I don't trust people. They earned my trust by simply just listening.

Housing First resident interviewed by the CSJ



chapter one

Housing First and its role in ending rough sleeping

In this chapter we present the evidence showing that Housing First is an effective way of ending rough sleeping for people whose homelessness is compounded by multiple disadvantage. We look at how it differs from other approaches to tackling rough sleeping, and how the outcomes that people achieve in Housing First are linked to a set of principles that guide service delivery. We set out the evidence showing that Housing First is a cost-effective approach, and the learning from countries that have scaled up Housing First so that it is the standard offer for people whose homelessness is compounded by multiple disadvantage.

1.1 What is Housing First and who is it for?

Housing First provides ordinary settled housing alongside intensive, person-centered support for people whose homelessness is compounded by multiple and complex support needs. Housing is offered without conditions other than an individual's willingness to maintain a tenancy. Housing First tenancies are most commonly provided in mainstream housing in either the social or private rented sectors rather than in communal settings (sometimes referred to as congregate Housing First). Housing First recognises that clients may not have straightforward journeys of progression. If participants disengage with support before or after becoming tenants, support workers are persistent in seeking to re-engage with them and cases remain open.

Ellen's Story

Ellen (not her real name) is 34 years old and as a child witnessed distressing violence in her family and her community. She left Ireland to escape an arranged marriage at the age of 15. She rotated between temporary accommodation and hostels but always found it difficult to get permanent accommodation due to having a dog. Ellen was taking drugs intravenously and begging to support her substance misuse. She had been living on the streets for seven years before being accepted into Housing First.

When Ellen entered the Housing First programme, she was staying at a hostel, and when the navigator first met her she was lying on her bed and was very unwell as a result of heroin withdrawal. Ellen agreed to accept support and was helped to access health services and get herself scripted on methadone. She moved into her Housing First property in December 2019 and since then has had it fully furnished, had lino flooring laid, white goods installed and has set up a direct debit with her electricity provider. Ellen is being supported with her budgeting and money management, completing fortnightly budgets with her navigator.

She has been stably housed since she moved in. She has stopped injecting drugs and has significantly reduced her alcohol use. Ellen maintains her property to a very high standard and is very house proud. She has daily contact with her navigator, either over the phone or home visits, and her navigator supports her with fortnightly food shopping on her pay day to support her to spend her money wisely and ensure all the necessities are paid for first. Ellen has said she wants to get involved in volunteering with animal shelters or Street Vets. She is also interested in doing a course and is considering options with the local college.

Housing First is a way of responding to homelessness for people who face complex and multiple challenges such as serious mental health issues, drug or alcohol dependency and a history of offending (see Ellen's story). Housing First is not solely a response to rough sleeping. While it is typically targeted at people who have histories of entrenched or repeat rough sleeping, it can also be used preventatively for those who are particularly at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping as a consequence of the multiple challenges they face. Its use as a preventative response in this way means more people are protected from the damaging impact of rough sleeping on health and life chances (see **The impact of rough sleeping** in Section 2.2). In some areas Housing First is used as a response for people who are no longer living on the street, but who have been unable to progress through a hostel pathway (see **Case study: Camden Housing First** in Section 3.1).

Housing First is underpinned by the following principles, considered in further detail in Section 1.5:

- People have a right to a home
- Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed
- Housing and support are separated
- Individuals have choice and control
- An active engagement approach is used
- The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations
- A harm reduction approach is used

The client group for Housing First typically includes people who may have revolved in and out of hostels or prison, who have previously abandoned or been evicted from social housing or who have been excluded from homelessness services or access to housing. This can challenge conventional perceptions and rules about who is eligible for to access permanent housing and require significant changes in statutory and voluntary agencies' systems and culture. These challenges were highlighted by staff taking part in the case studies for this report and are considered further in Part 2.

1.2 What Housing First is not

Housing First was not developed as an intervention for people with lower intensity support needs, and it is important to distinguish it from housing-led interventions for this group. The small caseloads and high intensity of support associated with Housing First are not financially justifiable when there are other more cost-effective solutions available. While it is important to distinguish between Housing First for people facing multiple disadvantage, and housing-led responses for people with lower to moderate support needs, many of the principles underpinning Housing First could equally apply to services for other people experiencing homelessness. Housing as a human right, person-centred support (albeit at lower intensity than for Housing First), unconditional access to housing and a harm reduction approach are values that could equally be applied to the way housing and support services are provided to all homeless people.¹¹

Similarly, Housing First is not, in isolation, an answer to homelessness or to rough sleeping.¹² Available information on the support needs of people who have experienced rough sleeping shows that not all have the complexity of support needs that would make them eligible for Housing First (see Section 2.2 **The profile of people experiencing rough sleeping and single homelessness**). A broader range of interventions are therefore needed as part of any strategy to end rough sleeping, and this should in turn be part of a wider strategic response to all forms of homelessness.¹³ There is a strong case for embedding a housing-led response to all forms of homelessness, not just for those with high and complex support needs (we share the learning on this from Finland and Scotland below). Analysis of the role of Housing First in tackling rough sleeping and homelessness has shown that it works best as part of an integrated homelessness strategy alongside effective prevention services, low intensity housing-led provision and emergency accommodation.¹⁴

¹¹ Blood, I. et al (2020) *Housing Led Feasibility Study for Oxfordshire. Summary Report*. London: Crisis

¹² Pleace, N. (2018) *Using HF in Integrated Strategies for homelessness: a review of the evidence*. York: University of York

¹³ Op. cit. Downie, *Everybody In*, 2018

¹⁴ Op. cit. Pleace, *Using HF in Integrated Strategies*, 2018; Blood, I. et al (2017) *Housing First Feasibility Study for the Liverpool City Region: Final Report*. London: Crisis

1.3 How does Housing First differ from other homelessness interventions?

Housing First operates in contrast to conventional responses to single homelessness in the UK provided through hostels and temporary supported housing. Under the conventional model, people experiencing homelessness are often expected to move through the hostel system and demonstrate their ‘tenancy readiness’ before being able to get access to mainstream housing.¹⁵ This has also been labelled a ‘housing last’ approach, and it typically means that access to housing is only possible when people have complied with requirements relating to their behaviour and, where relevant, agreement to accept treatment.¹⁶ There is evidence to suggest that interventions that provide unconditional access to accommodation for people with high support needs achieve better outcomes than services with similar levels of support but with conditions attached.¹⁷

For a minority of single adults experiencing homelessness, this traditional system can be particularly problematic. People facing multiple disadvantage may have needs that are rooted in past abuse or trauma, and experiences such as time spent in local authority care or prison.¹⁸ Mainstream hostels and supported housing schemes can be poorly equipped to meet the needs of homeless people with complex needs and, equally, some individuals may find it particularly challenging to comply with institutional rules and expectations.¹⁹ Recent evidence suggests ‘hostel avoidance’ – or what may be interpreted as a ‘voluntary’ return to rough sleeping – can also be understood as a rational response to a living environment that creates intolerable levels of stress for some individuals.²⁰

1.4 The origins of the Housing First model and its adaptation for the UK context

Housing First was originally developed by Pathways to Housing in New York in the early 1990s because conventional ‘linear’ approaches to supporting people with complex mental health needs who had experienced repeated rough sleeping and homelessness were not working.²¹ It reversed the conventional approach and offered independent permanent housing with no requirement to prove housing readiness or abstinence from drugs or alcohol. Instead, multi-disciplinary teams provided treatment, rehabilitation and support services to people who faced the greatest difficulties accessing mainstream services.²² A study of the Pathways approach in New York found that 88 per cent of previously chronically homeless people were stably housed after five years.²³

15 Johnsen, S. and Teixeira, L. (2010) *Staircases, Elevators and Cycles of Change: Housing First and Other Housing Models for People with Complex Support Needs*. London: Crisis

16 Op. cit. Blood, Housing First Feasibility Study for the Liverpool City Region, 2018

17 Op. cit. Keenan, Accommodation-based programmes, 2020

18 Bramley, G. et al (2015) *Hard Edges: mapping severe and multiple disadvantage in England*. Lankelly Chase Foundation

19 Op. cit. Mackie, Ending rough sleeping, 2018

20 McMordie, L. (2020) *Avoidance strategies: stress, appraisal and coping in hostel accommodation* Housing Studies, DOI: DOI: 10.1080/02673037.2020.1769036

21 Op. cit. Blood, Housing First Feasibility Study for the Liverpool City Region, 2017

22 Op. cit. Gousy, Housing First, 2017

23 Ibid

Evidence on the success of the New York approach led to Housing First being widely adopted across the United States, as well as then becoming a central component of national homelessness strategies in Canada, Denmark, Finland, and France.²⁴ As the model was exported from the US it has been adapted for the European and the UK contexts. The role of Housing First in Finland is considered further in Section 1.10 **Learning from countries that have scaled up Housing First**.

A guide and set of principles for Housing First has been developed for use in Europe,²⁵ and these have been further adapted for the UK (see Section 1.5 The Housing First principles in practice).²⁶

The original US model for clients with the most complex health needs typically involved direct provision of treatment and rehabilitation services by a multi-disciplinary team – known as Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) – as well as an Intensive Case Management (ICM) approach to connecting people to services provided by other agencies. The model as applied in England more typically relies solely on an ICM approach, in which support workers provide direct support to Housing First clients while connecting people to mainstream specialist health and treatment services provided by other agencies.²⁷ This in part reflects the differences in access to mainstream healthcare and treatment services in the US compared with the UK, but ACT models may have a role to play as Housing First is scaled up in England, for example for people with very complex health needs or in locations where access to services is limited.²⁸

Another adaptation of the Housing First model in the UK has been described as ‘Intensive Case Management plus’, where the Housing First team can draw on enhanced support from coordinated services.²⁹ This can be the case where Housing First operates in areas with other established services supporting people facing multiple disadvantage such as MEAM³⁰ or Fulfilling Lives.³¹ In these areas support workers are embedded within and can draw on broader services to support clients.

A further development of the model is the inclusion of specialist mental health posts within Housing First teams. This was recommended by a Housing First feasibility study conducted for the Liverpool City Region, reflecting stakeholder concerns that gaps in the provision of mainstream mental health services have the potential to undermine the sustainability of Housing First.³² The City Region pilots in Manchester and Liverpool are both providing mental health specialists as part of the Housing First service (see Section 3.3 **Early Learning from the City Region Housing First Pilots**). Providing services in this way does not remove the need to access mainstream mental health services for some clients. But it can provide capacity to deliver in house assessment of clients’ mental health needs

24 Ibid

25 <https://housingfirsteurope.eu/guide/core-principles-housing-first>

26 Op. cit. Homeless Link, *Housing First in England: The Principles*, 2017

27 Homeless Link (2015) *Housing First or Housing Led: The Current picture of Housing First in England* London: Homeless Link

28 Homeless Link (2017) *Housing First England. Guidance for Commissioners*. London: Homeless Link

29 Homeless Link (2018) *Understanding the implementation of Housing First in England*. London: Homeless Link

30 MEAM – Making Every Adult Matter – is an approach to providing services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage. It aims to ensure better local co-ordination and design of services for people experiencing a combination of problems including substance misuse, contact with the criminal justice system and homelessness. Further information: <http://meam.org.uk>

31 The Fulfilling Lives programme funds 12 local partnerships across England to support people experiencing multiple disadvantage, ensuring they receive joined up, person-centred services. Further information: tnlcommunityfund.org.uk

32 Blood, *Housing First Feasibility Study for the Liverpool City Region*, 2017

and address some of the barriers to accessing mainstream mental health provision. Mental health specialists can also support Housing First workers to implement psychologically informed responses tailored to individual needs.

1.5 The Housing First principles in practice

Principles underpinning the delivery of Housing First in England have been published by Homeless Link (see The principles of Housing First in England).³³ The principles and accompanying guidance on ‘fidelity’ are voluntary, so Housing First commissioners, providers and landlords can choose whether or not to adhere to them.

The principles of Housing First in England

People have a right to a home

- Access to permanent housing is provided as quickly as possible;
- Eligibility for housing is not contingent on any conditions other than willingness to maintain a tenancy;
- The individual will have a tenancy agreement, and will not lose their home if they disengage or no longer need support.

Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed

- The offer of support is open ended;
- The service is designed for flexibility in intensity of support, and provision for formant cases;
- The individual can be supported to transition away from Housing First if that is a positive choice for them.

Housing and support are separated

- Support is available to help people maintain a tenancy and address any other needs they identify;
- Housing is not conditional on engaging with support;
- The offer of support stays with the individual – if the tenancy fails, the individual is supported to access and maintain a new home.

Individuals have choice and control

- There is choice about the type and location of housing, within reason as defined by the context;
- There is choice about whether or not to engage with other services, and about where, when and how support is provided by the Housing First team;

³³ Op. cit. Homeless Link, Housing First in England: The Principles, 2017. The principles were developed as part of the Housing First England (HFE) project set up by Homeless Link in 2016 with funding from Lankelly Chase and Comic Relief to broaden the reach of Housing First and to embed effective practice.

- Support is person-centred and individuals are given the lead to shape the support they receive.

An active engagement approach is used

- Staff are responsible for proactively engaging their clients;
- Caseloads are small, allowing staff to be persistent and proactive, doing whatever it takes, and not giving up with engagement is low.

The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations

- Services are underpinned by philosophy that there is always a possibility of positive change, with improved health, wellbeing, relationships and community or economic integration;
- Individuals are supported to identify their strengths and goals, and to develop the skills they need to achieve these;
- Individuals are supported to develop increased self-esteem and confidence, and to integrate into their local community.

A harm reduction approach is used

- Staff support individuals who use substances to reduce immediate and ongoing harm to their health;
- Staff aim to support individuals who self-harm to minimise risk of greater harm;
- Staff aim to promote recovery in other areas of physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Delivering services in accordance with these principles has been shown to deliver a range of positive outcomes and cost benefits, including high rates of tenancy sustainment (see **Section 1.7 The impact and outcomes of Housing First**). There are a number of practical implications of adherence to the principles that can challenge conventional ways of commissioning and delivering services.

The Housing First approach delivers a genuinely person-centred way of providing support. Analysis of residents' journeys and learning from the City region pilots has shown that typically this involves very intensive support to engage with people while they consider whether to accept the offer of a Housing First tenancy and both before and immediately after they move into their home.³⁴ The intensity of support may then gradually decrease for some people as their confidence and capabilities grow, but this is not true for all Housing First tenants. Some individuals require intensive support over long periods of time, while for others there the intensity of support need may fluctuate, sometimes linked to events in their lives.

34 Op. cit. Homeless Link, Exploring patterns of Housing First support, 2019; MHCLG (2020) *Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots: Interim Process Evaluation Report. Final Report* London: MHCLG

I was on a death wish and if it weren't for them never giving up on me cause I gave up on myself a long time ago... they never gave up on me, they didn't just say "she's drunk again just leave her", they never stopped coming back and physically, emotionally and in every way picked me up... I wouldn't be sat here today were it not for that involvement and it worked and it payed off. My kids have their mum back and it changed mine and my children's lives.

Housing First resident³⁵

Supporting people to sustain their tenancies in this way, at the same time as helping them navigate access to mental health and treatment services, rebuild social networks and take part in meaningful activity, is highly labour intensive. Consequently, Housing First teams need to operate with caseworker to client ratios that are much smaller than the norm for floating support services. A maximum caseworker to client ratio of 1:7 is recommended, but in some cases, for example in the early phases of service development or where clients are geographically dispersed, this may need to be as low as 1:5.³⁶ Caseloads of between 1:5 to 1:7 are seen by many in the field as critical to enabling people to sustain their tenancies.

To deliver the principles effectively, Housing First teams need staff that can operate with a high level of autonomy, skill and knowledge, who are practical and flexible, and who understand the model.³⁷ Reflective practice is recommended to support staff in delivering the role effectively, and it is important that staff are trained in a range of psychologically-informed approaches and have access to clinical supervision.³⁸ Although not explicit in the principles, there has also been a growing emphasis on the value of co-production of services with people with lived experience of homelessness, and also of employing peer support workers to improve the impact of Housing First.³⁹

A further practical issue is the tension between the principle that Housing First support is provided for as long as it is needed and the often short term focus of conventional commissioning practice.⁴⁰ The open-ended commitment to support is grounded in the reality that many Housing First clients have experienced significant trauma and adversity and may require long term and perhaps lifetime support. While there is evidence that for some the intensity of support needed will reduce over time, and a minority of clients may ultimately graduate from Housing First, the open-ended support principle is important to underpin the impact of Housing First. This can be challenging to achieve when short-term commissioning timescales are the norm.

35 Op. cit. Homeless Link, Exploring patterns of Housing First support, 2019

36 Homeless Link (2019) *Delivering high fidelity Housing First: Guidance for services*. London: Homeless Link

37 Op. cit. Blood, Implementing Housing First, 2018

38 Homeless Link (2017) *Housing First England. Guidance for Support Providers*. London: Homeless Link; University of Southampton/DCLG/College of Medicine/Pathway (2012) *Psychologically informed services for homeless people. Good practice guide*

39 Op. cit. Homeless Link, Guidance for Support Providers, 2017

40 Blood, I., Pleace, N., Alden, S. & Dulson, S. (2020) 'A Traumatized System': Research into the commissioning of homelessness services in the last 10 years. York: University of York; Rice, B. (2018) *Investigating the current and future funding of Housing First in England Exploring innovation and identifying opportunities to sustain and expand Housing First services*. London: Homeless Link

This was identified as a key challenge by a number of call for evidence respondents, as this example illustrates:

I think one thing that people locally, and I'm broadly speaking, struggle with is this idea that you will be paying for the support, potentially, forever, because it's a fidelity model, and I think the historic model of looking at supported housing in the city, as it has been for most places, is that stepping-stone approach, and, eventually, somebody just comes out the other end. That's it, they never need any support ever again! What the Housing First model says is, 'No, no, we're just going to stay with you'.

Housing First commissioner, CSJ call for evidence

1.6 The question of 'fidelity' to Housing First principles

Adherence to the Housing First principles is important to ensure services achieve positive outcomes and are cost effective. But adherence is also voluntary; a decision for funders, commissioners and providers.⁴¹ Given the patchwork of Housing First funding and service provision that currently exists in England (described in **Section 3.1 The current profile of Housing First provision in England**), it is perhaps not surprising that there are some variations in practice.

Evidence provided by agencies and individuals participating in the CSJ study highlighted that most believe that adherence to the principles is important, echoing an evaluation of Housing First England which found that there is broad support for the principles, and that these are "well used and valued".⁴²

A 2015 review of practice found that the extent of fidelity to the principles was mixed, however.⁴³ While some Housing First services were reported to consider adherence to the principles as critical to the service, others had compromised on factors such as intensity of support (for example through higher caseloads for support workers or limiting contact hours) and the open-ended commitment to support and the focus on clients with the most complex needs. As a consequence, some schemes that described themselves as Housing First in England at that time did not meet all the expectations of a Housing First service as defined by the Homeless Link principles.

While there are more recent indications of a growing commitment to a high-fidelity approach,⁴⁴ our research highlighted concerns that funding constraints are leading some commissioners to seek to compromise on fidelity. One call for evidence respondent noted that *"councils are looking for a cheaper solution and high fidelity Housing First cannot compete with less stringent alternatives that call themselves 'housing first approaches'."* Another commented:

41 Adherence to the principles is supported and promoted by Housing First England which provides a range of resources for service providers and commissioners and which runs Housing First communities of practice to share learning.

42 Moreton, R. et al (2019) *Evaluation of Housing First England: A report for Homeless Link*. Leicester: CFE Research

43 Homeless Link, *Housing First or Housing Led*, 2015

44 Homeless Link (2020) *The Picture of Housing First in England*. London: Homeless Link

We've been approached by a number of LAs who have been looking to deliver 'Housing First' models that are not aligned to Housing First principles. They have adapted the model to meet their needs but haven't considered the customer's experience and in doing so have undermined the fidelity of the approach. This has ranged from using shared accommodation, using Assured Shorthold Tenancies and offering reduced or time restricted support. This reduces the success of the model and those failing are potentially used to demonstrate that Housing First doesn't work.

Housing Association, CSJ Call for Evidence

There are wide concerns that the adoption of practices that do not adhere to the Housing First principles – providing genuinely person-centred support on an unconditional basis – will put people at risk of losing their tenancies.⁴⁵ This in turn risks leaving people with the most complex support needs vulnerable to a return to rough sleeping, while at the same time discrediting the concept of Housing First. Ultimately then, compromising on fidelity to the principles risks jeopardising outcomes and undermining the value of investment in a service for a target client group with few other options. These risks were highlighted by a number of agencies taking part in our research, including in all three city region pilot areas (see report Annex) and by a number of respondents to our call for evidence.

One agency submitting evidence to the CSJ study took a different position to the majority of views expressed, arguing that the importance of fidelity has been overstated, and that there is a case for flexibility in implementing the principles. This was a social landlord, who suggested that insistence on a high-fidelity approach to Housing First implementation is *"overly prescriptive, and has become a barrier to effective roll out of a practical Housing First offer to people."* This was a minority view, however, with most case study participants and call for evidence submissions arguing that a high level of fidelity is critical to the transformative impact of the intervention.

Given the evidence of divergent opinion and practice, the question of fidelity would benefit from further attention at national level, establishing a commonly agreed position on what constitutes Housing First that is grounded in the Housing First England principles. This will be critical to ensure that investment in Housing First delivers value for money.

1.7 The impact and outcomes of Housing First

There is extensive international evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of Housing First as an intervention to end individuals' homelessness and deliver wider positive outcomes for people with multiple and complex needs.⁴⁶ The Centre for Homelessness Impact finds that Housing First programmes have been shown to produce positive results relating to housing stability, crime and employment, and studies meeting high evidential standards show that these results are consistent and durable over time.⁴⁷

45 Pleace, N. & Bretherton, J. (2012) *Will Paradigm Drift Stop Housing First from Ending Homelessness? Categorising and Critically Assessing the Housing First Movement from a Social Policy Perspective*. York: University of York

46 Op. cit. Mackie, Ending rough sleeping, 2017

47 <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/intervention/housing-first#highlight>

There are also a growing number of qualitative studies that we outline below on the impact of Housing First in the UK. These demonstrate the positive impact it can have for a client group that is often failed by current homelessness and treatment systems and services. These studies, combined with the international evidence base, provide a strong foundation for the continued expansion of Housing First in England.

There remain some gaps in the UK evidence base that need to be addressed, however, including to assess longer term impacts and provide more evidence on cost benefits, trajectories of support need, and the effectiveness of Housing First for subgroups of the population.⁴⁸ The scaling up process will provide an opportunity for further research in these areas, which we highlight in our recommendations in Part 2 of the report.⁴⁹

Housing stability

The vast majority of people who become Housing First tenants successfully sustain their tenancies. This is contrary to a prevailing view that people experiencing multiple disadvantage should be required to prove their capability to manage a tenancy. International evidence on housing outcomes shows that 60 per cent – 90 per cent of Housing First tenants retain their homes, with retention rates typically around 80 per cent.⁵⁰



England's Housing First regional pilots achieved 88% tenancy sustainment rates

Evidence of housing stability has been consistently echoed by projects in the UK, including a 2015 evaluation of nine Housing First projects across England, and subsequent evaluations of individual services across England.⁵¹

By September 2020, the English City Region Housing First pilots were achieving an 88 per cent tenancy sustainment rate, with a range of 86 per cent and 89 per cent (see **Section 3.3 Early Learning from the City Region Housing First Pilots**). In Scotland, where five Housing First pathfinders began in 2018, 87 per cent of the 327 tenancies started by September 2020 were still being sustained (see **Scotland Case study** in **Section 1.10 Learning from countries that have scaled up Housing First**).

48 Op. cit. Mackie, *Ending rough sleeping*, 2017

49 Op. cit. Mackie, *Ending rough sleeping*, 2017

50 Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (2013) *Improving Health and Social Integration through Housing First: A Review*. York: Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, FEANTSA; and Ibid

51 Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) *Housing First in England An Evaluation of Nine Services*. York: University of York; Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (2017) *The Threshold Housing First Pilot for Women with an Offending History: The First Two Years Report of the University of York Evaluation*. York: University of York; Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2017) *The Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First Pilot: Interim Report*. York: University of York; Jones, K., Gibbons, A. and Brown, P. (2019) *Assessing the impact of Housing First in Brighton and Westminster* University of Salford/St Mungos

Criminal justice outcomes

There is growing international evidence that Housing First has a positive impact on criminal justice outcomes, with some evidence of Housing First tenants engaging in significantly reduced levels of criminal activity.⁵²

There are also encouraging findings from some UK studies. The 2015 review of nine Housing First services found that while crime, anti-social behaviour and begging had not stopped in all instances, many service users reported that they were either less involved in these activities than had once been the case, or had ceased being involved altogether. Of the 59 service users providing outcomes information for the 2015 review 53 per cent had been arrested in the year before joining Housing First compared with 36 per cent since becoming a Housing First tenant. Begging had reduced from 71 per cent to 51 per cent, and anti-social behaviour from 78 per cent to 53 per cent.



Housing First reduces anti-social and criminal behaviour

The Threshold Housing First project was originally set up in 2015 to work with women with a history of offending and homelessness in Tameside, Stockport and Oldham. A University of York evaluation found evidence of 'clear reductions in offending behaviour, particularly among women who had been rehoused.'⁵³ These improvements were not universal. Of the 33 women supported by the project during the period of the pilot, four were either returned to prison and/or committed an offence during their time with Threshold Housing First. But for the majority there was a marked reduction in offending behaviour. Staff from statutory agencies interviewed for the project evaluation reported that the service was having a direct impact in reducing reoffending by tackling criminogenic risk factors. The majority of women supported by the pilot were parents, and a further positive outcome of the service was that it enabled some participants to take steps towards re-establishing contact arrangements.

Positive outcomes in reducing offending were also observed during an evaluation of the St Mungos Housing First service in Brighton and Hove.⁵⁴ This is a small service, with just six placements, but the review found that service users that had previously been in regular contact with the criminal justice system, including the police and antisocial behaviour officers, had minimal contact once they engaged with Housing First.

52 Op. cit. Mackie, Ending rough sleeping, 2017

53 Op. cit. Quilgars, Threshold Housing First Pilot, 2017

54 Op. cit. Jones, Assessing the impact of Housing First in Brighton and Westminster, 2019

Health and well-being

Successive literature reviews have reported that health and well-being outcomes of Housing First for individuals are more mixed than housing and criminal justice outcomes.⁵⁵ They note that studies may record improvements in physical and mental health, but there is often no substantive difference between the outcomes reported for comparator groups receiving treatment as usual.

Evidence for UK schemes reflects the international evidence, suggesting that the impact of Housing First on the health and well-being of individual tenants is mixed. Evidence from the 2015 review of nine services in England found while some tenants reported improvements in health, mental health, social integration and drug and alcohol use, these were not uniform.⁵⁶

An independent examination of Turning Point Glasgow Housing First pilot, one of the earliest Housing First projects in the UK, included an assessment of the broad trajectories of change in the lives of tenants in relation substance misuse and wider well-being.⁵⁷ It identified three groups amongst the 22 people assessed, highlighting that over the three year pilot period around half experienced 'sustained positive change', a quarter had 'fluctuating experiences' and a quarter saw 'little observable change'. For the positive change group substance misuse stabilised or reduced and involvement in criminal or street culture activity ended. The fluctuating experiences group experienced periods of re-engagement with street culture and disengagement with support, which meant that staff increased the intensity of support to help people get back on track. For the remaining quarter of tenants, substance misuse, activities such as begging and low-level criminality continued at similar levels to before joining the project. For this group the key benefit of the project was that housing stability and ongoing support enabled tenants to engage with health services, but management of people's housing was an ongoing challenge.

Recent analysis has examined factors that may impact on individuals' ability to use the foundation of Housing First, and the choice and control it offers, to achieve positive change in recovery from substance misuse.⁵⁸ This identified the importance of tenants' biographies in predicting outcomes, suggesting that those with an accumulation of the most traumatic life experiences and the least social capital were more vulnerable to relapse and disengagement from support.

These studies highlight the need for a continuing examination of individual trajectories in Housing First and of the way that services can be refined and developed to improve health and well-being impacts for all.

55 Op. cit. Mackie, Ending rough sleeping, 2017; Baxter, A. J., Tweed, E. J., Katikireddi, S. V., & Thomson, H. (2019).

Effects of Housing First approaches on health and well-being of adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness: systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials. J Epidemiol Community Health, 73(5), 379–387

56 Op. cit. Bretherton, Evaluation of Nine Services, 2015

57 Johnsen, S. (2013) *Turning Point Scotland's Housing First Project Evaluation Final Report* Edinburgh: Heriot Watt University

58 Parker, C. (2020) *The role of biographies in determining recovery in Housing First*, Housing Studies, DOI: 10.1080/02673037.2020.1803800

1.8 The impact of Housing First for individual groups

In some areas, Housing First is being delivered as a targeted intervention for specific groups of people, including young people, survivors of domestic abuse and prison leavers, and there are positive early indications of its potential as one of a range of options available to each client group. This early evidence suggests there is a case for further testing of the targeted use of Housing First as part of a wider roll out of provision.

Young people

The Scottish youth homelessness charity, the Rock Trust has been delivering a Housing First service for care leavers aged 16–25 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in West Lothian since 2017. An independent evaluation of the service has highlighted the positive impact of the scheme for the first ten young people supported by the service, all of whom had experienced significant and multiple disadvantage.⁵⁹ All ten clients had experienced some level of childhood trauma, and the majority of the young people had experienced domestic or institutional abuse. All of the young people came to the service with a history of complex needs and behavioural issues, including non-attendance or exclusion from school, going missing, offending behaviour and physical/verbal aggression, and most had past or current issues with alcohol and/or drugs. Over half of the young people presented with mental health issues, and four were at risk of self-harming. All but one of the young people successfully sustained their tenancy (which for some involved a home move), and other positive outcomes were also reported relating to improved health and well-being, and improved personal relationships. For some of the young people this included re-starting education or training, or beginning to make plans for college. One of the young people reported that they had started looking for work:

They've helped me put together my CV and gone round with me helping me to hand it in, because of my anxiety, I just couldn't walk in somewhere and do that by myself.⁶⁰

The CSJ also received early evidence from another service focusing on care leavers which is the subject of an independent evaluation due for publication in 2021. The service is based in London and has the capacity to support ten care leavers. Staff reported that the service has faced a number of delivery challenges, included challenges obtaining access to suitable housing and the impact of reductions in spending on wider services to support young people locally. Despite these, the provider commented that the project had already had a positive impact for many of the young people involved. While progress was not always linear (see Alan's Story), the flexible, person-centred and non-conditional approach has allowed them to build trusting relationships and remain in regular contact with the Housing First team.

⁵⁹ Blood, I., Alden S., and Quilgars, D. (2020) *Rock Trust Housing First for Youth Pilot*. Housing First Europe Hub/Rock Trust

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Alan's Story

Alan (not his real name) was taken into care under the age of 10 due to parental substance misuse and domestic violence. He experienced various care and foster placements, and as a teenager developed dependencies on class A drugs and became involved in criminal activity. Alan was referred to the Housing First project on leaving prison in 2019. He had reduced his drug use and was feeling positive about moving forward, but delays in accessing accommodation and a breakdown in his relationship with family saw Alan spend time sleeping rough, reconnecting with a negative peer group and increasing his use of drugs. During this time, Alan was in regular contact with his Housing First workers, who would meet him on the streets and in other settings to provide support. He was supported with accessing emergency accommodation, making a benefits claim and signing up with a GP, and was referred to specialist substance and mental health support. Alan was made an offer of permanent accommodation and moved into a council property in late 2019. He took on casual work soon after and continued to remain in contact with the Housing First team and wider services. However, Alan went missing for a time and it emerged that another adult was staying in his property. When the Housing First team re-established contact with Alan, he was moved back into temporary accommodation. He is currently waiting for a property transfer, but has reduced his drug use and is engaging in support from the Housing First team.

These services demonstrate the potential of Housing First in responding to the needs of young people who face multiple disadvantage, including care leavers. Importantly also, they show the potential of Housing First as a preventative service for young people at particular risk of rough sleeping.

Survivors of domestic abuse

There is emerging evidence of the potential role that Housing First can play as one of a range of interventions for survivors of domestic abuse. Housing First is one of the range of measures included as part of the 'Whole Housing' approach to tackling domestic abuse developed by Standing Together Against Domestic Violence and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance.⁶¹ Agencies delivering Housing First for women have highlighted the critical importance of a gender-informed approach to shaping services, recognising the particular needs of women who have experienced domestic abuse.

The evaluation of the Threshold Housing First service mentioned above provides evidence of the positive impact Housing First can have for women who have experienced violence and abuse.⁶² Almost all of the women using the service had experienced domestic abuse, and agencies interviewed for the evaluation noted that the service had a 'protective' impact in providing stable accommodation and enabling women to leave abusive situations.

A second project targeted at women who have experienced violence and abuse is being delivered by Westminster City Council, specialist domestic abuse support provider Solace Women's Aid and five housing associations. The partnership started taking referrals in Spring 2019 with capacity originally to support five women with connections to the local authority of Westminster and five women from other London boroughs. Staff involved

61 DAHA Whole Housing approach Toolkit: Whole Housing Toolkit – daha – Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (dahalliance.org.uk)

62 Op. cit. Quilgars, Threshold Housing First Pilot, 2017

in delivering the service report positive outcomes for many of the women supported to date, including those sustaining tenancies for the first time in their lives.⁶³ By December 2020, eight of the nine women entering tenancies had sustained these, two women had been housed for a year and two women had started college.⁶⁴

1.9 The costs and cost effectiveness of Housing First

Costs of delivery

The available literature suggests that the costs of delivering Housing First can vary quite widely between projects in England. Examples of the range of costs of support for one client over a year identified by successive studies are as follows:

- 2015 analysis of nine Housing First pilots: Annual support costs per client ranged from £4,056 to £6,240 based on 3 hours support per client per week, with a mid-range cost of £5,304 (reflecting a range of costs per hour of £26 to £40);⁶⁵
- 2018 analysis of 15 Housing First services: £3,492 to £5,641 based on 268 hours of support per annum (where pay rates varied between £9 and £17 per hour and caseloads varied from 3 to 10 clients to support worker);⁶⁶
- 2017 projection of the costs of delivering a high-fidelity Housing First service across the Liverpool City Region estimated staffing costs for the support service at £10,338 (assuming support workers with salaries at £33,600 for caseload of 1:5, one team leader per 20 clients with salary at £45,400 and organisational overheads at 15 per cent);⁶⁷
- 2017 evaluation of the high-fidelity Threshold Housing First pilot for women with an offending history identified an annual support cost of £9,192.⁶⁸

The 2015 and 2018 comparative costs analyses outlined above encompassed studies with a range of hourly pay rates and caseload ratios. Some of the services analysed were paying no more than national minimum wage, and some were operating with ratios above the recommended maximum 1:7.

It has been speculated that schemes funded as part of pilots with philanthropic or one-off innovations funding may have higher costs than services subject to local authority commissioning frameworks.⁶⁹ Costs may also be influenced by the scale of service being established, and whether services are slotting into an existing management and operational structure or involve the creation of a substantial new team and operating framework, as for example where services are set up to operate at scale across city regions.

63 APPG on Ending Homelessness transcript 8th December 2020: appgeh-hf-3rd-session-minutes-081220.pdf (crisis.org.uk)

64 Ibid

65 Op. cit. Bretherton, Evaluation of Nine Services, 2015

66 Pleace, N. & Bretherton, J. (2019) *The Cost effectiveness of Housing First in England* London: Homeless Link

67 Op.cit. Blood, Housing First Feasibility Study for the Liverpool City Region, 2017

68 Op. cit. Quilgars, Threshold Housing First Pilot, 2017

69 Op. cit. Pleace, Cost effectiveness of Housing First, 2019

The CSJ's analysis in 2017 of the costs of scaling up Housing First used the results of the 2015 study, with a benchmark cost of £5,304. Drawing on the learning since then it is clear that a higher cost range will be needed to deliver a high fidelity approach to services with salaries at a level capable of attracting suitably skilled staff. For the purposes of calculating costings for this study (see Chapter 4), we have assumed an annual average support cost per place of £8,600, in line with the Liverpool City Region analysis presented above but assuming a caseloads of 1:6 instead of 1:5 (see Chapter 4 for our recommendations on scaling up services). A caseload of 1:6 is the mid-point of the recommended range of between 1:5–1:7, and drawing on the evidence of the pilots and other areas interviewed for this research, is considered an appropriate assumption for costing a high fidelity Housing First service.

Drawing on the learning from the city region pilots (Section 3.3), we also recommend that Government funding includes provision for dedicated mental health support for Housing First services (see recommendations in Section 4.6). The Liverpool City Region study mentioned above costed the provision of second tier mental health support for a new Housing First service at £12,000 per 20 clients per annum.

We also recommend that a national Housing First programme includes provision for personal budgets. Personal budgets are an important element of the package of support that helps encourage people to engage with Housing First and then to sustain their tenancies. They enable support workers to meet crisis needs when clients first engage with services and during their tenancy (for example, essential items of clothing or topping up utilities bills), as well as to help provide essential furniture, curtains or equipment when people move into their homes, or to support access to meaningful activity such as exercise classes. Budgets of between £1,000 to £2,000 per resident are typical. Personal budgets may not in themselves meet all the needs that clients have during the course of a tenancy, so any funding allocation should ideally be supported through other funding sources such as local grants and furniture programmes.

Cost effectiveness

International evidence from the US, Canada and Finland suggests that spending on Housing First creates potential for offsets in public spending, because participants have reduced contact with homelessness, emergency health and criminal justice services.⁷⁰ As Housing First is not itself low cost, the greatest potential to generate offsets arises when Housing First is focused on people with high support needs who are frequent users of other homelessness services and health services and/or who have frequent contact with the criminal justice system.⁷¹



Where £9,700 is spent on supporting a Housing First client, the taxpayer saves £15,100

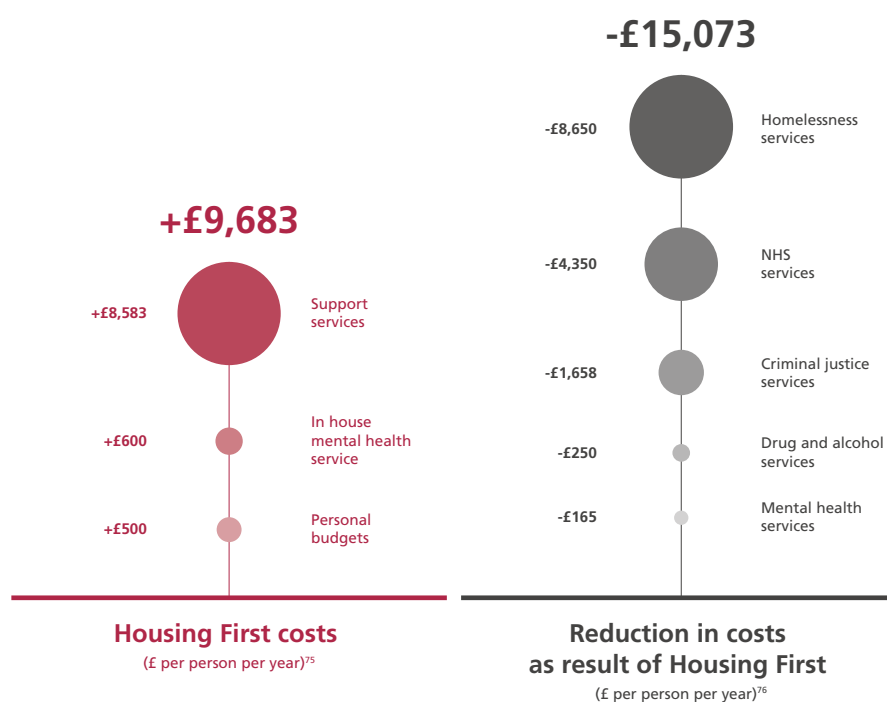
⁷⁰ Op. cit. Mackie, Ending rough sleeping 2017

⁷¹ Op. cit. Preece, Cost effectiveness of Housing First, 2019

UK studies have echoed international evidence on the potential for cost savings. Modelling of potential cost offsets associated with Threshold Housing First pilot identified a range of possible cost outcomes depending on the extent to which residents would typically have contact with emergency healthcare, criminal justice and mental health services.⁷² These ranged from savings of £12,196 a year for clients who would otherwise have high levels of contact with services to no savings, or a net cost, where there would have been very little engagement with services otherwise (the latter scenario was judged to be unlikely).

Drawing on modelling by Heriot Watt University, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimated that if Housing First is rolled out as the default option for homeless adults with complex needs in the UK it could save £200 million a year after two years of implementation at scale.⁷³ The assumptions for this analysis included retention of transitional accommodation for the minority of the complex needs client group – up to 20 per cent – for whom the model may not be suitable.⁷⁴

Figure 1: Costs and spending reductions for Housing First



Analysis for this study has identified that the reduction in public service costs typically generated by Housing First more than offsets the costs of providing Housing First (Figure 1). As Figure 1 shows, the reduction in spending on homelessness services alone offsets the cost of Housing First, while reductions in spending on other areas delivers wider savings.

⁷² Op. cit. Quilgars, Threshold Housing First Pilot, 2017

⁷³ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2016) *UK Poverty: Causes, Costs and Solutions*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ The cost of Housing First is based on the costs presented above, drawing on Blood, Housing First Feasibility Study for the Liverpool City Region, 2017

⁷⁶ The cost reduction data used here is taken from analysis of the costs of homelessness conducted by PWC for Crisis in 2018, using the lower end costs from a range identified by PWC. This means that, if anything, the cost effectiveness of Housing First will be greater than suggested by these figures. The analysis identifies changes in costs associated with services used. It does not include housing costs (eg the cost of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit, or any additional claims associated with Housing First). See: PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (2018) *Assessing the costs and benefits of Crisis' plan to end homelessness*. London: PwC.

The forthcoming evaluation of the city-region pilots will provide further cost-benefit evidence in due course, but the weight of evidence to date suggests that scaling up Housing First effectively would deliver reductions in spending on health and criminal justice services and provide a positive return on investment over time.

1.10 Learning from countries that have scaled up Housing First

A number of countries and cities have moved from piloting Housing First to rolling it out as a mainstream intervention, including Finland, Denmark, Canada, the US, France, and Brisbane and Melbourne in Australia.⁷⁷

In Ireland, following the positive outcome of a pilot Housing First programme in Dublin between 2011 and 2014, the decision was taken to mainstream Housing First delivery and roll it out nationally.⁷⁸ A National Implementation Plan shaping national rollout was launched jointly by the Ministries of Housing and Health, with a national director responsible for programme delivery.⁷⁹ This is based on delivering a high-fidelity approach to Housing First, with fidelity assessment part of national monitoring and evaluation processes. National and local targets have been set as part of an iterative process, while delivery is co-ordinated via regions. The programme also involves collaboration with criminal justice agencies to deliver Housing First services for prison leavers.

Closer to home, the Scottish and Welsh Governments have confirmed their intention to scale up Housing First as part of wider programmes to embed a housing-led response to all forms of homelessness.⁸⁰

For this study, we took a more detailed look at the learning from Finland and Scotland. In both countries Housing First is one part of a wider programme to end homelessness. These wider strategies are in both cases underpinned by a commitment to deliver cultural and systems change in the national approach to tackling homelessness, alongside major investment to increase the supply of social rented housing.

Finland

Finland has placed Housing First at the heart its approach to tackling homelessness since 2008 and, since that time, has all but eradicated rough sleeping and has made significant strides in reducing long term homelessness (see **Case study: Housing First in Finland**).⁸¹ While the Housing First model is central to Finland's wider long-term strategy to end homelessness, it is by no means the only factor in its success and it is helpful to understand the other factors that have played a part.⁸² These include a long-term commitment to increase the supply of social housing, and a high degree of political consensus that has enabled the long term roll out of a consistent strategic response to homelessness. Critically, Finland's national programme to end homelessness and the roll out of Housing First were

77 Op. cit. Downie, *Everybody In*, 2018

78 Government of Ireland (2018) *Housing First National Implementation Plan 2018–2021*

79 Ibid

80 Scottish Government (2018) Ending homelessness together: high level action plan; Working to prevent homelessness: Minister accepts in principle new recommendations to end homelessness in Wales | GOV.WALES

81 Hytönen, T., Kaakinen, J. & Turunen, S. (2017) *Finland: Towards ending homelessness instead of managing it*. In *Homeless in Europe. The Magazine of FEANTSA*, Summer 2017

82 Op. cit. Preece, *Integrated Strategies*, 2018

underpinned by municipal/national partnerships with national and local government collaborating to develop and implement the new approach in partnership with the third sector (see case study report).

Scotland

Housing First is set to play a key role in the Scottish Government's plans to end homelessness (see **Case study: Housing First in Scotland**). There is an ambition that Housing First will become the default response to homelessness for everyone with high and complex support needs.⁸³

As in Finland, increasing social housing supply lies at the heart of the Scottish approach. There is presumption that housing is a human right, supported by the abolition of the distinction between priority and non-priority need under Scottish homelessness law. A national action plan for ending homelessness has been shaped through collaboration between national and local government and the third sector, and a partnership approach is now underpinning the roll out of five Housing First pathfinders.

The pathfinders were launched in 2018, and will deliver 830 tenancies by 2022, sharing learning that will inform the wider roll out of Housing First. Funding for the pathfinders has been provided by a combination of Government and philanthropic fundraising, with delivery oversight and funding of the programme managed by the Corra Foundation and Homeless Network Scotland rather than directly by Government. Scottish Government oversee the project through a governance group also involving Corra, Social Bite and Homeless Network Scotland, and in consultation with a wider advisory group involving local government and third sector agencies. Consultation is underway on a national framework to guide Housing First scaling up in Scotland, which will be supported by a national outcomes framework and a quality assurance approach, both currently in development.⁸⁴

The evaluation team have published a year one report on learning and positive practice from the pathfinders, highlighting the importance of collaborative partnership to deliver the systems change needed to scale up Housing First.⁸⁵ Housing First is also being scaled up beyond the pathfinders, with every local authority asked to map out plans to expand provision as part of Rapid Rehousing transition plans.⁸⁶

⁸³ Scottish Government (2018) Ending homelessness together: high level action plan

⁸⁴ Homeless Network Scotland (2020) *A National Framework to Start-up and Scale up Housing First in Scotland 2021–2031. Public Consultation Version*

⁸⁵ Homeless Network Scotland (2020) Annual check up on Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder, May 2020

⁸⁶ Indigo House (2018) *Scotland's transition to rapid rehousing. Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans. Guidance*. Glasgow: Glasgow Homelessness Network

Case study: Housing First in Finland

In Finland Housing First is viewed both as an operating model for tackling long term homelessness and an ideology that informs the wider national approach to homelessness.⁸⁷ Although there are some differences in focus between Finnish and UK interpretations of the Housing First model⁸⁸ and differences in socio-economic context between the two countries,⁸⁹ Finland's approach provides useful insights into the logistics of rolling out Housing First nationally.

The decision to implement a national Housing First programme in Finland required 'a complete reversal in how homelessness was thought about.'⁹⁰ Roll out of the programme was grounded in collaboration across national and local government and the third sector, with all parties contributing to a shared goal. At a practical delivery level, 'Letters of Intent' between cities and national government included targets for the allocation of social housing to people experiencing long-term homelessness and set out the funding available to support delivery of additional homes and the recruitment of support workers.⁹¹ These letters also map out wider activities that will be delivered to contribute to the objective of ending homelessness.

While the Housing First model is central to Finland's wider long-term strategy to end homelessness, it is by no means the only factor in its success.⁹² Underpinning the roll out of Housing First has been a long-term commitment to increase the supply of social housing as the key intervention in tackling homelessness. This commitment has included a specific focus on increasing the supply of permanent homes for single people experiencing homelessness. A housing association dedicated to this objective – the Y-Foundation – played a key role in delivering the increase in the supply of homes targeted originally at single homeless people and more recently at all experiencing homelessness. It acquires and builds flats to let at social rents with the support of government grant and loans, and typically these are then leased to housing providers.

A further factor supporting the success of the national programme has been political consensus about the programme's objectives, methods and cost-benefits. This has been critical to its longevity and impact:

- In 2008 it published a National Programme – PAAVO I – aiming to half long-term homelessness by 2011. PAAVO I delivered a 25 per cent reduction in long term homelessness, and resulted in a dramatic reduction in the use of homelessness shelters. In Helsinki in 2008 there were 600 hostel and shelter beds; 10 years later there were 52 emergency beds.⁹³
- A second national programme (PAAVO II) aimed to eliminate long term homelessness by 2015. Increasing social housing supply and delivering Housing First were central to this, but PAAVO II also placed a stronger focus on homelessness prevention and tackling hidden homelessness. While long term homelessness wasn't ended, it was further reduced.

87 Y-Foundation (2018) *A Home of Your Own. Housing First and ending homelessness in Finland*. Keuruu: Y-Foundation

88 In Finland "congregate" models of Housing First are part of the response, in addition to apartments scattered within mainstream housing. Congregate Housing First typically provides self-contained apartments within a block that also has communal living spaces and on-site staffing.

89 Pleace, N. (2017) The Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016–2019: The Culmination of an Integrated Strategy to End Homelessness? In *European Journal of Homelessness*, Volume 11, No. 2, September 2017

90 Y-Foundation (2018) *A Home of Your Own. Housing First and ending homelessness in Finland*. Keuruu: Y-Foundation

91 See example letter in Y-Foundation, *A Home of Your Own*, 2018

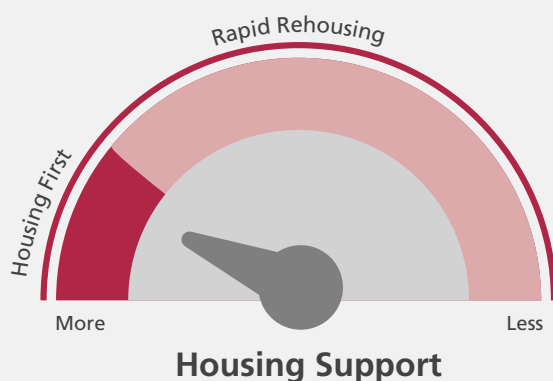
92 Op. cit. Pleace, *Integrated Strategies*, 2018

93 Pleace, N. (2017) The Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016–2019: The Culmination of an Integrated Strategy to End Homelessness? In *European Journal of Homelessness*, Volume 11, No. 2, September 2017

- A national Action Plan for the period 2016–2019 aimed for further increases in affordable housing supply alongside a focus on meeting the needs of specific client groups including women, young people and migrants. As long-term homelessness has been reduced significantly, hidden and migrant homelessness are now key areas of focus.
- Acknowledging the critical role of additional housing supply in preventing homelessness a new agreement has been put in place between the state and the main cities to secure an increase in the proportion of social homes delivered on new sites from 25 per cent to 30 per cent. Building on progress over the last decade, the current national target is to end homelessness by 2027.

Case study: Housing First in Scotland

In 2018 the Scottish Government published an Action Plan setting out the steps it would take to end homelessness in Scotland.⁹⁴ The Ending Homelessness Action Plan commits to implementing rapid rehousing by default for all people experiencing homelessness, meaning that families, couples and single adults should be housed in settled, mainstream accommodation that meets their needs as quickly as possible rather than placed in temporary accommodation for long periods of time. Housing First is seen as one part of a wider spectrum of housing-led solutions to homelessness:



Local authorities have been tasked with producing and implementing “Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans” to enable a move towards rapid rehousing and Housing First by default, with Government funding of £15 million to support this.⁹⁵ Local authorities have produced ‘gap analyses’ setting out the scale of need for additional housing and support provision for people experiencing homelessness in their area, including the scale of need for Housing First. In parallel, there is a national commitment to increase the supply of social rented housing in Scotland, with a target of 35,000 new homes for social rent to be delivered between 2016/17 and 2020/21.

For people experiencing homelessness and facing the most significant disadvantage, the ambition is to provide Housing First as the default response. To help achieve this commitment the Government commits to scale up both Housing First and other specialist support options for those who need them, and to provide additional capacity to support local areas with this process. Research is currently underway in Scotland to examine the role of supported housing

⁹⁴ Op. cit. Scottish Government, Ending homelessness together, 2018

⁹⁵ Op. cit. Indigo House, Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, 2018

in the context of rapid rehousing by default, and to consider how services need to be tailored to meet the needs of the minority of people experiencing multiple disadvantage for whom Housing First is not suitable.⁹⁶

To drive the scaling up of Housing First, five Housing First pathfinders have been created to deliver 830 tenancies between 2018 and 2022. £6.5 million funding for this has been provided by Government, with a further £3.5 million raised by the social business Social Bite. Delivery oversight and funding of the programme is managed by the Corra Foundation and Homeless Network Scotland, and progress overseen by a governance group involving Scottish Government, Corra, Social Bite and Homeless Network Scotland. An advisory group involves a broader cross section of local government and third sector agencies. Multi agency partnerships are delivering services in each area, with fifteen agencies involved in delivering support across the five areas.

An independent evaluation process is underway, and there is a strong emphasis on transparency and shared learning. Learning from the pathfinders will inform the wider roll out of Housing First. The pathfinder process is addressing what a longer-term funding programme might look like, with the evaluation considering costs and the potential for savings across the homelessness and wider public sector. A year one evaluation report has shared learning and best practice from the pathfinders, highlighting the importance of collaborative partnership to deliver the systems change needed to scale up Housing First.⁹⁷ This includes a collective approach to tackling risk, and sharing learning on what works. The tenancy sustainment outcomes of the Scottish Pathfinders have been comparable with the international evidence. By September 2020:

- 327 tenancies had been started, of which 87 per cent were still being sustained (284 current tenancies).
- Of the 43 (13 per cent) of tenancies ended around half were not successfully sustained (eg they were abandoned), while around half were due to the death of a tenant or a long-term prison sentence.
- There have been no evictions from Housing First tenancies.⁹⁸

Housing First schemes were operating in a number of areas before the pathfinders, and more services are planned as part of local authorities' Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans. Together it is anticipated that legacy and planned schemes will deliver 350 places in addition to the pathfinders by the end of 2020/21. There is a national ambition to grow provision to 3,650 tenancies a year over 10 years.⁹⁹

96 Shared Spaces: Future role of supported housing as a response to homelessness – Homeless Network Scotland: we are all in

97 Op. cit. Homeless Network Scotland, Annual check up, 2020

98 <https://homelessnetwork.scot/housing-first/pathfinder/tracker/>

99 Op. cit. Homeless Network Scotland, National Framework to Start-up and Scale up Housing First, 2020

chapter two

Rough sleeping and single homelessness in England

In this chapter we look at the scale and profile of rough sleeping and single homelessness, the impact the COVID-19 pandemic and the way the Government is tackling the problem. We make the case for an increased role for Housing First to ensure that people facing the greatest disadvantage are properly supported to end their rough sleeping.

2.1 Rough sleeping and single homelessness trends before COVID-19

Rough sleeping

While rough sleeping makes up a relatively small proportion of the number of people experiencing homelessness, it is the most visible and dangerous form of homelessness and is understandably a significant cause for concern among politicians and civil society (see “The impact of rough sleeping”).

Rough sleeping has risen significantly over the last decade. According to the annual count published by MHCLG the number of people seen sleeping rough on any given night peaked in 2017, at 4,751 people. Since 2017 there has been a modest reduction in the number of people counted as rough sleeping by this measure, with 4,266 people recorded as sleeping rough in 2019. Analysis for MHCLG found that the number of people recorded as sleeping rough in the annual count fell between 2017 and 2019 in areas receiving funding under the rough sleeping initiative.¹⁰⁰ This may also help to explain the decrease in the national count.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ MHCLG (2019) *Impact Evaluation of the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018*. London: MHCLG

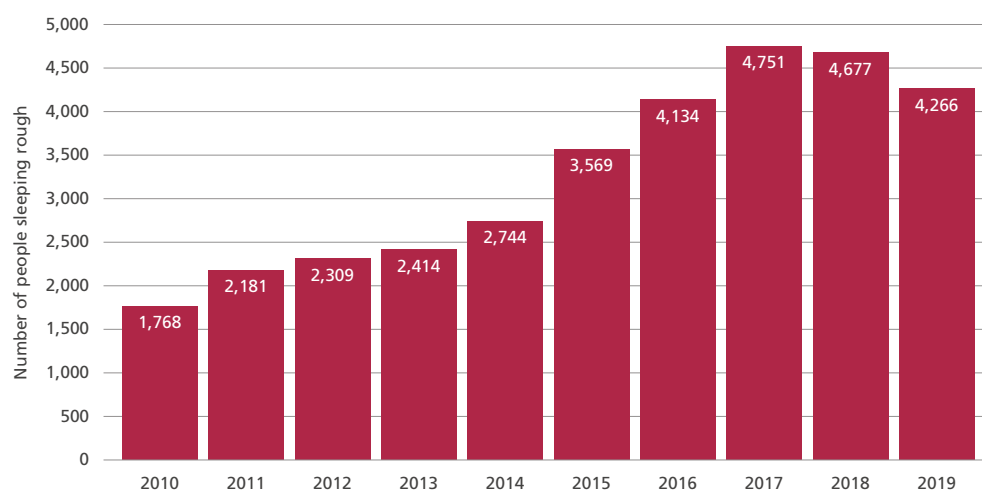
¹⁰¹ Fitzpatrick, S. et al (2019) *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019*. London: Crisis

The impact of rough sleeping

Rough sleeping has an extremely damaging impact on people's health and well-being, affecting physical and mental health and personal safety:

- **Rough sleeping deaths:** Mortality rates among homeless people are far higher than for the general population.¹⁰² It is estimated that 778 people in England and Wales who had been sleeping rough or living in emergency accommodation died in 2019, representing a 61 per cent increase since 2013 when data first became available, and a 7 per cent rise on the previous year.¹⁰³
- **Physical health needs:** 88 per cent of rough sleepers report physical health problems, with 49 per cent reporting long term health conditions.¹⁰⁴ This includes higher rates of tuberculosis and hepatitis compared with the general population,¹⁰⁵ injuries following assault on the streets and high rates of respiratory conditions.¹⁰⁶
- **Mental health needs:** More than 40 per cent of people sleeping rough have a mental health condition, and those with mental health problems are 50 per cent more likely to spend a year or more on the streets.¹⁰⁷
- **Personal safety:** 77 per cent of rough sleepers have been a victim of crime or antisocial behaviour in the previous 12 months including 30 per cent who had experienced violent crime and 6 per cent who had been the victim of sexual assault.¹⁰⁸
- **Domestic abuse:** 54 per cent of St Mungo's female clients that slept rough have experienced violence or abuse from a family member, and 33 per cent said that domestic abuse contributed to them becoming homeless.¹⁰⁹

Figure 2: Local authority rough sleeper estimates 2010–2019 (England)¹¹⁰



102 Op. cit. Downie, Everyone In, 2020

103 Deaths of homeless people in England and Wales – Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

104 Homeless Link (2014) *The Unhealthy State of Homelessness – Health Audit Results 2014*. London: Homeless Link

105 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002) *Addressing the health needs of rough sleepers*. London: ODPM

106 Groundswell (2016) *Room to breathe: Room to Breathe* – Groundswell

107 St Mungo's (2016) *Stop the scandal: an investigation into mental health and rough sleeping*. London: St Mungos

108 Sanders, B. and Albanese, F. (2016) 'It's no life at all.' *Rough sleepers' experiences of violence and abuse on the streets of England and Wales*. London: Crisis

109 Bretherton, J. & Pleace, N. (2018) *Women and Rough Sleeping: A critical Review of Current Research and Methodology*. York: University of York

110 Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019 – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Measuring the number of people who experience rough sleeping is inherently challenging, and there is no one dataset that provides a comprehensive picture of rough sleeping in England (see **Measuring the scale of rough sleeping in England**).

It is widely acknowledged that while the annual rough sleeping count can be useful for monitoring trends over time, it does not provide a comprehensive record of the scale of rough sleeping.¹¹¹ Other data sources and evidence gathered in the initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that the number of people sleeping rough in England on any one night may be in the region of 7,000–10,500.¹¹² The numbers helped through the ‘Everyone In’ programme – including people at risk of rough sleeping – had reached 34,000 by November 2020, further illustrating the limitations of the annual count (see **Section 2.4 COVID-19, ‘Everyone In’ and the impact for people experiencing rough sleeping**). This underlines the importance of ensuring that any strategy to tackle rough sleeping is grounded in an understanding of the wider scale of single homelessness.

The CSJ’s 2017 report on homelessness and Housing First recommended that the Government improve the quality of data on rough sleeping by rolling out the methodology used by the Greater London Authority (GLA) for monitoring homelessness in London to the rest of England (known as CHAIN – the Combined Homelessness and Information Network).¹¹³ The CSJ continues to urge Government to introduce this change.

Recommendation

The Government should take steps to introduce a national CHAIN-style database to improve the quality of evidence about rough sleeping and the characteristics of people experiencing rough sleeping.

Measuring the scale of rough sleeping in England

The annual count published by MHCLG for England (see Figure 2) is based on a combination of counts and estimates from local authorities to record the number of people sleeping rough on a ‘typical night’.¹¹⁴ While the long term trend has been one of rising numbers, this dataset suggests a decline in the number of people sleeping rough on any given night over the last two years from a peak of 4,751 in 2017 to 4,266 in 2019.

An alternative and more robust database captures data on rough sleeping in London.¹¹⁵ The CHAIN (Combined Homelessness and Information Network) records numbers of people sleeping rough in London over a year using homelessness service provider records. Over the period that the national dataset recorded a decline in rough sleeping, CHAIN found

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² The number of people recorded as rough sleeping as part of the Everyone In initiative at the start of the pandemic was 7,000. Analysis by Heriot Watt University estimated that in the region of 10,500 people were sleeping rough on any given night in 2020.

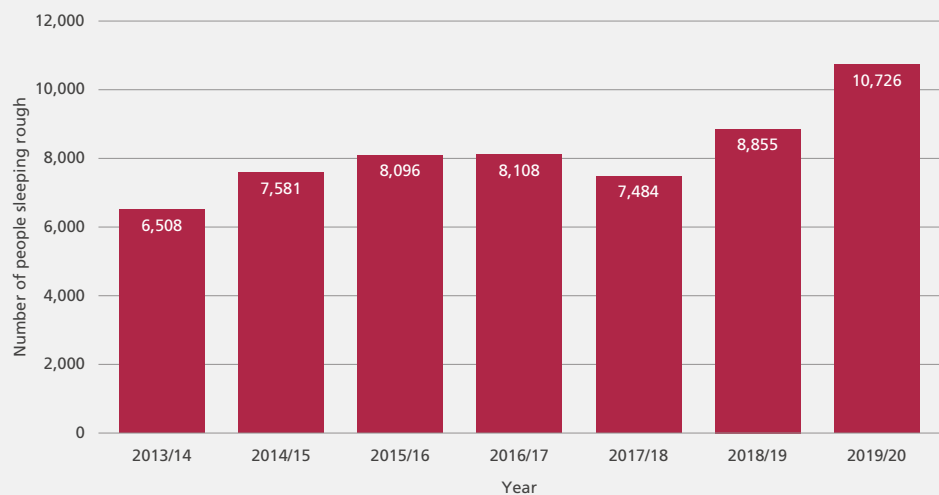
¹¹³ Rough sleeping in London (CHAIN reports) – London Datastore

¹¹⁴ Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019 – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹¹⁵ Rough sleeping in London (CHAIN reports) – London Datastore

that homelessness in London had continued to rise, from 7,484 people in 2017/18 to 10,726 in 2019/20. This compares with the national nightly count figures suggesting levels of rough sleeping in London stood at 1,136 in 2019, having fluctuated over the last three years.¹¹⁶

Figure 3: CHAIN rough sleeping estimates for London 2013/14–2019/20



A further approach to assessing the scale of rough sleeping has been developed for Crisis by Heriot Watt University as part of a wider programme to quantify and forecast levels of 'core homelessness'.¹¹⁷ This combines panel and household surveys, statutory statistics and academic studies to quantify the scale of rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness. A 2020 update of this analysis projected that there were 10,500 individuals and families sleeping rough on any one night in England in 2020, representing five per cent of the 202,300 households identified as being within the core homelessness group.¹¹⁸ The same study projected that the number of people forced to sleep rough could rise to 15,000 by 2026 without action to address the drivers of homelessness.

Single homelessness

The number of single adults experiencing single homelessness is far greater than the scale of rough sleeping, and the two are connected. A high proportion (in the region of 75 per cent–80 per cent) of single homeless adults have slept rough at some point in their lives.¹¹⁹

Analysis of the scale of single homelessness in 2017 projected that there were in the region of 77,000 single homeless adults in England on any one night, and a flow of people in and out of single homelessness in the region of 200,000.¹²⁰ The same research found that around 10 per cent of people experiencing single homelessness on any

¹¹⁶ Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2019 – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹¹⁷ Core homelessness describes the most acute forms of homelessness, including rough sleeping, sleeping in cars tents and public transport, unlicensed insecure squatting, sleeping in sheds, staying in night or winder shelters, unsuitable temporary accommodation and short term insecure sofa surfing.

¹¹⁸ Forthcoming: Crisis (2020) *Core homelessness and projections: 2020 update*. London: Crisis

¹¹⁹ Reeve, K. (2011) *The hidden truth about homelessness: Experiences of single homelessness in England*, London: Crisis.

Mackie, P. & Thomas, I. (2014) *Nations apart? Experiences of single homeless people across Great Britain*. London: Crisis

¹²⁰ Rowe, S. and Wagstaff, T. (2017) *Moving on: Improving access to housing for single homeless people in England*. Crisis: London

one night were rough sleeping, while the largest proportions were staying in hostels or shelters (45 per cent), sofa surfing (32 per cent) or squatting (13 per cent). For many single homeless people the only form of shelter available comes from tents, cars or public transport.¹²¹ Crisis' updated core homeless figures show that on any given night in 2020 202,300 households are experiencing rough sleeping, sofa surfing, living in hostels, B&Bs and other nightly paid accommodation and living in non-residential buildings including squatting.¹²² The majority of people counted by the core homelessness data set are single adults, so since 2017 the number of single homeless people will have increased.

There are around 34,000 bedspaces for single homeless people in hostels and other types of temporary homelessness accommodation in England.¹²³ Homeless Link estimates that between 10–20 per cent of people in touch with homelessness services have the complexity of support need that means they would qualify for Housing First.¹²⁴ People living in hostels make up one part of the wider potential client group for Housing First described in Section 3.2 of the report.

2.2 The profile of people experiencing rough sleeping and single homelessness

The national rough sleeping count database also provides information about the characteristics of people recorded as sleeping rough in England:

- the majority of rough sleepers (70 per cent) are found in London and the southern half of England (South East, South West and East), with around 30 per cent in the North West, North East, West and East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber (Figure 4);
- People aged under 25 make up around 5 per cent of recorded rough sleepers nationally, while 14 per cent are female;
- The majority of people sleeping rough (64 per cent) are from the UK, 22 per cent are EU nationals and 4 per cent are neither UK or EU nationals (nationality was not recorded for 10 per cent of rough sleepers).

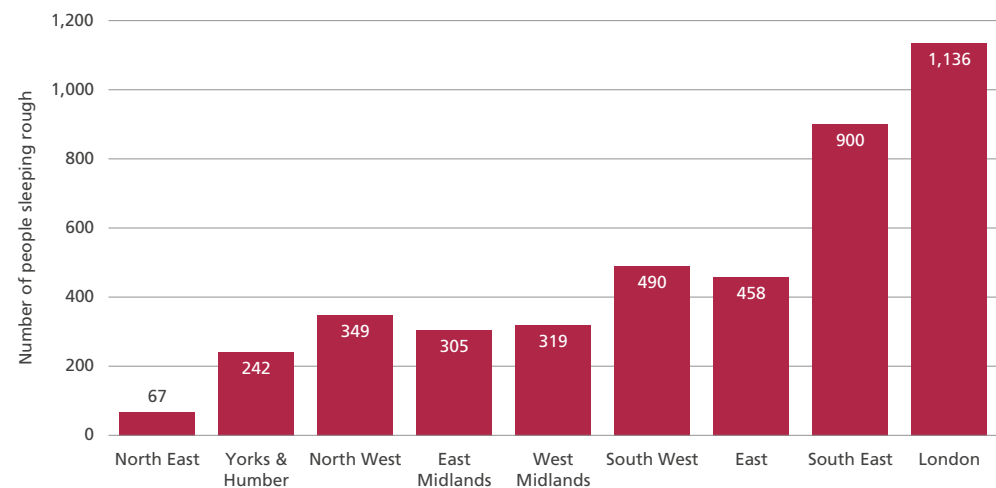
121 Op. cit. Mackie, *Nations apart*, 2014; Op. cit. Forthcoming: Crisis, Core homelessness, 2020

122 Op. cit. Forthcoming: Crisis, Core homelessness, 2020

123 Homeless Link (2020) *Support for people experiencing single homelessness in England. Annual Review 2019*. London: Homeless Link

124 Op. cit. Homeless Link, Housing First or Housing Led, 2015

Figure 4: Number of people sleeping rough by region¹²⁵



Data from CHAIN provides us with a more detailed breakdown of information about the profile of people experiencing rough sleeping in London. This suggests that just under a quarter of people sleeping rough in London have no support needs,¹²⁶ while two fifths have two or more needs relating to drugs, alcohol or mental health issues (see The profile of people sleeping rough in London). This also tells us that a third of people sleeping rough in London have spent time in prison, while one in ten have experience of living in care.

It has been estimated that across England as whole in the region of a third of people experiencing all forms of single homelessness have low or no support needs, while two thirds may have moderate to high levels of need.¹²⁷ People whose experience of homelessness is compounded by past trauma, mental health conditions or substance dependence are likely to need tailored support to resolve their homelessness and sustain a settled home.

Recent analysis of the experience of people who had slept rough within the past year, commissioned by MHCLG, found that half had first slept rough at least five years ago, and two fifths over ten years ago.¹²⁸ The same study echoes earlier research¹²⁹ in showing that people sleeping rough have often previously been hidden homeless, with nearly a quarter (23 per cent) reporting that they had been sofa surfing before sleeping on the street. A fifth of respondents had previously been in a hostel or another form of short-term homeless accommodation, suggesting a significant group of people are cycling in and out of homelessness services. Over a fifth (12 per cent) had left either prison or hospital. While only 7 per cent of respondents were currently working, 80 per cent had previously been employed.

125 The geographical distribution of rough sleeping differs from the distribution for people requiring Housing First, see Section 3.2 How many people would benefit from Housing First in England?

126 Support needs arise because of factors such as mental health conditions (for example, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder or experience of other trauma) or drug and alcohol dependency

127 Op. cit. Rowe, *Moving on*, 2017

128 MHCLG (2020) *Understanding the Multiple Vulnerabilities, Support Needs and Experiences of People who Sleep Rough in England*. London: MHCLG

129 Sanders, B., Boobis, S., and Albanese, F. (2019) *'It was like a nightmare' The reality of sofa surfing in Britain today*. London: Crisis

The recent MHCLG study also highlights the high levels of support need experienced by many (though not all) rough sleepers, with 75 per cent of respondents reporting both physical and mental health support needs, and 60 per cent reporting a support need relating to drug or alcohol dependency. Depression and anxiety were the most reported mental health issues (reported by 70 per cent and 64 per cent respectively). But a significant minority (22 per cent) also reported post-traumatic stress disorder, 16 per cent other forms of trauma and 15 per cent psychosis or schizophrenia. The development of complex support needs may also be associated with difficulties in childhood. The majority of respondents (72 per cent) reported experience of 'adverse childhood events' such as exclusion from school or time spent in care.¹³⁰ Around two fifths of respondents had developed drug or alcohol support needs before first sleeping rough, and the majority had developed these by the time they were 25 years old.

This evidence clearly demonstrates the extent of disadvantage and complexity of need experienced by people who have slept rough repeatedly or over long periods in their lives. As noted in chapter 1 for people experiencing chronic rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness, Housing First has been shown to be an effective response.

The profile of people sleeping rough in London

New, long term and repeat rough sleeping

Two thirds (66 per cent) of people recorded sleeping rough in London were new to rough sleeping in 2019/20, 22 per cent had slept rough in the previous year and 12 per cent had returned to the street after a year or more away. The number of new rough sleepers increased by 28 per cent on the previous year, while those sleeping rough in the previous year rose by 14 per cent and those returning to the street increased by 4 per cent.

Support needs of people sleeping rough¹³¹

Just under a quarter (23 per cent) of people seen sleeping rough have no 'support needs' – that is, needs that arise because of factors such as mental health conditions (for example, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder or experience of other trauma) or drug and alcohol dependency. Two fifths of people (40 per cent) have at least two support needs relating to alcohol, drugs or mental health, while 12 per cent have all three needs.

Nationality of people sleeping rough

A higher proportion of rough sleepers in London are non-UK nationals compared with the rest of the UK. CHAIN data records that just under half (44 per cent) of people seen rough sleeping in 2019/20 were from the UK, 36 per cent were EU Nationals, 12 per cent were from the rest of the world (nationality was not recorded for 9 per cent of rough sleepers).

Experience of prison, the care system and the armed forces

Just over a third of people (34 per cent) have spent time in prison. A small proportion of rough sleepers (6 per cent) have served in the armed forces, while 10 per cent have experience of living in care. Of those serving in the armed forces (376 individuals) more than half (247) are non-UK nationals.

¹³⁰ These were defined in the research as regular truancy, leaving school before 16, permanent exclusion from school or time in care.

¹³¹ Whether or not people sleeping rough have support needs is recorded for around 60 per cent of rough sleepers. The majority of those for whom support needs are not recorded were seen sleeping rough only once or twice.

2.3 The drivers of rough sleeping and single homelessness

Analysis of the factors that cause homelessness is sometimes focused on whether these are 'personal' or 'structural'.¹³² Personal factors focus on the individual behaviours and problems faced by people experiencing homelessness such as mental ill health, substance dependency, which might be associated with relationship breakdown, adverse childhood experiences or a history of trauma and domestic abuse. Structural factors include social and economic issues such as barriers to accessing affordable housing or employment, welfare policy and poverty.

A literature review for MHCLG found that recent studies tend to acknowledge that personal and structural factors can be connected, with structural factors creating the conditions in which people facing personal problems are more vulnerable to homelessness.¹³³ It has also been argued that individual vulnerabilities can often be rooted in the pressures associated with structural disadvantage, and that the protective social relationships which may act as a buffer to homelessness can be put under strain by stressful financial circumstances.¹³⁴

It is clear, however, that many people sleeping rough have experienced significant disadvantage and are likely to have multiple support needs (see **Section 2.2 The profile of people experiencing rough sleeping and single homelessness**). The MHCLG study mentioned above identified that personal rather than structural factors were more likely to drive homelessness for people sleeping rough than for other forms of homelessness, but that a mix of structural and personal factors play a role across all forms of homelessness.¹³⁵

These findings highlight the potential to prevent rough sleeping through effective early intervention to address the wide-ranging causes and levels of support need experienced by rough sleepers. The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy makes clear that homelessness and rough sleeping are not inevitable, and that Government is committed to understanding the causes of rough sleeping in order to better prevent and tackle it.¹³⁶ Recent analysis has examined the measures that would have the largest impact in reducing rough sleeping and single homelessness.¹³⁷ This projects that in the longer term the greatest impact would come from consistent large-scale application of Housing First and increases in both overall and social rented housing supply, and in the short term by investment in welfare measures to address destitution and raise Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to meet market rents.¹³⁸

2.4 COVID-19, 'Everyone In' and the impact for people experiencing rough sleeping

The COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on the national response to rough sleeping and what we know about the scale of the problem.

132 Bramley, G., Fitzpatrick, S., (2017) Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk? *Housing Studies* 33, 96–116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2017.1344957>

133 Alma Economics (2019) *Homelessness. Causes of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. A Rapid Evidence Assessment*. London: Alma Economics/MHCLG/DWP

134 Op. cit. Fitzpatrick, Homelessness Monitor, 2019

135 Alma Economics (2019) *Homelessness. Causes of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. A Rapid Evidence Assessment*. London: Alma Economics/MHCLG/DWP

136 MHCLG (2018) *Rough Sleeping Strategy*. London: MHCLG

137 Op. cit. Forthcoming: Crisis, Core homelessness 2020

138 Ibid

COVID-19 represented a significant additional risk to the already precarious lives of people sleeping rough and to those reliant on shelters and other communal services. People experiencing homelessness are three times more likely than the housed population to have a chronic health problem,¹³⁹ and do not have a home in which to self-isolate and follow public health guidance. In recognition of the level of risk to the homeless population, the then Minister for Local Government and Homelessness wrote to all local authorities in England on 26 March 2020 asking them to work with national government to bring everyone in from the streets, and provide safe accommodation for those staying in shelters and other places where they could not comply with public health advice.¹⁴⁰ In the initial emergency response this included making provision for people who would not normally be eligible for help because of their immigration status. Just under a fifth (17 per cent) of those helped through Everyone In by May 2020 would not be eligible for statutory homelessness assistance because of their immigration status.¹⁴¹ In January 2021 the Secretary of State restated the Government's earlier request to local authorities to bring Everyone In, while at the same time asking councils to implement arrangements to ensure that people helped through the programme are also registered with a GP. While this is essential to ensure health needs are addressed, it will also ensure that people are able to receive the Coronavirus vaccination.

The early phase of the Everyone In initiative meant that almost 15,000 people who had been sleeping rough or who were otherwise at risk had been provided with emergency accommodation by May 2020.¹⁴² Of the 15,000 people helped initially, 7,000 were recorded as previously sleeping rough, with a further 2,000 people using shared sleeping facilities (such as night shelters), 5,000 were at risk of rough sleeping and 1000 were discharged from prison or hospital. Around 30 per cent of those helped were in London, comparable with the 27 per cent recorded as rough sleeping in London by the national count. By November MHCLG reported that the number of people helped had doubled, with over 34,000 people assisted in total.¹⁴³ Of these around 10,000 were in emergency accommodation (including hotels, hostels and Bed & Breakfast accommodation) and nearly 24,000 provided with settled accommodation or move on support (though this might also include short-term homelessness accommodation).¹⁴⁴

Rough sleeping trends since the first lockdown

Despite the huge effort put into bringing 'everyone in' during the first national lockdown, there has been a continuing flow of people facing rough sleeping. It is likely that this is linked to the continuing impact of the pandemic on employment and housing security, in addition to the existing structural and personal drivers of rough sleeping described in section 2.3. CHAIN data for London identified that 3,444 individuals were seen sleeping on the streets between July and September. This is a 14 per cent decrease on the same period last year.¹⁴⁵ While the year-on-year decrease is encouraging, probably reflecting

139 Lewer, D., et al. (2019) *Health related quality of life and prevalence of six chronic diseases in homeless and housed people; a cross-sectional study in London and Birmingham, England*

140 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928780/Letter_from_Minister_Hall_to_Local_Authorities.pdf

141 Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency accommodation survey data: May 2020 – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

142 Ibid

143 Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency accommodation survey data: November 2020 – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

144 Ibid

145 Rough sleeping in London (CHAIN reports) – London Datastore

the impact of Everyone In, we are still seeing significant numbers of people coming onto the street, with 55 per cent of the 3,444 people new to the streets. Worryingly, the number of people categorized as 'living on the streets' (longer term rough sleepers) in July to September 2020 rose by 27 per cent compared with the previous quarter despite the unprecedented level of provision in the early months of the pandemic. This group is likely to encompass people with the most complex support needs, and suggests these needs are not being met by the range of interventions on offer.

Homelessness charity St Mungo's has reported a continuing flow of rough sleepers coming on to the street since the start of the pandemic, with outreach teams seeing an increase in the number of people who are new to rough sleeping.¹⁴⁶ As noted above, charities have also highlighted concerns about the risk of an increased flow of people facing homelessness and rough sleeping if the number of people losing work and facing rent arrears continues to rise.

Data on the high scale of need revealed by the emergency response to the pandemic also underlines that the number of people seen sleeping rough on any given night is just the tip of the iceberg. The flow of people onto the streets is continuing, illustrating the close relationship between rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness and housing precarity.

The impact of Everyone In

'Everyone In' meant that thousands of people who had long experience of living on the streets or in shelters were invited into safe, stable en-suite accommodation with specialist support. In many cases, this included access to specialist medical and mental health support. Feedback from residents and staff demonstrated the positive impact this had on many individual lives, providing a period of respite for people to think about what their future might look like and the support they would need to get there.¹⁴⁷ The Government has been widely praised for its prompt and effective action in the early weeks of the crisis.¹⁴⁸ Analysis by UCL has shown that this action saved the lives of many people experiencing homelessness during the first wave of the pandemic.¹⁴⁹ The study estimated that while there were likely to have been in the region of 24 deaths among homeless people, the Government's preventative measures are likely to have avoided over 21,000 infections, 266 deaths, 1164 hospital admissions and 338 ICU admissions. The researchers cautioned that should preventative measures not be repeated for a second wave of infection, outbreaks of the disease amongst people experiencing homelessness might lead to larger numbers of infections and deaths, even with low incidence in the general population.

Everyone In demonstrated that for many, access to accommodation and support provided a foundation to transform the lives of people with long term histories of rough sleeping. While the outcome of Everyone In has been positive for some, there is anecdotal evidence of less positive experiences for some, creating a risk of further homelessness.

146 Policy briefing: Rough sleeping in England – Looking beyond 'Everyone In' – St Mungo's

147 Riverside (2020) *Manchester Emergency Accommodation Evaluation: Interim Report*; Groundswell (2020) *Monitoring the impact of COVID-19 Fortnightly Homelessness Briefing 6 – Focus on emergency hotel accommodation*; MEAM (2020) *Flexible responses during the Coronavirus Crisis: Rapid evidence gathering*

148 www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/07/what-coronavirus-proved-about-homelessness/614266/

149 www.ucl.ac.uk/epidemiology-health-care/news/2020/oct/emergency-accommodation-given-homeless-during-covid-19-saved-hundreds-lives

This was sometimes because accommodation itself was not appropriate, or staff were not appropriately trained, while in other cases people weren't receiving suitable packages of support.¹⁵⁰ One Housing Association responding to our call for evidence praised the fact that some local authorities have been using direct lets to move people helped through Everyone In into social housing. However, the same organisation noted with concern that:

Some people with quite complex needs [are] being given little or no support. It also appears that they are being given very little choice in where this accommodation is.

Housing Association, CSJ Call for Evidence

Analysis of the experiences of people living in emergency accommodation found that some who had no access to cooking facilities or cafes had been unable to obtain a hot meal, while others had been moved into temporary accommodation outside their local area and communities, including to locations where they had previously suffered harm.¹⁵¹ People also reported a deterioration in their mental health as a consequence of the isolation caused by lockdown, which in some cases led to increases in substance misuse.¹⁵²

A minority of people have left or have been asked to leave emergency accommodation. As noted in section 1.3 of the report, people with complex support needs might 'choose' to leave this type of accommodation because the pressures they face make it particularly challenging to comply with institutional rules. People may also be asked to leave if their behaviour breaches rules set by accommodation providers, which might include rules around things such as smoking, drug or alcohol use or abusive behaviour. For some people originally helped through Everyone In this has meant a return to the streets. Qualitative evidence gathered by Groundswell suggests that in some cases people being asked to leave had not been supported to find alternative accommodation.¹⁵³

A survey of local authority responses to the pandemic has highlighted the challenge now facing local authorities as they seek to move those housed in emergency COVID-19 accommodation into permanent and secure housing.¹⁵⁴ Local authorities and third sector agencies have also highlighted concerns about the impact of newly emerging need from people facing homelessness as a consequence of expected increases in unemployment and rising rent arrears.¹⁵⁵ The Government's plans for delivering settled housing to meet this demand are considered below.

Everyone In and migrant homelessness

In the initial response to the pandemic, Government asked local authorities to extend emergency assistance to everyone at risk of rough sleeping including those with no recourse to public funds. This meant that people who would ordinarily have been ineligible for local authority help were able to access emergency housing as well as

150 Op. cit. Groundswell, Monitoring the impact of COVID-19 Briefing 6, 2020; Op. cit. MEAM, Flexible responses, 2020

151 Op. cit. Groundswell, Monitoring the impact of COVID-19 Briefing 6, 2020

152 Op. cit. MEAM, Flexible responses, 2020

153 Op. cit. Groundswell, Monitoring the impact of COVID-19 Briefing 6, 2020

154 Boobis, S. and Albanese, F. (2020) *The impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and service provision across Great Britain*. London: Crisis

155 Ibid; Policy briefing: Rough sleeping in England – Looking beyond 'Everyone In' – St Mungo's

support and advice to help people regularise their status (for example, for EEA nationals to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme). The Government also suspended evictions from asylum accommodations between March and June 2020, and suspended rules restricting councils' ability to house EEA nationals.

After the immediate response to the pandemic, questions emerged about whether national government funding would cover emergency assistance for people newly rough sleeping who had no recourse to public funds.¹⁵⁶ Subsequently, charities have reported that some councils have re-instated pre-pandemic criteria to assess eligibility for assistance.¹⁵⁷ There have been calls in the charity sector for more robust measures to enable local authorities to provide emergency support for migrants experiencing or at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping, including suspending 'no recourse to public funds' provisions for 12 months. Proponents argue that without such measures at a time when employment is hard to find there is a likelihood that people without recourse to public funds will be at significant risk of returning to rough sleeping.

In the Autumn 2020, the Government announced new immigration rules that will make rough sleeping grounds for cancelling or refusing someone's right to remain in the UK. This is in addition to existing Home Office powers to remove or refuse their permission to be in the UK. Government has said that they will publish guidance making clear that the rules should be used sparingly and only where individuals have refused support and accommodation and are engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour.¹⁵⁸ The new rules will not be implemented prior to publication of this guidance.

The new provisions overturn a 2017 ruling from the European Court of Justice that found previous Home Office policy on rough sleeper deportations to be contrary to EU law.¹⁵⁹ Starting on 1 December 2020 the new rules will apply in the first instance to non-EEA nationals, and from 1 January 2021 to people newly arriving EEA, with exemptions for people who have been granted status under the EU Settlement Scheme, people with indefinite leave to remain and most refugee and asylum seekers. Some people affected by the rules who already or would otherwise have a right to remain in the UK will be at risk of deportation, subject to any conditions set out in forthcoming Home Office guidance. Homelessness and migrant charities have raised concerns that the rules will push migrants at risk of homelessness even further away from seeking out the limited support opportunities that are available to them.¹⁶⁰

There is also a danger that people at risk of homelessness and deportation will be more exposed to the risk of exploitation and modern slavery. The CSJ wants to see enforcement action directed towards the people and organisations responsible for modern slavery and trafficking.¹⁶¹ The CSJ awaits publication of the guidance setting out the Government's

156 Fitzpatrick, S, et al. (2020) *Homelessness Monitor England 2020: COVID-19 Crisis Response Briefing*. London: Crisis

157 Inside Housing November 2020: "Lockdown 2.0: is everyone still in?" by Lucie Heath; Op. cit. Boobis, Impact of COVID-19, 2020

158 Written questions and answers – Written questions, answers and statements – UK Parliament

159 R (Gureckis) v Secretary of State for the Home Department and others [2017] EWHC 3298 (Admin) (judiciary.uk)

160 Over seventy homelessness organisations sign letter urging Government to reconsider dangerous new immigration rules targeting people sleeping rough for deportation | Crisis | Together we will end homelessness

161 CSJ (2020) *It Still Happens Here: Fighting UK Slavery in the 2020s*. London: CSJ

proposed safeguards. It is important this ensures that every individual faced with rough sleeping is properly supported to access emergency accommodation and obtain advice on their migration status, and that victims of modern slavery are identified and protected.

2.5 Beyond Everyone In, what is the Government doing to tackle rough sleeping?

The commitment to end rough sleeping

We will also end the blight of rough sleeping by the end of the next Parliament by expanding successful pilots and programmes such as the Rough Sleeping Initiative and Housing First, and working to bring together local services to meet the health and housing needs of people sleeping on the streets.

The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2019

The CSJ strongly welcomes the Government's commitment to end rough sleeping by the end of the current Parliament. This commitment built on a pre-existing Conservative Government commitment to halve rough sleeping within the Parliamentary term and to end it for good by 2027.

The 2018 Rough Sleeping Initiative

In Autumn 2017 the then Prime Minister established a 'Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Reduction Ministerial Task Force' supported by a multi-agency 'Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel'. The Rough Sleeping Initiative was launched subsequently in 2018, creating a new cross departmental Rough Sleeping Team made up of rough sleeping and homelessness experts and civil servants to work with local authorities, and focusing on 83 areas with the highest levels of rough sleeping. This was initially backed by funding of £30 million for 2018 to 2019 to develop tailored local interventions to reduce the number of people sleeping on the streets, with provision also to upskill front line workers to support those with the most complex needs.

Alongside the RSI the Government also announced a £100m Move On Fund to provide capital and revenue funding to provide homes with support for people moving on from homelessness, focused on people with low to moderate support needs. Take up of the programme was slow, due to concerns with the longevity of funding for support. The learning from this helped shape the subsequent Next Steps programme, with provision for support to be delivered over a four-year period where needed.

Subsequently the Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy backed by further funding and setting out cross-government commitments to tackle rough sleeping by focusing on three broad areas: preventing rough sleeping before it happens, intervening at crisis points, and helping people to recover with flexible support that meets their needs.¹⁶² This was followed by a Delivery Plan with actions that included providing a homelessness

¹⁶² www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy

single point of contact for very Jobcentre Plus and an expectation that all councils would publish a rough sleeping and homelessness strategy by winter 2019, setting out how specialist support would be provided for people sleeping rough.¹⁶³

In addition, MHCLG invited local authorities to apply for £41 million funding under the Rapid Rehousing Pathways, to become early adopters of interventions to tackle rough sleeping as follows:

- Somewhere Safe to Stay – funding to set up assessment hubs, building on the No Second Night Out Model;¹⁶⁴
- Local Lettings Agencies – funding to set up or extend local lettings agencies to develop property portfolios to meet the needs of rough sleepers;
- Supported lettings – funding for floating support services to help people with a history of rough sleeping to sustain their tenancies;
- Navigators – funding for specialists to help people sleeping rough to access local services and gain access to settled accommodation.

These initiatives were accompanied by a £20 million fund to enable local authorities to set up or expand schemes to enable single homeless people to access tenancies in the private rented sector.

While the Government's renewed focus on rough sleeping was widely welcomed, there were criticisms of the scope of the strategy.¹⁶⁵ A key concern was the creation of a number of piecemeal short term pots of funding, and the obligation on local authorities to repeatedly bid for this.¹⁶⁶ Some commentators argued that the Government still lacks sufficient ambition to address important drivers of single homelessness and rough sleeping, including the gap between Housing Benefit/Universal Credit rates and rents, and the shortage of social housing.¹⁶⁷ It has also been argued that the piecemeal, pilot-focused approach to delivering funding limits local authorities' strategic influence and ability to respond to homelessness in a coherent, joined-up way.¹⁶⁸

In 2019, the Rough Sleeping Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Programme funding streams were combined to create a single RSI funding programme, and councils were invited to submit bids for a £112 million funding pot. The programme has enabled a substantial increase in accommodation and staffing, delivering 6,000 bed spaces and 2,500 staff. While most of the accommodation provided is 'specialist' supported housing, a number of Housing First schemes have also been funded. In a recent survey for Homeless Link, 43 per cent of agencies delivering Housing First in England said they receive RSI funding via their local authority.¹⁶⁹

163 www.gov.uk/government/news/james-brokenshire-unveils-action-plan-to-combat-rough-sleeping

164 No Second Night Out services aim focuses on people sleeping rough for the first time and aims to ensure that rough sleepers are helped off the streets as quickly as possible and do not return to the streets.

165 Op. cit. Fitzpatrick, Homelessness Monitor, 2019

166 Op. cit. Blood, A Traumatized System, 2020

167 Local Government Association (2018) Rough sleeping strategy – LGA Briefing

168 Ibid

169 Op. cit. Homeless Link, Picture of Housing First, 2020

In November 2020, the Spending Review provided reassurance that investment in the provision of accommodation and support for rough sleepers including Housing First will be sustained, with the announcement that a further £151m will be available for the RSI in 2021/2. This brings the total resource for rough sleeping and homelessness in 2021/22 to £676m, a 60 per cent increase compared to this year.

An example of RSI funded Housing First provision is the scheme being delivered in Basingstoke and Deane (see case study report). The Basingstoke & Deane service is a new service set up as part of the council's broader programmes to tackle rough sleeping and multiple disadvantage in the Borough. It is being delivered in partnership with Two Saints and Sovereign Housing Group, organisations with wider experience of Housing First delivery. It provides an example of the way small scale provision can complement a wider strategic response to rough sleeping, with Housing First integrated within a broader portfolio of services to tackle homelessness. The Basingstoke scheme is also grounded within a broader MEAM¹⁷⁰ partnership, demonstrating the role of Housing First in complementing wider initiatives to support adults facing multiple disadvantage.

Case study: Basingstoke & Deane Housing First

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council's Housing First scheme was launched earlier this year with funding from the Rough Sleeper's Initiative. It will in due course support five people.

The decision to seek funding for Housing First is part of a broader strategy to tackle rough sleeping in the Borough, and just one of a number of interventions that the council and its partners have put in place. Rough sleeping rose significantly in the Borough between 2010 when the annual count recorded three people sleeping rough and 2016 when the number reached 26. Efforts to address the problem saw a significant reduction in the number of people sleeping rough between 2017 and 2019 with a focus on delivering housing led responses with floating support. But there remains a small number of people for whom available interventions have not been effective. The council became a MEAM Approach area in 2016, and multi-agency collaboration identified that some of these might benefit from the more intensive support provided by Housing First.

The Council's Housing First funding bid was developed in partnership with Sovereign Housing, a major housing association operating in South West England and Two Saints, a provider of housing and support services for single people experiencing homelessness. Both agencies had prior experience of delivering Housing First, and in Basingstoke & Deane, Sovereign will provide all five tenancies while Two Saints delivers support. The three agencies are committed to delivery of an approach that meets Housing First principles, with a support worker to client ratio of no more than 1:7. Two Saints deliver other homelessness services in Basingstoke and neighbouring areas, providing a management structure for the Housing First team to sit within.

The scheme was due for launch in April 2020 at the height of the pandemic. The council supported more than 80 people facing homelessness because of coronavirus, with a number of people being placed in emergency hotel accommodation. While this impacted on the launch of the Housing First scheme, two people have since accepted tenancies and further potential clients are being identified.

¹⁷⁰ MEAM – Making Every Adult Matter – is an approach to providing services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage. It aims to ensure better local co-ordination and design of services for people experiencing a combination of problems including substance misuse, contact with the criminal justice system and homelessness. Further information: <http://meam.org.uk>

Rough Sleeping Initiative funding is for one year only, so at the time of writing there is no clarity about the future of Housing First in Basingstoke & Deane. Short term funding is problematic for service delivery, and the scheme's existence is dependent on the commitment and trust of the delivery partners. The County Council was not directly involved in commissioning the service, and the availability of funding for floating support from the County Council is limited, reflecting wider pressures on adult social care and housing related support budgets. The scheme partners highlight that the future viability of the service will be dependent on identifying reliable funding sources, effective multi-agency working and the ability to demonstrate clear evidence of impact for all partners.

In some local authority areas, the RSI has enabled local authorities to expand existing Housing First schemes. The London Borough of Camden is an example of this, where RSI funding enabled the council to grow a smaller service that was originally funded with housing-related support funding, a legacy of the former Supporting People programme.¹⁷¹ Further information about Camden's Housing First service is provided later in the report (see **Section 3.1 The current profile of Housing First provision in England**).

While the RSI has increased the resources available for Housing First in England,¹⁷² little information has so far been made available by MHCLG on the scale of RSI funded Housing First delivery or the outcomes it is delivering.

A further key drawback of funding Housing First this way has been the fact that money is only awarded for a year at a time. Staff interviewed for the study highlighted the issues that this causes for service providers and landlords, who in effect are required to take a leap of faith that funding will continue to be made available to provide support to tenants in the longer term. Short term funding streams create particular challenges for staff recruitment and run counter to principles that safeguard the effectiveness of Housing First (see **Section 1.5 The Housing First principles in practice**).

The Housing First City Region Pilots

Alongside the RSI, the Government also announced funding of £28m to deliver three large-scale Housing First pilots across the Liverpool, Greater Manchester and West Midlands city regions, providing ordinary, settled housing alongside intensive support to help individuals "recover from complex health issues, for example substance abuse and mental health difficulties and to sustain their tenancies."¹⁷³ The 2019 manifesto commitment suggested that Government intends to roll out Housing First more widely in due course to help deliver its strategy to end rough sleeping.

Housing First has been shown to be effective in meeting the needs of people whose homelessness is compounded by multiple and complex support needs, with an extensive international evidence base that demonstrates its effectiveness in enabling people to sustain their tenancies (see Chapter 1).

¹⁷¹ The Supporting People programme provided central government funding for local authorities to fund housing-related support services, enabling people to sustain their tenancies and live independently. The funding stream became absorbed into wider government funding for councils from 2010/11.

¹⁷² Op. cit. Homeless Link, Picture of Housing First, 2020

¹⁷³ Housing Secretary James Brokenshire awards funding to reduce rough sleeping – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The pilots were designed in part to test approaches to scaling up Housing First at a city-region level and are the subject of a large-scale independent evaluation. Early findings from the evaluation were published in December 2020, based on visits to each pilot area in the summer of 2019. A toolkit sharing lessons on mobilisation from the pilots is due for publication in 2021, with further evaluation reports to follow. Staff from the pilot areas have also shared their thoughts on early learning from the pilots with the Centre for Social Justice. This evidence is outlined in Section 3.3 of the report, and has informed the report's recommendations on scaling up (Part 2).

The Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (Next Steps)

In February 2020 the Prime Minister announced that he had appointed Dame Louise Casey to undertake an urgent review into the causes of rough sleeping. At the same time, MHCLG announced £236m funding for "Housing First style 'move on'" accommodation for up to 6000 rough sleepers and those at immediate risk of rough sleeping. In the March 2020 budget, it was announced that the £236m capital funding would be supplemented by £144m revenue funding for associated support – a funding pot that was increased by a further £50m when the Next Steps programme was announced.

The Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP) – also referred to as the Next Steps programme – brings together the Government's strategy to provide 'move on'¹⁷⁴ housing for people with a history of rough sleeping and its response to Everyone In. It recognises the critical role of additional housing supply in tackling rough sleeping, as well as the importance of providing longer term funding for tailored support (bids can be made for up to four years' support funding).

The RSAP is delivering short – and longer-term funding programmes to enable local authorities, homelessness service providers and social landlords to respond to the needs of single adults who were rough sleeping at the outset of the pandemic or who have become homeless since:

- £105 million revenue funding has been allocated to supplement funding already provided for the emergency response. This must be spent in 2020/21. It can cover support to access tenancies in the private rented sector, extending or procuring interim accommodation such as hotels or student accommodation and supporting individuals to reconnect with friends or family.
- £161 million has been allocated from the larger £433 million funding announcement to deliver 3,300 units of 'longer-term, move on accommodation'. The £161 million is split into £130 million capital funding for housing and £31 million revenue funding for support services.

Although not part of the RSAP, a further £23 million has been made available to provide drug and alcohol treatment services for rough sleepers during 2020/21 and will be administered separately by Public Health England.¹⁷⁵ The aim of this funding is to ensure that the engagement that people have had with drug and alcohol treatment services while

¹⁷⁴ In the programme guidance, the term 'move on' relates to the provision of homes let on short term tenancies to people moving on from rough sleeping, normally a maximum of two years.

¹⁷⁵ Extra help for rough sleepers with drug and alcohol dependency – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

in emergency accommodation is maintained as they move into longer-term 'move-on' accommodation and to support those who have not previously engaged with treatment services. For this first year, Public Health England are targeting this funding at 43 priority areas – the areas with the highest number of rough sleepers brought into accommodation with significant intervention likely required. A further £52 million will be made available for the programme in 2021/22.

A notable feature of the RSAP is the stated objective of providing 'long-term, national assets in the form of supported move-on homes for people recovering from rough sleeping.' Programme guidance made clear that tenancies under this scheme should be for a maximum of two years to ensure a continuing flow of this type of accommodation and support for those who need it. In practice this means that while homes provided through the programme will become a permanent resource for the national response to rough sleeping, they will not provide permanent homes for the people moving into them. There is a presumption that people will complete their 'recovery' from rough sleeping, and then move on to alternative housing. The bidding prospectus for RSAP acknowledged that this assumption may not be appropriate for Housing First tenants, and that longer term tenancies would be appropriate for this group. In practice, however, our research has found that the unofficial 'steer' from MHCLG and the GLA to housing providers suggests that Housing First tenants may be expected to move, subject to the availability of suitable alternative accommodation (see **Case study: Network Homes/Look Ahead Housing First partnership**).

This raises some challenging implications for the delivery of Housing First. Housing First principles and the achievement of the tenancy sustainment outcomes they underpin, assume the provision of ordinary settled housing, with the presumption that people will be able to remain in their home for as long as they choose (subject to meeting their tenancy obligations). Under Housing First principles an open-ended tenancy would be preferable, but where fixed term tenancies are the norm (as for example in the private rented sector) there is an aspiration that tenants would be offered a tenancy renewal where feasible, giving them the option to stay in their home. Having to move home has both a financial and emotional cost which can be particularly challenging for people who have already experienced homelessness.¹⁷⁶ For Housing First tenants (whose experience of homelessness is compounded by multiple disadvantage), having to move home again with all the disruption that this entails threatens the effectiveness of the intervention. As we shall see, the sense of permanence provided by Housing First is one key to transforming the lives of some of our most vulnerable citizens.

176 Smith, M. et al. (2014) *The Roof Over My Head: the final report of the Sustain project*. London: Shelter & Crisis

Case study: Network Homes and Look Ahead Housing First partnership

Working in partnership Network Homes and Look Ahead have secured funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) for a Housing First scheme in North West London. In order to rapidly help people who have been sleeping rough relets of existing affordable homes within Network Homes' stock will be offered through the GLA's clearing house – with Look Ahead offering intensive and bespoke tenancy support. In order to ensure that the Housing First homes are additional to the current affordable homes available they will be replaced by the same number of new London Affordable Rent homes. These new homes will shortly begin construction and will be converted from homes that would otherwise have been made available for sale.

Look Ahead will make at least weekly contact with all Housing First tenants, more intensively at the beginning of the tenancy, as well as supporting them to move in and with a starter furniture pack. Network will write off any former tenant arrears from these tenants to give them a fresh start and liaise with Look Ahead before starting any additional income collection activity. Housing First tenants will be offered two-year tenancies, to maximise the number of people that can be helped on an ongoing basis. Whilst every effort made support move-on within two years, if this is not possible then the Housing First tenants will remain until such time as a suitable move-on home is available.

The timing of the programme has been tight and challenging, with a short window for bidding and a delivery deadline of 31 March 2021. As the programme is dependent on suitable affordable homes becoming available for relet there is a risk that this does not happen. During the various lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic tenants have been moving less and works are taking longer, including those necessary to prepare empty homes for occupation. Subject to funding availability and these challenges both partners would like to expand the pilot to support additional people.

In Part 2 of this report we set out proposals for the development of the next phase of the RSAP to include longer term settled housing options for people at risk of or moving on from rough sleeping, including for Housing First provision.

Protect Programme

In November 2020 the Government announced provision of £10 million to support councils' delivery of cold weather provision for rough sleepers during the winter, and further funding of £15 million to tackle rough sleeping over the winter for 10 areas of the country: London, City of Bristol, Brighton and Hove, Cornwall, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Manchester, Salford, Oxford, Leicester and Birmingham.

2.6 Why Housing First should be at heart of the Government's plan to end rough sleeping

The Government's policy focus and programme of investment in rough sleeping in recent years provided a foundation for its effective early response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid mobilisation of services to support rough sleepers in March 2020 was in part enabled by recent investment in specialist staffing under the RSI, as well as by the prompt action by local authorities, health services, charities and local businesses to secure a supply of emergency accommodation with tailored support. For this, the Government should be commended.

As noted above, however, there are early indicators that despite helping over 30,000 people under the Everyone In programme by January 2021, we are continuing to see people coming onto the streets. Some of those are people who were initially provided with emergency accommodation during the pandemic but who have returned to the street, while some are new to rough sleeping. With the prospect of rising unemployment and rent and mortgage arrears, and continuing pressure on the availability of housing affordable to people the lowest incomes, there is a clear risk that we will see an increased flow of people facing homelessness and rough sleeping in the coming year.

Ending rough sleeping means being truly ambitious about transforming lives. And yet there is a clear risk that those experiencing the most complex problems in their life, including people with the longest and most entrenched histories of rough sleeping, are not able to access the tailored support they need to sustain an exit from rough sleeping.

This is where Housing First comes in. In the next chapter we look at the evidence that shows Housing First is not fulfilling its potential in tackling rough sleeping across England, and set out the case for a more rapid scaling up.

The CSJ has been encouraged to hear the then Rough Sleeping Minister confirm the Government's support for Housing First in November 2020:

I am very supportive of the Housing First programme, and I would very much like to extend that. It's something we will be working on in Government.

Kelly Tolhurst, then Rough Sleeping Minister

In order to truly end rough sleeping and help people realise their full potential, the CSJ believes that scaling up Housing First must become a central component of the RSI and the Government's strategy to end rough sleeping.

chapter three

The case for rolling out Housing First in England

In this chapter we look at the scale of current Housing First provision in England, and evidence that many more people could be supported to end their homelessness in this way. Drawing on early learning from the city-region pilots and services across the country we set out the case for a national programme and map out what will need to change to make this possible.

3.1 The current profile of Housing First provision in England

Analysis by Homeless Link suggests that Housing First services across England currently have the capacity to support 2,000 individuals at any one time.¹⁷⁷ This is a six-fold increase since the previous survey in 2017, and welcome progress in extending the reach of Housing First.¹⁷⁸ This increase has been boosted by Government investment in the City Region pilots and the RSI, and demonstrates the potential for further growth.¹⁷⁹ There are 105 active services across the country now compared with just 32 in 2017.¹⁸⁰ Services vary in size from one place to 250 places, but most services are relatively small, supporting between 6 and 20 people.

The majority of services deliver the low client to worker caseloads recommended for Housing First, with 71 per cent of services having six or fewer people per support worker. On average, services responding to the Homeless Link survey report that 47 per cent of clients have been homeless for three to nine years at the point they enter the service, and 14 per cent for ten years or more.

¹⁷⁷ Op. cit. Homeless Link, Picture of Housing First, 2020

¹⁷⁸ Homeless Link (2017) The picture of Housing First in England. London: Homeless Link

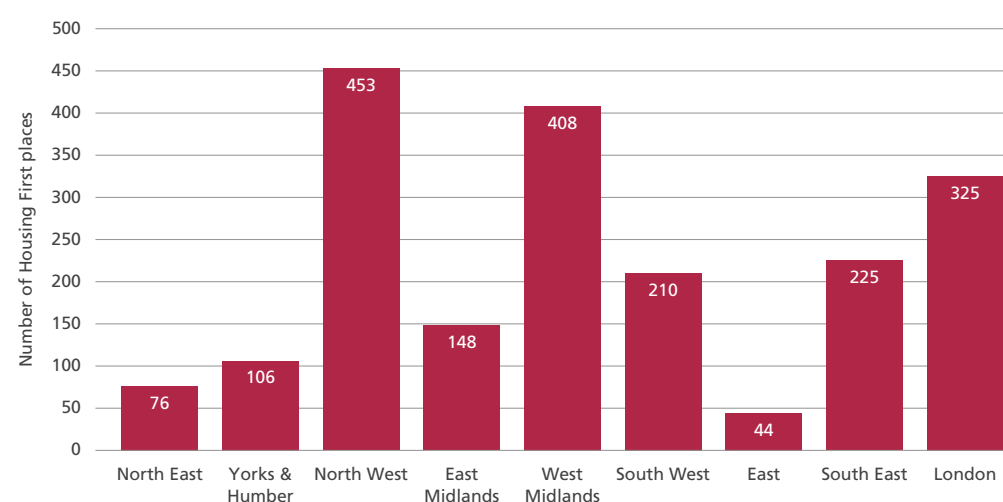
¹⁷⁹ Op cit. Homeless Link, Picture of Housing First 2020

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

Just over a fifth of services (22 per cent) have been operating for less than a year, just under a third (32 per cent) for between one and two years, and 45 per cent for two years or more.

Regionally, the North West, London and the West Midlands have the greatest number of places (Figure 5). With two of the three city region pilots in the North West and one in the West Midlands, this helps to explain the concentration of places in those regions. In London there has been significant growth in places over the last three years, with just 84 places in 2017 and 325 by 2020.

Figure 5: The number of current Housing First places, by English region



Source: Homeless Link (2020).

The London Borough of Camden is an example of a local authority with a long-standing Housing First service that has grown steadily over time (see **Case study: Camden Housing First**). Delivered initially as a pilot, and then mainstreamed as a service with funding from the Council's housing-related support budget, the service has subsequently been expanded with funding from RSI and RSAP. The Council has sustained and grown the service because of the positive impact it has had in ending homelessness for people who are otherwise unable to move-on through the Council's Adult Pathway; 88 per cent of tenants housed since 2014 have sustained their tenancies.

Despite the steady increase in places at Camden Housing First over the past decade, there is evidence of continuing unmet need in the Borough. Camden's service is one of the largest services in the country outside the city-region pilots, with capacity to support 72 people from January 2021. But this is still only around half of the 140 people within the Council's Adult Pathway who meet the Council's eligibility criteria for Housing First. There is also further potential demand from the new flow of people facing rough sleeping with a history of multiple disadvantage and high and complex support needs.

Case study: Camden Housing First

The London Borough of Camden's Housing First scheme is one of the longest running in England. Housing First was originally piloted in 2010 using innovations funding from the Council's former Supporting People Programme. Following a positive evaluation of the pilot,¹⁸¹ the decision was taken to commission an expanded service as part of the council's mainstream housing related support budget. The present scheme began in 2014 originally with 20 places and is delivered by St Mungo's.

Successful Rough Sleeping Initiative bids enabled the scheme to grow to 30 places in 2017, 44 in 2018, and 50 in October 2020. The Council will be further expanding the scheme to 72 from January 2021 with revenue funding (but not capital funding for housing) from the London Mayor's Rough Sleepers' Accommodation Programme.¹⁸² Social housing provides around two thirds of current Housing First tenancies, which are accessed through Camden's own housing register, service level agreements with two partner housing associations and the pan-London Clearing House scheme. St Mungo's sources private rented tenancies.

Tenancy sustainment is seen as a key indicator of the scheme's success, with 88 per cent of tenants housed since 2014 sustaining tenancies. Other positive outcomes include the majority of tenants' ongoing engagement with primary health care, mental health and substance abuse services.

While the Council's Adult Pathway Commissioning Strategy has been developed in consultation with other statutory agencies, they are not closely involved in the commissioning process for the current Housing First service. Around 60 per cent of Housing First tenancies are located outside Camden, which makes multi-agency commissioning more challenging and highlights the case for a pan London approach.

The service has been established broadly in line with the Housing First principles published by Homeless Link, and with a 1:5 support worker to client ratio. Camden Housing First is targeted at people with complex support needs who have been unable to move on through the Council's Adult Pathway. The evaluation of the original pilot scheme noted that a logical next step for the council would be to consider targeting chronically homeless people – including those sleeping rough – before they enter the Adult Pathway. Camden's service commissioner noted that there continues to be significant unmet demand for Housing First amongst those already within the Adult Pathway and that a preventative approach is not yet being considered. The council's annual review of service user data for those in the Adult Pathway found that 140 service users met the eligibility criteria for the Camden Housing First service. At the same time, few people fully move on from the service – three people have 'graduated' since 2014.

The council remains committed to delivering Housing First, and the recent award under the RSAP will enable the council to significantly grow provision. In the longer term, the scope for further growth will depend on identifying additional sources of external funding in the face of pressure on the Council's reducing budgets.

¹⁸¹ Nicholas Pleace and Joanne Bretherton (2013) *Camden Housing First. A Housing First Experiment in London*.

Centre for Housing Policy, University of York: York

¹⁸² www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/rsap_prospectus.pdf

3.2 How many people would benefit from Housing First in England?

Despite the encouraging increase in provision of Housing First places in England since 2017, now standing at around 2,000 places, there is a significant shortfall in the scale of provision.

Reaching firm conclusions about the potential client group for Housing First is intrinsically challenging. The CSJ's 2017 study projected a level of need ranging between 20–46,000 people.¹⁸³ These estimates were derived from a combination of evidence sources on rough sleeping, people unable to move on through the hostel system, and modelling for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that drew on evidence about the number of people facing multiple disadvantage.¹⁸⁴

More recent analysis by Crisis and Homeless Link projects a current requirement of between 16,450 and 29,700 Housing First places in England.¹⁸⁵ The lower estimate of 16,450 reflects current need and is derived from Heriot-Watt analysis on the scale of homelessness,¹⁸⁶ combined with analysis from the Hard Edges study to calculate the proportion of people with mental health needs, substance misuse, and offending behaviour (12.8 per cent).¹⁸⁷ The higher estimate of 29,700 again draws on the Hard Edges analysis and represents the cohort of people with experience of homelessness, mental health, substance misuse and offending behaviour, adjusted to allow for recent increases in homelessness.

Using the Crisis/Homeless Link lower estimate of a cohort of at least 16,450 people suggests that the current provision of 2,000 Housing First places provides just over a tenth (12 per cent) of the provision needed. Figure 6 shows the regional distribution of need compared with current availability.¹⁸⁸ Even allowing for the remaining 600 or so places yet to be provided by the three city region pilots (see Section 3.3), there is still a significant shortfall in provision.¹⁸⁹ While the pace of growth in delivery since 2017 is encouraging, concerted national action is needed to expand provision so that Housing First plays its full part in the Government's strategy to end rough sleeping.

183 Op. cit. Gousy, *Housing First*, 2017

184 Op. cit. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *UK Poverty*, 2016; Bramley, *Hard Edges*, 2015

185 Op. cit. Blood, *Implementing Housing First*, 2018

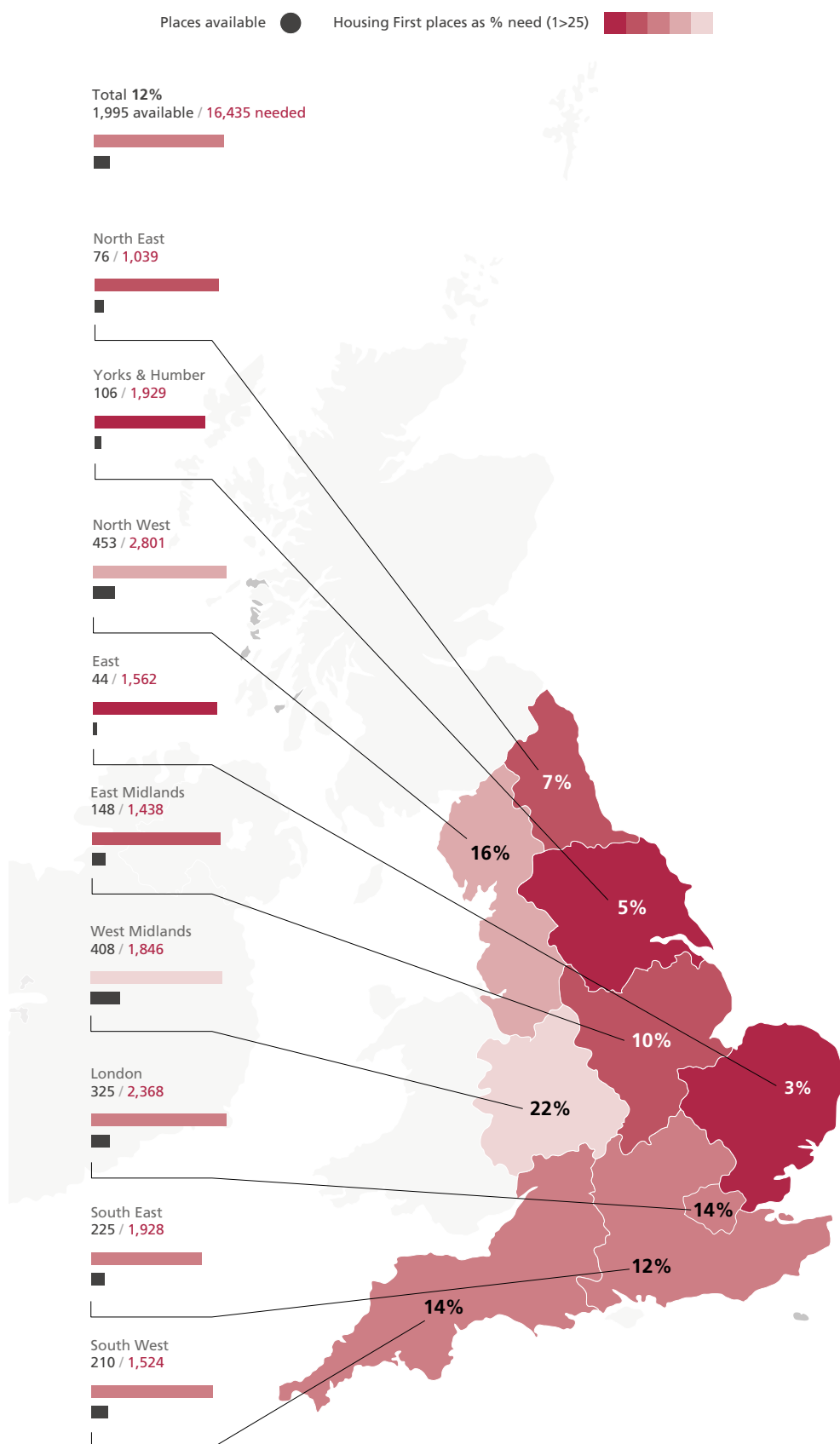
186 Bramley, G. (2017) *Homelessness projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain*, London: Crisis

187 Op. cit. Bramley, *Hard Edges*, 2015

188 It is worth noting that the regional distribution of Housing First requirements differs from the distribution of rough sleeping, with the requirement for Housing First places proportionately lower in London and higher in the northern regions than the concentration of rough sleeping outlined in Chapter 2. This reflects the geographical distribution of multiple disadvantage identified in the 'Hard Edges' analysis.

189 At the time of writing, information was not yet available from MHCLG on the number of Housing First places due to be funded through the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme.

Figure 6: Regional distribution of need and places for Housing First



Source: Housing First Need from Blood 2017; Places from Homeless Link 2020.

3.3 Early learning from the City Region Housing First Pilots

As noted in Chapter 2, three city-region Housing First pilots were launched in 2018 as part of a three-year funding programme backed by an independent evaluation. It is currently projected that the pilots will deliver 1,160 places, with the programme period allowing spending in some areas to run on into 2022/23 (Figure 7). All three pilots committed to Housing First principles in their delivery of services, with fidelity assessment embedded as part of the independent evaluation process.

By September 2020 the pilots had housed 450 people, with 88 per cent of tenants sustaining their tenancies across the programme as a whole (89 per cent in Greater Manchester, 88 per cent in the Liverpool City Region and 86 per cent in the West Midlands). Nearly 400 tenancies were in place across the three city-regions, with the vast majority of these provided by social landlords.

Figure 7: City Region Housing First Pilots key facts

	Liverpool City Region	Greater Manchester	West Midlands
MHCLG funding allocation	£7.7m	£7.6m	£9.6m
Target number of places to be delivered	330	330	500
Pilot delivery timescales	2019–2022	2019–2022	2018–2023
Number of people in Housing First tenancies at Sept 2020, of which:	41	124	231
Council & housing association	40	115	225
Privately rented	1	9	6
Proportion of people sustaining tenancies at Sept 2020	88 per cent	89 per cent	86 per cent

Delivering Housing First requires systems and cultural change, and all three pilots commented that original expectations on the speed with which the programme would get up and running did not allow adequate time for laying down the foundations for change (see **Annex: City Region Housing First Pilots**). There have also been challenges associated with delivering a new service at scale, including securing a sufficient supply of housing and staff recruitment.

Delivering at city-region (as opposed to local authority) level meant that structures were needed to shape the relationship between the city region and local authority level commissioners. Each city region opted for a different solution (see “*Commissioning and eligibility*” below). Staff highlighted that they await the forthcoming evaluation to fully understand the effectiveness and impact of the varying approaches adopted to delivery. Staff also flagged an appetite for more real time sharing of learning across the pilots, a message that should shape any future programme to scale up delivery.

In 2020 the pilots were faced with the challenge of delivering continued expansion of services during the pandemic. This is reported to have had a mixed impact on progress. On the one hand, it slowed progress with staff recruitment in some areas and impacted on the availability of lettings. On the other, the Everyone In response has helped to provide a foundation for engagement with potential Housing First clients that should support progress with delivering the rest of the programme. Generally, however, it was noted that Housing First provided a robust model of provision in the face of the virus, with residents safely housed in self-contained accommodation. While there was some disruption to the delivery of face-to-face support in the early phase of the pandemic as teams sourced protective equipment, phone/digital engagement was felt to have worked well for some residents alongside targeted face to face support.

There have been negative consequences for some individuals however, with the disruption in face-to-face support associated with greater isolation and deteriorating mental health. The pandemic was reported to have resulted in some increases in the incidence of anti-social behaviour, as it became more challenging for staff to deliver the intensity of face to face support that some tenants needed during lockdown. Staff commented that the routine process for managing anti-social behaviour, with swift intervention to address problems, typically leads to a resolution. In the small minority of cases where problems cannot be resolved, a managed move is likely to be offered, ensuring that evictions are rarely needed.

Despite these challenges and the impact they have had on speed of delivery, the early results from the pilots on tenancy sustainment are positive, and staff reported that the pilots are having a positive impact on individual lives and on rough sleeping. The independent interim process evaluation of the pilots identified that positive outcomes have included individuals with a history of multiple failed tenancies retaining their Housing First tenancies, a reduction in recidivism for persistent offenders, and enabling family reconnections.¹⁹⁰

There is support for the Housing First programme in each of the pilot areas, caveated by a clear message that the sustainability of support funding and shortage of housing supply must be addressed in order to sustain and further extend expansion of Housing First.

Commissioning and eligibility

Each city region has shaped its own approach to commissioning and delivering services within the broad parameters provided by the MHCLG funding programme. Each has chosen a different delivery approach, with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority delivering services using an in-house team, Greater Manchester outsourcing services to a housing association-led partnership at a city-region level, and the West Midlands commissioning services at local authority level. In the West Midlands some councils have outsourced Housing First, while some have developed in house teams. One authority that originally outsourced its service is now bringing this in-house following performance concerns. The Liverpool City Region had originally intended to operate a two phase programme, with phase 1 delivered by an in-house team on a 'test and learn' basis, while

¹⁹⁰ Op. cit. MHCLG, Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots, 2020

preparations were made to outsource services as part of phase 2. Following concerns about speed of progress, it was agreed with MHCLG and local partners that the in-house service should be expanded to deliver the full service.

The decision to commission services at local authority level in the West Midlands was in part driven by the assumption that this would improve local buy in and the ability to tailor services to local needs and circumstances. Eligibility for Housing First is also determined at local authority level in the West Midlands with a variety of approaches adopted, including in some cases using multi-agency assessment panels. In Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region, while Housing First services are delivered by the City Region Partnership and Combined Authority respectively, a range of mechanisms have been used to ensure accountability and engagement at local authority level. Key amongst these is the engagement of local authorities in assessing eligibility for Housing First services at local authority level. In Greater Manchester, multi-agency assessment panels in each council area oversee access to Housing First as part of a 'no wrong door approach', and all authorities use a common assessment system to score referrals as a mechanism to improve consistency of approach. In Liverpool referral panels are chaired by their respective local authority, with the Combined Authority Housing First teams directly involved in the assessment process, again providing consistency.

Staffing and peer support

At the time of our interviews, all three pilots reported operating with support worker to client ratios of between 1:5 and 1:7, with the objective of delivering a service that is faithful to Housing First principles. Earlier analysis of the pilots by the independent evaluators found that difficulties with staff recruitment in some areas meant that caseload sizes reached levels as high as 1:12 in the early phases of implementation, giving rise to early concerns about service fidelity until higher staffing levels could be achieved.¹⁹¹

All three pilots highlighted their commitment to co-production, involving people with lived experience in the development, delivery and oversight of the programme, although work is still underway to develop capacity to provide peer support and advocacy. Across all three pilots service capacity has been increased on a phased basis, with recruitment programmes still underway when the pandemic struck in 2020. The independent evaluation identified concerns about the availability of a suitably experienced provider base across all three pilot areas.¹⁹² Staff recruitment has presented a significant challenge, particularly across the West Midlands, and is an issue that will require further attention as part of any national programme to scale up Housing First.

Specialist mental health provision

Ensuring that people with mental health needs can access specialist support is important to help them fully engage with Housing First services. Staff from all three pilots highlighted challenges associated with securing access to mainstream mental health services for Housing First clients, and in particular for individuals with a dual diagnosis of substance misuse and mental health problems.¹⁹³ The pilots have adopted a range of approaches to seek to

¹⁹¹ Ibid

¹⁹² Ibid

¹⁹³ Ibid

address these challenges. The Liverpool City Region service employs two psychologists as part of the in-house team, while the West Midlands authorities have been working to improve pathways into mental health services and some have commissioned specialist roles to support their respective Housing First teams. In Greater Manchester, the Housing First partnership has used pilot funding to commission Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust (GMMHT) to provide a Housing First Dual Diagnosis team (see Case study: Greater Manchester Mental Health Housing First Dual Diagnosis Team). The provision of in-house specialists is seen as critical to help mitigate the impact of difficulties accessing mainstream mental health services, and ensure Housing First services can fulfil their potential. Staff emphasised that this type of provision is not about seeking to replace mainstream services, but instead to improve access to them in the short term while also helping deliver the longer-term system change needed to tackle the barriers faced by Housing First clients.

Case study: Greater Manchester Mental Health Housing First Dual Diagnosis Team

GMMHT is contracted by Great Places on behalf of the Housing First Partnership to provide a team of four dual diagnosis practitioners for the Housing First service. The dual diagnosis team is line managed within GMMHT and forms part of a wider hub of mental health services for homeless people delivered by GMMHT. Dual diagnosis workers are supported by a GMMHT psychologist through weekly case review and monthly group reflective practice meetings. The team supports Housing First staff and works directly with clients in specific circumstances, as follows:

- Consultation and Advice: advising Housing First support teams on which service is suitable for Housing First clients and how best to access it; liaising with other professionals; supporting care planning; developing behaviour or risk management plans.
- Assessment and Interventions: direct engagement with Housing First clients to complete a specialist assessment of Mental health or Substance Misuse or where the person is not ready to access other Mental Health/Substance Misuse services to support them in looking at specific issues such as coping with emotions or symptoms, or reducing harm from drug or alcohol use.
- Training and supervision/reflective practice for Housing First support workers.

Mainstream mental health services in the Greater Manchester Housing First pilot area are provided by GMMHT and the Pennine Care Foundation Trust. The GMMHT dual diagnosis team provides services to Housing First teams across both Trust areas and helps support access into mainstream services provided by GMMHT and by referral into the Pennine Care Foundation Trust.

Housing supply

In all three areas, it was anticipated that both social and private rented tenancies would play a role in Housing First, and all of the pilots were backed by commitments from social housing providers to make lettings available for Housing First. All three pilots highlighted that securing a sufficient supply of housing has been a significant and ongoing challenge that has impacted on the pace of growth. In the social sector this is partly about competition for the limited supply of one-bedroom flats from a wider cross section of groups in housing need. Staff noted that Housing First is competing for tenancies with other programmes targeted at rough sleepers and others facing multiple disadvantage. Supply problems were also said to have reflected resistance from some social landlords to take part in Housing First in some areas. In the Liverpool City region, staff also report a shortage of accessible homes for people with long term disabilities.

The very limited role of private rented housing in the pilots to date is striking; by September 2020, just four per cent of pilot tenancies used the private sector. This was said to reflect the under-development of mechanisms to bring forward private lettings for the pilots, and in some areas a concern that landlords would be reluctant to work with the Housing First client group. Staff in some areas also commented on wider constraints on the supply of private lettings including Local Housing Allowance rates and landlords preferring to let property using the Exempt Accommodation provisions of Housing Benefit.

Key learning from the City Region pilots for scaling up Housing First

Staff from the pilot areas identified a number of learning points for the future expansion of Housing First. These are detailed in the case study report for each area (see Annex), with the following common themes:

- **Sharing learning about what works.** There is an appetite from staff across the pilot areas for more sharing of learning, including feedback from the independent evaluation, to guide the further development of services. Staff flagged concerns about ensuring they are delivering an appropriate balance between regional consistency/economies of scale and local accountability. But there was also an appetite for more shared learning on what works in front line service delivery to achieve the best outcomes for individuals.
- **Allowing time for set up and delivery.** Staff from all three areas highlighted a common concern that there had been an unrealistic expectation about the speed with the pilots could be set up and rolled out. Study participants highlighted the fact that Housing First represents a significant change in the way homelessness services are delivered, and it takes time to build understanding of the principles, and to develop partnerships and infrastructure needed to roll out Housing First.
- **Ensuring a focus on outcomes as well as numbers.** Staff were concerned that pressure to deliver places risks diluting Housing First and undermining the principles. In the scaling up process it will be critical to focus on systems change, to share learning and to embed understanding of what works, ensuring that services deliver the best possible outcomes for the most entrenched rough sleepers.

- **Embedding a common understanding of what Housing First is.** Staff highlighted the need to establish a clear understanding of what Housing First is to underpin effective delivery. This is both about ensuring there is a clear national, commonly agreed position on what constitutes Housing First, and ensuring that steps are taken to embed this understanding across all relevant national government departments, local agencies and communities as Housing First is scaled up.
- **Providing sustainable funding for long term support.** The pilots are funded to deliver support over a three year period, but there are unanswered questions about longer term funding – both the future funding of those already housed, and the scope to grow provision beyond those housed during the pilot. It is expected that many of those housed by the pilots will require long term support. Ensuring their needs can be met beyond the term of the pilots was flagged as a key concern given the wider pressures on local authority budgets. It was noted that although some local authorities do operate multi-agency commissioning approaches, the pilot programme had not specifically incentivised multi-agency commissioning.
- **Increasing the availability of housing.** All three pilots highlighted that securing a sufficient supply of one-bedroom flats has been a significant and ongoing challenge that has impacted on the pace of growth. All three pilots are supporting a cohort of clients who are waiting for an appropriate offer of accommodation. There were also concerns that against a backdrop of severely curtailed supply, there is a risk that Housing First becomes one of the few pathways into social housing, raising questions of equity for others in severe housing need.

This early learning from the pilots provides evidence to support planning for the next phase of Housing First roll out. The CSJ urges Government to take the opportunity to begin preparations for a national rollout of Housing First drawing on this learning.

3.4 The case for a national Housing First programme

The evidence presented in the first three chapters of this report demonstrates the case for further Government leadership and investment to expand the delivery of Housing First across England:

- Evidence from abroad and the UK that Housing First works in ending rough sleeping and entrenched homelessness for the vast majority of people with high and complex needs. Recent evidence from scaling up in England and Scotland shows that over 80 per cent of Housing First tenants sustain their tenancies. There is also emerging evidence demonstrating the preventative role of Housing First, with the potential to reduce the flow of people at risk of rough sleeping by expanding its use for groups such as care leavers, survivors of domestic abuse and prison leavers (Chapter 1).
- Growing evidence to suggest that Housing First has a positive impact on criminal justice outcomes, with reductions in offending behaviour. Reductions in criminal activity and recidivism have the potential to partially offset the costs of Housing First, alongside

reduced impacts on emergency health and homelessness services. More analysis is needed to assess the scope to realise these benefits, analysis which should form part of a scaling up programme (Chapter 1).

- Evidence of concern from agencies involved in Housing First delivery that budgetary constraints are leading to pressures to cut corners in the way Housing First is delivered, with a risk this will undermine the outcomes that services could otherwise achieve in preventing a return to rough sleeping (Chapter 1).
- Evidence that people whose homelessness is compounded by the highest and most complex support needs continue to be at risk of rough sleeping, despite the impact of the Rough Sleeping Initiative and Everyone In. We will see a continued flow of people onto the streets for whom Housing First is the best option to end their homelessness (Chapter 2).
- Early evidence that the City Region Housing First pilots are delivering positive outcomes on tenancy sustainment for individuals who would otherwise be at risk of rough sleeping. But there are also profound concerns that longer term funding for these services is not secure, raising questions about the future housing prospects of the many hundreds of people supported by the pilots to sustain settled mainstream housing (Chapter 3).
- Evidence of significant untapped potential for Housing First. Expanding provision would enable more people to get vital support to end or prevent their rough sleeping. While Housing First is now estimated to provide around 2,000 places, at least 16,500 people could benefit from Housing First services, ending the cycle of repeat homelessness and rough sleeping (Chapter 3).

What needs to change?

The clock is ticking on the Government's welcome and ambitious commitment to end rough sleeping by 2024. But while the RSI and the Next Steps programme have significantly boosted the resource available to support rough sleepers, they are not delivering a consistent offer to people with the most complex needs. The solution lies in ensuring that a scaled up Housing First programme becomes a key component of the RSI and the Government's strategy to end rough sleeping.

We therefore propose a national Housing First programme.

There is a strong case for Government to take steps to progress roll out at the earliest opportunity, working across Government and with partners at a local level to start planning for scaling up. One of the key early learning points from the English City Region pilots is that time must be built into the scaling up process to allow commissioners to prepare the ground for Housing First. This includes building understanding of Housing First and how it differs from conventional approaches, getting partnerships in place, and establishing the systems needed to enable referrals, eligibility assessments and housing allocations. Government should begin preparation for the roll out process now, and this should be grounded in collaboration with local government and the third sector to develop a shared national vision for Housing First. Scaling up will be an incremental process but

if preparatory work for scaling up begins in 2021 alongside continued expansion of Housing First delivery through the RSI and RSAP, we could begin to see a real impact from a funding programme delivering investment from winter 2021/2022.

While Housing First could play a central role in both tackling and preventing rough sleeping, this is not its only value. Housing First has a broader role to play in supporting adults facing multiple disadvantage. As outlined in Chapter 1, international evidence and observational studies from the UK are demonstrating the potential role of Housing First in reducing recidivism and offending behaviour for people with multiple and high support needs. Housing First also has a role to play in local public health strategies, with stable housing an essential platform to support people as they seek treatment for substance dependency and serious mental health issues.

The Government has recognised the central importance of cross-departmental working in shaping the RSI advisory team that supports local authorities with the delivery of their rough sleeping programmes. The Secretary of State has also flagged his aspiration to expand this multi-disciplinary approach:

There is a lot to do and I need to get my cabinet colleagues to support me because I think this isn't just a housing crisis it's also a crisis of mental health and addiction. There're also law enforcement issues: as well as trying to support people we've also got to take action against aggressive begging and gangs on the street; individuals coming to this country to beg. So, what we want to do is to bring together Health, Housing and the Home Office in the most concerted and coherent effort on this we've certainly done since we've come to power in 2010, if not a long time before that.

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, October 2020

The CSJ strongly welcomes the commitment to cross-departmental working, which will be essential to underpin a national funding programme for Housing First. An inter-departmental approach at national level should be reflected in local commissioning arrangements.

Recent Ministerial remarks and indeed the scale of the Government's investment in the City Region pilots have also demonstrated its commitment to placing Housing First at the heart of its rough sleeping response. The pilots provide vital learning on what it will take to scale up Housing First and highlight the critical role of increased social housing supply. This learning has informed our recommendations on the shape of a national programme, and the steps Government should now take to roll this out in collaboration with local partners.

In Part 2 of this report we set out our detailed proposals on how to deliver a national programme, as follows:

- **Chapter 4** – Sustainable, longer term funding for Housing First support
- **Chapter 5** – Increased access to housing
- **Chapter 6** – Effective delivery of a national programme

part two

How to deliver a national Housing First programme

In this part of the report we set out proposals to help shape a national Housing First programme. This includes proposals for funding Housing First support services and the cost of these (Chapter 4), proposals for increasing the availability of housing for Housing First services (Chapter 5) and arrangements to underpin effective delivery of a national programme (Chapter 6).

A person is sitting on a bench, hunched over with their head down. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent red overlay. The person is wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants. The background shows a building with a window and some architectural details.

//

They're there all the way through. And as long as I want the service in my life, that support network will always be there. That's what gave belief to me. The promises didn't get broken. They build your trust first, they really do. I've changed my life so much because someone believed in me. I didn't believe in myself. I'd given up. That little bit of hope got me where I am now. If it wasn't for Housing First, I wouldn't be where I am now.

It can only get better if we make it country wide... Show them how much it works so it can help more people.

Housing First resident interviewed by the CSJ

chapter four

Sustainable long-term funding for Housing First support

In Chapter 4 we look at what it will cost to scale up Housing First and make the case for increased national funding to support the Government's objective of ending rough sleeping by the end of the current parliament. We look at the importance of longer-term funding commitments and multi-agency commissioning in improving the sustainability of services. We set out our recommendations on the scale and profile of national funding needed to grow the number of Housing First places in England from 2,000 to 16,450.

4.1 Extending the reach of longer-term funding

With the introduction of a longer-term commitment to fund support as part of RSAP, the Government has demonstrated its awareness of the importance of stable funding to underpin the response to rough sleeping. We now need to see this approach extended to underpin investment in Housing First, enabling the stability of the services which underpin the effectiveness of Housing First.

The open-ended support commitment provided by Housing First is out of step with the short-term commissioning cycles and funding programmes that have typically been used to fund Housing First in England. Analysis of the profile of funding for Housing First services in England found that most offer a long-term service but have to rely on short-term funding sources.¹⁹⁴ A 2020 survey of Housing First projects found that 40 per cent had funding of 12 months or less, while 43 per cent were funded for 2–3 years.¹⁹⁵ The same analysis for Homeless Link found that providers and their

¹⁹⁴ Op. cit. Rice, Investigating the current and future funding of Housing First, 2018

¹⁹⁵ Op. cit. Homeless Link, Picture of Housing First, 2020

funders are usually committed to continuing services in the long term, even though funding is not guaranteed. Where this is the case, services are often enabled by strong partnerships and trust that further funding will be found. While this approach can work when services are delivered on a small scale, the risks to providers and landlords increase as services are scaled up.

The City Region pilots are funded for the term of their programmes, but to date there is no clarity about how the 1,100 places supported through the programme will be financed in the longer term. This represents a major long-term funding obligation, with unanswered questions about how it will be met after the end of the programme period.

4.2 Consolidating funding streams for Housing First

Housing First services outside the pilot programme are funded by a patchwork of funding sources that include local authority housing related support budgets, public health funding, Adult Social Care personal budgets, the Better Care Fund, and funding from philanthropic Trusts and Foundations.¹⁹⁶ In 2020 66 per cent of services received all or part of their funding from a local authority, while 26 per cent of services receive funding from multiple sources, up from 11 per cent in 2017.¹⁹⁷ Over the past three years, funding for Housing First has also been increasingly provided through the RSI and going forward will also be available through the RSAP.

As we noted in Chapter 2, there have been calls to simplify funding under the RSI and reduce the burden on local authorities to bid repeatedly for diverse funding pots. The provision of longer-term funding for support (the remaining months of 2020/21 and a further three years) through RSAP is many respects a very welcome step forward, providing a model for the future funding of Housing First support. We would like to see this funding linked to provision of an increased supply of settled, long term housing options, rather than solely focused on short term provision as now. Our recommendations for the support elements of a Housing First programme are set out below, and recommendations relating to housing supply in Chapter 5.

4.3 Extending the reach of multi-agency commissioning

Current funding mechanisms and commissioning arrangements for Housing First have typically been siloed within individual statutory sectors.¹⁹⁸ The focus on Housing First solely as a rough sleeping intervention risks undermining consideration of its wider potential benefits and limiting the pool of funding available to pay for services.

Against the background of wider budgetary constraint faced by statutory services, many participants in our research highlighted the potential for pooling funding responsibility for Housing First across the range of sectors that potentially benefit from its positive impacts, including homelessness/housing, health, criminal justice and adult social care.

¹⁹⁶ Op. cit. Rice, Investigating the current and future funding of Housing First, 2018

¹⁹⁷ Op. cit. Homeless Link, Picture of Housing First, 2020

¹⁹⁸ Op. cit. Rice, Investigating the current and future funding of Housing First, 2018

Moving to a multi-agency (and at national level, cross departmental) approach to funding could help to locate the wider cost-benefits of Housing First, and in turn improve the prospects of funding being mainstreamed in the longer term.

4.4 Reducing reliance on Exempt Accommodation status

Analysis for Homeless Link has identified that some Housing First schemes rely on access to exempt accommodation status under the Housing Benefit regulations to provide an income stream for landlords.¹⁹⁹ This is in addition to any funding provided to support clients, and is in some cases seen as a way of offsetting higher management costs (for example because of higher property wear and tear, as well as the risk of damage to property and arrears).

There are a number of problems associated with funding Housing First this way including distortion of the private rental market as more landlords opt for exempt status, the impact on affordability for residents who are responsible for far higher levels of costs through their rent, and the impact on the fidelity of service if tenants are expected to move on from the property if they graduate from the Housing First model.²⁰⁰ The experience of many social landlords participating in Housing First shows that management risks can be addressed through effective partnership working with support providers (see Section 5.5). A funded national Housing First programme could play a role in reducing dependence on exempt accommodation funding and its potentially negative impact on the fidelity of Housing First services.

4.5 Mitigating the impact of wider constraints on local authority spending

Participants in our research noted the impact of wider budgetary constraints on the scope to expand Housing First. Analysis by WPI economics for St Mungos estimated that In 2017/18, nearly £1bn less was spent on single homelessness than was spent in 2008/9 – a fall of more than 50 per cent.²⁰¹ This fall was explained primarily by reductions in local authority spending on housing related support (formerly the Supporting People funding stream).²⁰² Cuts in spending on housing related support were in turn driven by wider reductions in Local Government funding, which is estimated to have fallen by 77 per cent between 2010 and 2020.²⁰³

Respondents to our call for evidence also highlighted the impact of wider cuts in public health spending, addiction services, mental health services, adult social care budgets and youth services impacting on access to the wider range of services required by Housing

199 Homeless Link (2020) *Briefing: Exploring the relationship between social landlords & Housing First services*

200 Ibid

201 WPI Economics (2019) *Local authority spending on homelessness. Understanding recent trends and their impact*. London: WPI Economics, St Mungos & Homeless Link

202 Ibid

203 Op.cit. Blood, *A Traumatized System*, 2020

First clients. For example, analysis by the CSJ found that cuts to addiction services across England were typically in the region of 30 per cent, with some authorities cutting by as much as 50 per cent.²⁰⁴

These wider pressures on funding contribute to an environment in which local authority commissioners may seek to dilute the principles of Housing First in order to stretch limited resources further. As noted in Chapter 1, these pressures include expecting a throughput of clients within a specified timeframe or higher staff to client ratios than the recommended 1:5 to 1:7. These pressures could be addressed by establishing a longer-term funding programme underpinned by a clear definition of Housing First, and grounded in the principles that deliver successful outcomes.

4.6 Solutions

There is a strong case for Government to invest in scaling up Housing First through a national programme, as a critical part of meeting the Government's objective to end rough sleeping by 2024.

Setting delivery targets at national and local level

As part of the first phase of a national programme, the Government should work with local areas to set targets for the delivery of Housing First places to meet the lower level of identified need of at least 16,450 places across England. In order to translate this national estimate of need to targets for local delivery as part of a national Housing First programme, all local authorities should be asked to assess local levels of need and set targets for provision in collaboration with local homelessness partnerships and using a standardised methodology. The assessment of need should be aligned with local authority homelessness strategies and strategic plans for adults facing multiple disadvantage. Local targets should in turn inform the national target and delivery plan.

Government should work with local authorities and third sector representatives to propose a methodology for this assessment, capturing both current need and forecast newly arising need. The assessment should include provision for individuals with a history of sleeping rough whose needs are not being met by current services as well as those with high and complex support needs who are at risk of rough sleeping, including for example people in contact with the criminal justice system, drug and alcohol services, domestic abuse services and mental health services. The needs assessment should specifically consider the potential role for Housing First for care leavers, survivors of domestic abuse and people leaving prison.

While targets for Housing First delivery should be grounded in an assessment of need, national government should work with local delivery partnerships to put in place realistic proposals for phasing the rollout of Housing First, combining realism about what can be delivered in the short-term with long-term ambition. In terms of the geographical distribution of places, the most rapid scaling up might in the first instance be focused on areas with the highest rough sleeping levels. Delivery plans should take account

²⁰⁴ The Centre for Social Justice (2019) *Road to Recovery: Addiction in our society – the case for reform*. London: The Centre for Social Justice

of the time needed to develop partnerships, protocols and operating systems, and build understanding of the Housing First model with local politicians, relevant agencies and the wider community (see Chapter 6).

The costs of a three-year national programme

We have made an indicative assessment of the costs of a three-year national Housing First programme to deliver 16,450 places, assuming a programme start in 2022.

We have assumed additional funding is needed for 13,850 places in year one of the programme, and 16,450 places in years two and three. The year one figure of 13,850 represents the overall need for 16,450 places minus 2,000 Housing First places that are already being provided in England, and around 600 additional places that will be produced by the city region pilots by 2022/23. The longevity of funding for the 2,000 places already in place in England and the remaining places to be delivered by the city region pilots varies, but ongoing funding will be needed for these services once their funding ends (noting for example that the Government has already announced increased funding for the RSI in 2021/22 which it is assumed will provide another year's funding many of the projects that already have RSI funding). From year 2, it is assumed funding for 16,450 places is needed. This analysis does not take account of any provision of Housing First support provided through RSAP, as information about the number of places being provided is not yet publicly available.

Housing First funding streams from RSI and the RSAP should, in due course, be brought within a single consolidated funding stream to provide consistency of approach and longer-term certainty of funding.

The experience of the city-region pilots has shown that it takes time to grow services, bring clients on board and scale up the number of places. This suggests that there may be challenges in scaling up delivery from the current 2,000 places to 16,450 by 2024. The process of agreeing local delivery targets outlined above would enable national and local partners to put in place deliverable plans for each locality.

But for the purposes of costing a national programme, we have assumed that the full level of identified need is met from year one. These costs are as follows:

- Support costs:
 - Funding an additional 13,850 places in year one at £8,600 would require an annual support budget of £119.1 million. This is in addition to funding currently available for Housing First services through the pilots, RSI and other funding sources and any due to be provided through the first tranche of RSAP funding.
 - To deliver funding for 16,450 places in years two and three would require a support budget of £141.5 million per annum. This assumes funding is made available to the (approximately) 2,600 places funded originally through the pilots, RSI and other funding sources. It also assumes that services can scale up to meet nationally identified levels of need by year two.
 - This represents a total support budget of £402 million over the three years 2022–2024.

- These costings assume an annual support cost per person of £8,600 based on analysis of costs for Crisis and the Liverpool City region outlined in Section 1.9, with a team of four workers and one team leader supporting 24 clients and allowing 15 per cent for organisational overheads.
- Personal budget costs:
 - The programme should include provision of £21 million to fund personal budget costs (assuming budget provision of £1,500 per place or £500 per annum over the three years).
- Mental health costs:
 - The programme should include provision enabling local partnerships to bid for the inclusion of specialist mental health support staff within Housing First services. A budget of £28 million should be made available for this, based on the formula recommended in the Liverpool City region study (0.3 FTE specialist worker supporting 20 Housing First clients at a cost of £12,000 per annum) or £600 per place per year.

This represents a total budget of £451 million over three years, or an annual budget of £150.3 million to deliver 16,450 Housing First places in England.²⁰⁵ The cost per place per annum is £9,700.

Our costings have not included provision for set up costs beyond the organisational overheads allowance in the support costings above. In practice these will vary depending on the scale of the service being set up. It may be considered reasonable for local delivery partnerships to meet these costs.

As noted in Chapter 1, the costs of providing Housing First would be more than offset by reductions in spending in areas such as health, criminal justice services and the homelessness system, providing a positive return on investment. Where £9,700 is spent annually on average per Housing First client, £15,100 is saved on other bills including homelessness services, the criminal justice system, NHS and mental health services, as well as drug and alcohol support. The Government should consider a further increase in the Stamp Duty Land Tax surcharge for overseas buyers to offset the upfront cost of the programme.

The first phase of a national funding programme should incorporate an evaluation of these potential cost offsets. Creating a joint MHCLG, Department of Health & Social Care, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Department for Work and Pensions fund for Housing First would signal an acknowledgement from the outset that Housing First is more than a homelessness intervention with potential benefits across statutory services. To realise the benefits of Housing First across all departments, it will be critical to ensure that an outcomes monitoring framework reflects the objectives of all contributing departments. A cross-departmental approach at national level could also help support faster progress towards a multi-agency approach to commissioning at local level and help ensure consistent national oversight of the engagement of local health, mental health, adult social care and

²⁰⁵ This is based on funding for 13,850 additional places in year one, and funding for 16,450 places in years two and three, with total costs averaged over the three years.

criminal justice agencies in local delivery. The Secretary of State has already acknowledged this with his commitment to a cross departmental approach to tackling rough sleeping, and it will be critical that this underpins a national Housing First programme.

Assessing the longer term costs of a national programme

More robust forecasts of the scale of need and costs in the longer term will help inform consideration of how these costs are met after the first three-year phase of a national programme.

More analysis is also needed to evaluate longer term trajectories of Housing First support needs and the impact on costs in the longer term. While for many, housing support needs will be long term, some people may need reduced levels of support over time, or to be able to graduate from services (see evidence on this from the Camden case study in Chapter 3). Projections are also needed of the likely flow of newly arising need in the medium to longer term, taking account of the impact of wider prevention activity. This analysis should form part of the evaluation process that underpins the first phase of a national Housing First programme, as well as drawing on learning from the city region pilots.

Recommendation

The Government should commit a budget of £150.3 million per annum over three years to deliver 16,450 Housing First places in England.

The objectives of this funding programme would be to:

- Provide Housing First support and settled housing for 16,450 people;
- Ensure value for money by delivering outcomes focused services that reflect a nationally agreed vision for Housing First and the way it should operate (see further recommendations in Chapter 6). This should include a commitment to the co-production of services with people who have lived experience of homelessness and multiple disadvantage and to sustaining a culture of shared learning (see further recommendations in Chapter 6);
- Encourage multi-agency commissioning and the use of multi-agency assessment panels to consider eligibility for Housing First;
- Enable the delivery of both generic Housing First services, and services targeted at particular groups including care leavers, survivors of domestic abuse and prison leavers;
- Map out a vision for the longer-term future of Housing First funding and delivery, taking into account the cost benefits of Housing First across the full range of relevant statutory services, long term trajectories of support need, and the scope to reduce flow into Housing First services through wider preventative activity.

The Government should create a joint MHCLG, Department of Health & Social Care, Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Department for Work and Pensions fund, backed by an outcomes monitoring framework that reflects the objectives of all contributing departments.

The national target for delivery of places to 2024 should be refined to take account of local assessments of need and locally agreed targets as these become available. These should be produced in accordance with a nationally agreed methodology.

chapter five

Increased access to housing

In this chapter we look at the housing challenges that need to be overcome to scale up Housing First, and the steps Government should take to increase the availability of both social and privately rented housing.

5.1 Putting settled housing at the heart of Housing First

As the name implies, for Housing First to work you need a supply of settled housing. Yet the availability of housing has been a key constraint slowing the pace of Housing First delivery in England – including in the City Region pilot areas. In evidence to the CSJ, all three Housing First pilots identified the shortage of suitable one-bedroom flats as a significant constraint on scaling up. There are constraints on supply in both the private and social rented sector, and these are felt across the country – not just London and the south of England (see **Constraints on housing supply – feedback from the City Region Housing First pilots**). There are also challenges associated with the allocation of social housing and nominations arrangements with housing associations, as well as a need to deliver a more effective approach to partnership working with all types of housing provider.

Constraints on housing supply – feedback from the City Region Housing First pilots

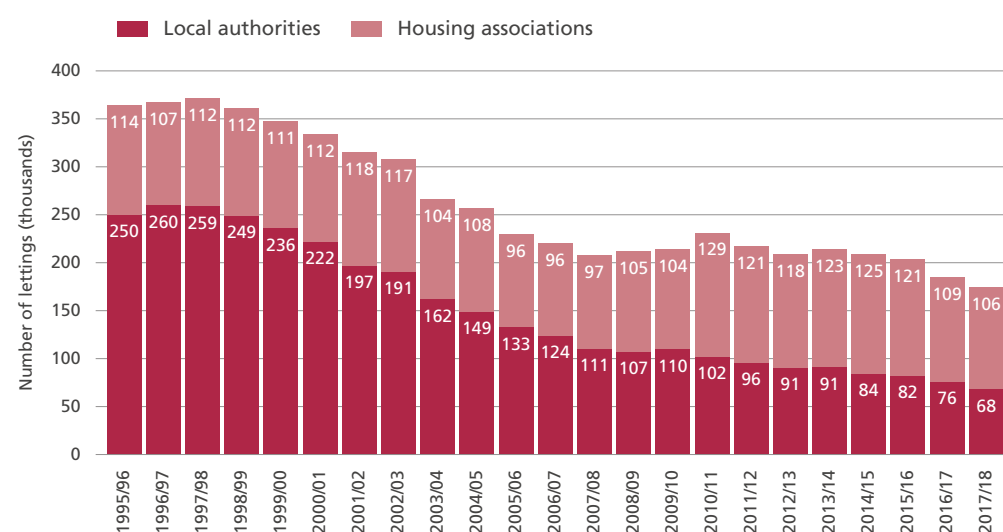
- **Liverpool City Region:** Getting access to a sufficient supply of affordable one-bedroom homes in some areas is problematic. The shortage of accessible housing for clients with long-term disabilities has also impacted on the ability to provide permanent tenancies for some clients being supported by the service.
- **Greater Manchester:** A key challenge flagged is delivering the supply of one-bedroom homes needed for the Housing First client group, whilst at the same time meeting competing needs from local housing registers and people being assisted through other programmes.
- **West Midlands:** The Housing First programme is one of many chasing a limited pool of properties. Providers are seeing a net reduction in the social housing stock each year, and it is a challenge to get access to private tenancies within Local Housing Allowance Rates.

5.2 The shortage of social housing supply

The impact of reductions in social house building and the effect of Right to Buy in reducing the availability of housing for social rent have been well documented.²⁰⁶ As one participant in the research noted: *“The social housing stock gets smaller year on year, even with the best use of right to buy receipts”* (West Midlands Housing First Pilot Case study).

The supply of social sector lettings to new tenants has fallen dramatically over the last 25 years:

Figure 8: Social sector lettings to new tenants



Source: UK Housing Review 2019, Table 102.

Analysis by St Mungos highlights that while the number of general needs social lettings decreased by 24 per cent in the decade from 2007/08, the number of lettings to adults and couples experiencing single homelessness fell by 44 per cent over the same period.²⁰⁷ This echoes analysis by Crisis showing that the number of lettings to homeless single adults fell from 19,000 in 2007/08 to 12,000 in 2016/17.²⁰⁸

A growing proportion of council Housing Options teams report difficulties in accessing social tenancies to help prevent or resolve homelessness in their areas – 70 per cent in 2017 compared with 64 per cent in 2016.²⁰⁹

Staff in the pilot areas highlighted the impact of these shortages on their capacity to deliver the Housing First programme. They paint a vivid picture of the competition for one bedroom tenancies between programmes targeted at adults with high and complex needs, which in turn limits capacity to assist other priority groups.

One respondent to our call for evidence highlighted the long waits that clients can face waiting for suitable accommodation:

²⁰⁶ CSJ (2018) A Social Justice Housing Strategy. London: CSJ

²⁰⁷ St Mungos (2020) *Home for Good: the role of social housing in ending rough sleeping*. London: St Mungos

²⁰⁸ Op. cit. Rowe, Moving On, 2017

²⁰⁹ Fitzpatrick, S. et al. (2019) *Homelessness Monitor*. London: Crisis

Despite the council being really on board... the lack of suitable council housing has been a challenge. Often our clients require housing away from particular areas (for safety etc.), or properties suitable for their support needs (ground floor etc.) and due to being quite a small and highly populated borough, this has meant our clients have waited sometimes for a year or more to be housed. It has also been difficult to procure PRS properties for our clients as landlords are difficult to get on board with the service and the nature of the support needs of our clients.

CSJ call for evidence, Housing First worker

Liverpool City Region also highlighted the impact of the shortage of accessible housing for Housing First applicants with long term disabilities. One individual respondent to our call for evidence who is homeless and has a long-term disability highlighted the impact of the shortage of accessible housing on their ability to access a permanent home, describing also their frustration that their local authority's approach to planning does not give this issue sufficient priority. There is substantial under-provision of accessible housing in England, and this wider shortage is impacting on access to housing for people whose homelessness is compounded by high support needs and physical disabilities.²¹⁰

The urgent need to find housing for people moving on from rough sleeping and others in acute housing need during the pandemic has led some local authorities and housing providers to suspend choice-based lettings systems and move to direct lettings, while at the same time prioritizing applications from people at risk of rough sleeping and domestic abuse.²¹¹ While a similar approach could be used to prioritise a flow of lettings for Housing First and is one of the options we recommend below, this does not in isolation address the wider shortage of social housing affecting a much larger group of people in housing need. It is critical that a national Housing First programme is underpinned by investment to deliver additional social housing.

5.3 Building on the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (Next Steps)

In Chapter one we noted that the £433 million Next Steps programme is intended to deliver 6,000 additional move-on places for people who have been rough sleeping. While it is most welcome that the programme brings together longer-term revenue funding for support with capital funding for additional housing, the homes provided offer only short-term housing for the people moving into them. This raises questions about the suitability of the programme, as it is currently shaped, for Housing First delivery.

210 Habinteg (2019) *Insight Report: A forecast for accessible homes*. London: Habinteg

211 Inside Housing – News – Liverpool housing associations make more than 200 homes available for rough sleepers in hotels; Op. cit. Boobis, Impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness, 2020

The first tranche of funding (£161 million) has been allocated to deliver 3,300 short-term properties, with £31 million of this delivering intensive support. There is a strong case for Government refocusing the second tranche of the programme to allow providers to deliver permanent housing for people moving on from rough sleeping, including Housing First. This would provide much needed additional housing and help to tackle the competing pressures faced by local authority housing options teams.

The Network Homes/Look Ahead Housing First partnership case study in Chapter 2 highlights the additional logistical challenges that social landlords face in providing new homes for Housing First under the Next Steps programme. These challenges mean landlords may not always be able to deliver new homes at the right time or in the right location for Housing First clients. In these circumstances it may sometimes be more practical to offer relets within the existing social housing stock. But without increasing the supply of homes for social rent, this puts more pressure on the constrained supply of social lettings. A solution to this, as with the Network Homes example, is to match Housing First relets in the existing housing stock with investment in an equivalent new home. We set out our proposals for creating this additionality below.

5.4 Addressing the impact of social housing allocations barriers on Housing First

Respondents to the call for evidence and staff in some of the pilot areas noted that allocations systems and rules can sometimes create practical barriers to delivering social housing lettings for Housing First.

Research by the National Housing Federation (NHF) identified nominations arrangements as one potential challenge, with associations in some areas “working around nomination agreements” where local authorities were not supportive of using nomination rights for Housing First services. In our call for evidence we heard examples of social housing providers agreeing service level agreements with housing associations for access to lettings that associations are able to make outside nominations agreements.

Barriers also include the impact of rules preventing people from accessing social housing if they have a history of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, or if they have had a criminal conviction within a given period of time.²¹² Where this is the case, including in some of the pilots, direct lettings are sometimes used by social housing providers to ‘bypass’ the mainstream allocations system.

Direct lettings typically mean that applicants are matched directly to properties rather than being asked to bid through choice-based lettings systems. Service providers emphasised the importance of investing time and care in matching people to properties when using direct lets. This involves supporting clients to weigh up their options against a backdrop of limited housing supply and identify the best option to meet their needs in terms of property type, tenure and location. This approach reflects the Housing First principle of ‘choice and control’ (see Chapter 1). While the principle of choice and control is not just about access to housing, constraints on housing availability make it particularly

212 Op. cit. Rowe, *Moving On*, 2017

challenging to deliver a significant element of housing choice. Housing First applicants should ideally be supported to identify their housing preferences in so far as options are realistically available, and should have the ability to refuse a property once offered. A number of contributors to the study noted that in practice the extent of choice can be very limited. Call for evidence respondents reported that it is sometimes the case that Housing First clients are supported into short term and sometimes unsuitable housing while they wait for a suitable permanent offer.

One housing association responding to our call for evidence highlighted how it aims to preserve an element of choice for Housing First applicants through the direct lettings process:

In terms of allocating properties, we don't do this through Choice Base Lettings – instead we make direct offers based on the resident's needs. On the surface this may appear to take away choice for the client but we don't feel this is the case. The client is asked to tell us where they want to live and anything they particularly would like or need in a property, such as level access, a garden, second floor and above etc. We then use this information to look for any empty properties we have coming up, if we find one that matches what they want we then do checks on the block and the local community to establish if there would be any issues for the client or the community. For example, if a client has a drug addiction and had expressed a desire to address this, we wouldn't want them to be in a block or an area where there are known drug problems/dealing. The client views the property and is able to refuse it if they don't like it so there remains choice and free will. We do believe that this process has in part assisted clients to maintain their tenancies.

Housing association, CSJ call for evidence

Bypassing normal eligibility rules and application processes may also allow providers to speed up access to housing for Housing First clients.

There are, however, examples of social landlords successfully supporting Housing First clients to access social housing through choice-based lettings. The Camden case study in Chapter 3 provides an example of this, with Housing First clients supported by their support worker to bid for and access council housing through the council's standard housing application process.

In order for such approaches to be successful it is essential that applicants are not locked out of eligibility for social housing by rules restricting access on the grounds of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or criminal convictions. This will mean a move away from the use of blanket restrictions on allocations on the grounds of tenancy history, towards a more person-centred approach that considers each individual's needs. We recommend solutions to address these barriers below so that, where possible, Housing First applicants are able to access social housing through the standard housing register application process in the same way as other applicants.

5.5 Partnership working with social housing landlords

There is clear evidence of the importance of ensuring that Housing First delivery is underpinned by effective partnership working with social landlords.

National Housing Federation (NHF) analysis of social landlords' experiences of Housing First highlights the critical importance of involving social landlords as key partners when Housing First schemes are being developed.²¹³ This recommendation is relevant to local authority and ALMO landlords as well as housing associations. The NHF finding was echoed by housing associations submitting evidence to the CSJ who made a plea for service commissioners to engage with social landlords at the earliest opportunity when plans for Housing First are being developed, and to give social landlords a voice in shaping systems for allocating homes and for resolving issues once the service is up and running.

A key challenge is to address housing provider's concerns about the risks of Housing First. The NHF study mentioned above found that housing associations consider Housing First an attractive model because it aligns with their organisational objectives, notably on addressing all forms of housing need, and includes fully funded support. Survey participants reported positive experiences of Housing First, noting that Housing First was no more expensive to manage than a general needs property. But it is clear from evidence submitted to the CSJ that some housing providers continue to have concerns about management risks associated, for example, with fears about anti-social behaviour and the impact on neighbours, as well as concerns about arrears and damage to property. The NHF research also highlights social landlords' concerns about the implications of short-term support funding, and the risks this poses to landlords.²¹⁴

Establishing longer term funding streams for Housing First as proposed in Chapter 4 would address this critical risk. But there is clearly also more work to do to broaden acceptance of the value of Housing First across the social housing sector, and to demonstrate how the perceived risks of Housing First are being effectively managed by agencies with a Housing First track record. In response to our call for evidence, one Housing First provider told us that they were having to explain to social landlords why nominees for Housing First tenancies did not need to pass the normal tests used to judge whether people are 'tenancy ready.' We also received examples of Housing First applicants being turned down for tenancies because of previous tenancy history.

Early engagement with social housing providers is therefore critical when roll out of Housing First is planned. This is not just about developing understanding of the Housing First model amongst agencies or individuals that do not have experience of it, though that is clearly important. But it should also be about designing systems and processes in partnership with landlords and, where appropriate, putting in place protocols or service level agreements to manage relationships. In Chapter 6 we look at the role of partnerships, training and awareness raising in providing a foundation for scaling up Housing First.

213 NHF (2020) *Experiences of housing associations delivering Housing First*. London: NHF

214 Ibid

5.6 Increasing access to good quality private rented tenancies

Available evidence suggests that the private rented sector houses fewer Housing First tenants than the social rented sector in England, and that the proportion of private Housing First tenancies has fallen since 2017.²¹⁵ Submissions to the CSJ call for evidence and case study interviews highlighted the practical challenges associated with obtaining private tenancies for Housing First. These included the impact of welfare restrictions on the availability of Housing Benefit (see **The impact of welfare restrictions on access to housing**), and landlords preferring to let to other client groups or to let their properties through the Exempt Accommodation Sector where higher rents are available (see **Annex: West Midlands Housing First Pilot**).

Participants in the study also noted the negative impact of the fixed term tenancies that are typical in the private rented sector. Staff highlighted that when fixed term tenancies are not renewed, and tenants have to be supported to identify another property and move home, this can have a destabilising impact.

One provider of Housing First services responding to our call for evidence said staff prefer to access social housing for their clients, because it is more likely to be offered with long term tenancies and to be affordable. This provider commented that social landlords experience in working with clients with support needs helps with effective tenancy management. These experiences reflect the evidence of longitudinal analysis of the experiences of people moving on from homelessness.²¹⁶ This found that people who were resettled in the private-rented sector had poorer housing outcomes than those who moved to social housing.

Despite these disadvantages, private renting can play a useful, targeted role in Housing First provision and there are examples of schemes successfully working with private sector landlords to provide sustainable housing.²¹⁷ Because of the challenges associated with accessing private tenancies, private rentals are sometimes used to enhance the range of choice available where social housing vacancies are not suitable rather than relying on private renting as the main source of supply.

One call for evidence response summed up the issues:

Privately rented sector is extremely difficult to enter... Very few properties are within the local housing allowance, so they are usually a lot more expensive – the rent. Rent-wise it's a lot more expensive than the Housing Benefit can cover, and in general there is a lack. Where we struggle is with this affordability and choice.

CSJ Call for evidence, Housing First worker, South East

²¹⁵ Op. cit. Homeless Link, Supporting people experiencing single homelessness, 2020

²¹⁶ Crane, M., Joly, L. and Manthorpe, J. (2016) *Rebuilding Lives Formerly homeless people's experiences of independent living and their longer-term outcomes*. London: The Policy Institute at King's College

²¹⁷ Op. cit. Quilgars, Threshold Housing First Pilot, 2017

The impact of welfare restrictions on access to housing

Local Housing Allowance rates

- At the start of the pandemic, the Government announced that LHA rates would be restored to cover the bottom third of rents (the 30th percentile) providing much needed help for households seeking access to a private tenancy. But the Secretary of State has announced that LHA will remain at current cash amounts from April 2021, effectively meaning that rates will be frozen again. If the gap between frozen LHA rates and rents begins to grow again as rents increase, this will put current tenancies and risk, as well as being a barrier to people finding affordable homes in the PRS, including people being supported through Housing First services.

The Benefit Cap

- The increase to LHA rates has had the unintended consequence of meaning that more people are now affected by the benefit cap. This limits the amount of money people can get to help pay their rent. The cap impacts on people being supported by Housing First services in areas where rents are highest, making it more difficult to find suitable homes for people in their local community.

In view of the severe shortage of social rented housing highlighted in this research, it will be essential to continue to build relationships and make use of private tenancies where feasible. Analysis of what it will take to scale up Housing First has highlighted the potential role for social lettings agencies in this process.²¹⁸ Instead of Housing First providers directly sourcing properties and being solely responsible for managing the relationship with landlords, social lettings agencies and other types of help to rent schemes provide an intermediary role, bringing expertise to the identification and management of suitable property.

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy recognises the important role to be played by Local Lettings Agencies in opening up access to private renting, and funding has been provided to enable local partners to set up and extend schemes as part of the RSI. There is a case now for expanding this provision to support delivery of a national Housing First programme.

5.7 Solutions

Challenges in accessing affordable homes for Housing First are a reflection of the wider barriers faced by households on low incomes seeking access to decent, affordable housing. To address these barriers the CSJ recommends addressing the need for wider investment in additional social housing and targeted welfare flexibilities, alongside interventions to support the delivery of homes specifically for Housing First.

218 Op. cit Blood, Implementing Housing First, 2018

It will also be essential to make use of both the social and private rented sectors to maximise available housing options in the short to medium term. Delivery planning at city region and local levels should include the assessment of housing supply requirements for Housing First and how these will be met across the social and private rented sectors.

Our recommendations are as follows:

To increase the supply of social housing

Historically, truly affordable rented homes have comprised a core element of new housing supply, with councils routinely delivering more than 100,000 homes for rent each year between the 1950s and 1970s. Since the mid-1980s, however, social housing delivery has fallen dramatically, and the number of homes delivered for social rent – the most affordable type of provision – has not exceeded 7,000 in any of the past five years.²¹⁹ Analysis by Heriot Watt University has identified that 90,000 additional homes for social rent are needed to meet the scale of housing required by people on the lowest incomes.²²⁰ Today, the Government spends over four times as much on housing benefit as it does on investment in truly affordable homes. The CSJ has called on Government to revive the One Nation Conservative tradition of truly affordable housebuilding.²²¹ As well as addressing the social injustices in our housing system and helping to level up the country, this would also increase the supply of homes available to help local authorities tackle rough sleeping. It would also increase the availability of homes for Housing First.

While the availability of homes for Housing First would be improved by a major social housebuilding programme, in the short-term scaling up Housing First will also need targeted interventions to increase access to social housing specifically for Housing First services.

Recommendation

- To increase social housing supply in the short term, the Government should bring forward its £12.2 billion Affordable Homes Programme and harness the low costs of borrowing to enable housing associations and councils to acquire and build an additional 50,000 social rented homes a year over the next two years. Combined with increased supply from the private rented sector (see below) this would contribute significantly to the need for 16,450 one bedroom Housing First places, while ensuring not to displace wider social housing supply.
- As an immediate first step Government should review its approach to Housing First delivery through the RSAP as follows:
 - Instruct Homes England and the Greater London Authority to work with housing providers to identify options that will enable the renewal of time limited tenancies in homes funded through the first tranche of RSAP where feasible so that Housing First tenants are not automatically required to move to alternative accommodation.

²¹⁹ Live tables on affordable housing supply – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

²²⁰ Bramley, G. (2018) Housing supply requirements across Great Britain: for low-income households and homeless people. London: Crisis and NHF

²²¹ CSJ (2020) *The Great Recovery: A post Covid deal for Great Britain*. London: CSJ

- Refocus the second tranche of the RSAP so that providers can bid to deliver permanent homes using open ended tenancies for people eligible for Housing First support through the RSI.
- To support the delivery of a new national Housing First programme, Government should provide ring-fenced funding to significantly expand a reformed RSAP, delivering permanent homes for Housing First as well as others moving on from rough sleeping. This must enable councils and housing associations to increase the supply of one bedroomed homes, including accessible properties, at a level commensurate with the number of Housing First placements into the social housing stock. This provision should encompass acquisitions and tenure conversion, as well as new build, to maintain the supply of additional homes during any post pandemic downturn. A key principle for this programme should be that the number of Housing First clients moving into social housing is matched by additional social housing provision.
- To track the scale of Housing First lettings into the social housing stock, Government should consult with the social housing sector on updating the Continuous Recording of Social Lettings system (CORE) to record all Housing First lettings into general needs social housing.

To ensure Housing First applicants can access social housing

It will be critical to overcome the eligibility barriers that can prevent Housing First clients from accessing social housing.

Recommendation

As part of the Housing First funding programme, Government should encourage local commissioners to prioritise partnership working with Housing Associations, ALMOS and Council run housing services to agree how to manage housing applications, nominations and allocations as part of the set up process for new or expanded Housing First services, as well as addressing how Housing First tenancies will be managed. Delivery arrangements for Housing First should specify how access to social housing will be enabled including through:

- Prioritising nominations and allocations for Housing First applicants;
- Using direct lets where appropriate to work around barriers created by eligibility restrictions or practical challenges using Choice Based Lettings systems;
- Reviewing allocations policy and systems to address eligibility and access barriers, ensuring that the individual circumstances of Housing First clients and others in housing need are taken into account through the application and allocations process for social housing.

The CSJ welcomes the Social Housing White Paper announcement that Government will review the impact of allocations barriers on people experiencing homelessness. The CSJ now calls for this to be expedited, taking account of the implications of these restrictions for the delivery of a national Housing First programme. This should include the case for reviewing allocations guidance to end the use of blanket allocations restrictions on grounds such as former tenancy arrears, anti-social behaviour and criminal convictions that sometimes exclude people in acute housing need from accessing social housing. To support the delivery of Housing First, the assessment of housing need should be person-centred, enabling Housing First applicants to be considered for housing regardless of their tenancy history. As part of our work on

reimagining affordable housing delivery, the CSJ will be conducting further work on housing eligibility and allocations as this affects the wider client group for social housing, with further recommendations due later this year.

Increasing the role of private renting to support scaling up and provide choice for Housing First clients

While there are advantages to social sector tenancies in providing long term stability and affordability for Housing First clients, there is significant pressure on supply. Government should build on the steps taken through the RSI and expand the supply of tenancies for Housing First by supporting the further expansion of social lettings agencies. There is also a case for targeted investment in welfare budgets to support the supply of private tenancies to tackle homelessness.

Recommendation

- To maximise the role of private renting in providing housing options for Housing First services Government should ensure that a national Housing First programme includes further funding to establish or expand provision by social lettings agencies and other types of help to rent scheme. This should build on the learning from schemes funded through the RSI.
- As part of the Housing First funding programme, Government should encourage local commissioners to prioritise early engagement with existing social lettings agencies, help to rent schemes and private landlords to raise awareness of Housing First and the way it operates and to identify the scope for supplying homes for Housing First services.
- To improve access to private sector tenancies for Housing First services, Government should:
 - **Commit to continuing to invest in LHA so that it covers the bottom third of rents (30th percentile) for at least this Parliamentary term.** This will give landlords, Housing First services and their clients certainty and security that Housing Benefit will cover the cost of rent, and maximise the supply of housing available to scale up Housing First;
 - **Exempt people sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation from the benefit cap.** This will be of particular benefit for Housing First clients in high pressure housing markets, where the cap has prevented renters from benefitting from LHA rates at the 30th percentile. It will help improve the range of housing options for services where affordable housing is its most scarce.

chapter six

Effective delivery of a national programme

In this chapter we outline the systems change needed to support delivery of a national Housing First programme and ensure its cost effectiveness, grounded in a shared understanding of Housing First and the outcomes it should deliver. We set out recommendations that address the need for national stewardship grounded in effective collaboration with local delivery agencies, and for a genuinely cross-departmental approach.

6.1 Towards a new approach

Rolling out Housing First at a national level cannot be treated as business as usual. While it might be possible to deliver small scale Housing First funding streams without wider systems changes, delivering at scale will require a new approach. In this report we have outlined the many challenges that need to be overcome to scale up services. These include the need for sustainable longer-term funding and access to housing, as outlined in Chapters 4 and 5. But there are other delivery challenges which a national programme will need to address, as follows.

6.2 Providing national stewardship

Oversight of a national programme that expands provision from 2,000 places to over 16,000 will require national stewardship and co-ordination, grounded in effective collaboration between national government and local delivery agencies.

As noted in Chapter 4, cross departmental working will also be critical to support national programme delivery. The cross departmental approach that underpins the RSI advisory team needs now to be expanded, with a cross Government, inter-departmental approach to both funding and oversight of Housing First delivery led by MHCLG.

Our recommendations for the shape of the national programme draw on the learning from Scotland, Finland and Ireland where Housing First is being rolled out nationally (see Section 1.10). In Scotland, the Scottish Government oversees the delivery of the pathfinder project through a governance group also involving grant-giving agency Corra, the social enterprise Social Bite and Homeless Network Scotland. This is being delivered in consultation with a wider advisory group involving local government and third sector agencies. A consultation is underway on a national framework to guide Housing First scaling up in Scotland, which will be supported by a national outcomes framework and a quality assurance approach.

The roll out of Housing First in Finland was underpinned by partnership agreements between national and local government. At a practical delivery level, 'Letters of Intent' between cities and national government included targets for the allocation of social housing to people experiencing long-term homelessness and set out the funding available to support delivery of additional homes and the recruitment of support workers.²²² In Finland a dedicated national agency – the Y-Foundation – delivers social housing for single people moving on from homelessness, supplementing the supply of housing provided by municipalities (see **Case study: Housing First in Finland in Section 1.1**). The Y-Foundation has played a key role in the delivery of national strategy to end homelessness and in rapidly increasing the supply of homes to tackle single homelessness. The homelessness charity Crisis is currently working with Savills to examine the feasibility and cost-benefits of establishing a similar delivery agency in England.

In Ireland, a national programme director leads delivery of an implementation programme that is jointly owned by the housing and health ministries.²²³ It is based on delivering a high-fidelity approach to Housing First, with fidelity assessment part of national monitoring and evaluation process. National and local targets have been set as part of an iterative process which includes targets for every local authority, while delivery is co-ordinated via regions. The programme also involves collaboration with criminal justice agencies to deliver Housing First services for prison leavers.

Our proposals for the delivery of a national programme for England draw on the learning of what has worked in scaling up Housing First elsewhere, as well as the learning from the RSI and other cross departmental programmes delivered by the Westminster Government. We propose a national programme director in MHCLG to drive delivery of the Housing First programme, supported by oversight and delivery arrangements that ensure effective collaboration between the relevant government departments and representatives of key sectors involved in delivery at local level. The director, supported by national oversight and delivery groups, should oversee development of an implementation programme that sets out the objectives and framework for delivery of the national programme. This should include provision of a clear definition of Housing First grounded in the principles, an approach to agreeing delivery targets with local delivery partnerships and arrangements for addressing housing supply and workforce constraints (see recommendations below).

²²² See example letter in Y-Foundation (2018) A Home of Your Own. Housing First and ending homelessness in Finland

²²³ Op. cit. Government of Ireland, Implementation Plan, 2018

6.3 A shared understanding of what Housing First is and the outcomes it should deliver

There is wide support within the Housing First sector for the principles established by Housing First England, and recognition of the value of a high fidelity approach.²²⁴ The principles were developed in consultation with Housing First providers, academics and experts both in the UK and internationally, and reflect the weight of evidence on what works. The impact of Housing First is grounded in these principles, and to ensure a national funding programme delivers value for money, it is important that the programme delivers a high fidelity approach.

We heard evidence, however, that there can be pressure on providers to dilute these principles, often as a result of wider financial and housing supply pressures. We also heard that the push to scale up services can itself lead to pressure to dilute the principles if the focus on numbers outweighs the focus on outcomes. A national programme to scale up Housing First should address this, ensuring that there is a commonly agreed position on what constitutes Housing First, backed by a consistent national approach to monitoring outcomes and fidelity. This should enable services to capture the impact of their work in a way that aligns with, but does not undermine, the Housing First principles.

‘Top line’ indicators should address factors such as housing stability and prevention of eviction, health and well-being, reductions in offending and anti-social behaviour, and progress towards training or employment. While the availability of consistent top line data is important to assess the impact of services at national and locality level, it is equally important that outcomes monitoring captures the distance travelled by individual service users on the basis of outcomes agreed individually with them, as well as incorporating measures that reflect local service priorities. While providing standardised top line indicators, a national approach should therefore also encompass local flexibility and provide guidance on the range of appropriate tools and measures for capturing individual and service-wide outcomes. This should draw on learning from within and beyond the homelessness sector, including programmes supporting adults experiencing multi-disadvantage and providing psychologically informed services.²²⁵ The development of a national approach should be a collaborative process involving representation from all relevant stakeholders.

Despite the huge evidence base on Housing First, there is still more to learn. This includes the practical challenges of delivery at scale, the day-to-day challenges of implementing the Housing First principles, and how the impact of services can be improved for the minority of people who do not sustain their tenancies, or whose experience of Housing First is less positive than for others. The city-region pilots all highlighted an appetite from staff for more sharing of learning, including early feedback from the independent evaluation, to guide the further development of services. It will be important that a national programme is underpinned by a commitment to enable shared learning, building on the work of Housing First England. This should ensure a co-ordinated approach to collaboration that involves all relevant participants including government advisors and sector led communities of practice.

224 Op. cit. Moreton, Evaluation of Housing First England, 2019

225 See for example op. cit. University of Southampton, Psychologically informed services, 2012

Drawing on this learning, there would also be value in developing a quality assurance framework that supports local delivery partnerships to meet a set of common standards. Again, this should be grounded in the agreed vision for Housing First, supporting providers to achieve fidelity to the standards and achieve the best outcomes for individuals. This might include the development of materials and processes to support self-assessment, peer review and performance benchmarking, an accreditation framework focused on assessing fidelity and outcomes, and/or a training academy, with accredited qualifications for Housing First roles.

6.4 Partnerships and system design

Many of the agencies providing evidence for this study highlighted the importance of effective partnerships to underpin the delivery of Housing First. Partnership working is central to a range of elements of Housing First delivery including handling referrals and assessing eligibility, getting housing options in place and providing access to essential health and care services, including mental health and substance dependency provision. Local partnership arrangements should therefore involve engagement with health, mental health and addiction services, adult social care teams and criminal justice agencies. As noted in Chapter 5, early engagement with housing providers is also critical to build effective partnerships and enable co-design of the approach to allocations and housing management. Housing providers are also playing a lead role in delivery partnerships in some areas (see for example case study reports for Basingstoke and Deane in Chapter 2 and the Greater Manchester Housing First pilot in the Annex to the report).

The co-production of services with people with lived experience is also important to underpin effective service delivery, as well as effective engagement with staff at all levels within partner organisations. Feedback from the pilots and elsewhere suggest that this is most effectively achieved where front line staff are involved in shaping referral systems and eligibility rules, with the opportunity to raise concerns and explore solutions.

Comparisons have been made between the change in focus of the relationship between the homelessness service and client under Housing First – a relationship that needs time to build trust – and the time needed to develop the partnerships and systems that are essential to Housing First:

What makes or breaks a Housing First programme is relationships at every level – between the Housing First worker and the person on the programme, and relationships between stakeholders.

City-region pilot Programme Lead

Staff from the city region pilots and many of the other agencies involved in the study highlighted the importance of allowing time to build these relationships and to get new operational systems in place. Early learning from the city region pilots suggested that too much was expected too quickly, and so the national programme proposed in this report must allow sufficient time to get these foundations in place.

As well as emphasising the critical importance of local partnership working, the city region pilots provide learning on the value of cross border delivery partnerships and the range of ways these have been structured to provide local accountability. The three pilots have each adopted different approaches to delivery which will help inform the next phase of scaling up (see Annex), and more evidence on the impact of these approaches is expected from forthcoming phases of the independent evaluation.

There is a case for Government encouraging cross boundary partnerships to deliver Housing First services – whether within existing city-regions or other sub-regional/county-wide partnerships – to increase opportunities for shared learning, pooling resources and economies of scale. This should include encouraging cross-boundary delivery in areas with two-tier local government and areas without established cross-border delivery structures. A national Housing First programme should incentivise the development of multi-agency, and where appropriate, cross-border partnerships to deliver Housing First at local level. The set-up phase for Housing First should also encompass time to get these partnerships and supporting systems, service level agreements and protocols in place. All the evidence demonstrates that early engagement between agencies and a co-production approach to designing services will provide a more sustainable foundation for service delivery.

6.5 Workforce development

Growing Housing First services to deliver many thousands more places in the coming years will require a commensurate growth in staffing capacity, with at least two thousand additional support workers required to meet the scale of need. Some of this provision may come from within the existing workforce in the homelessness, housing options and related sectors, but there will be a need to grow capacity.

Learning from existing schemes has highlighted the important potential role of employing people with lived experience of homelessness as peer support workers to improve the impact of Housing First.²²⁶ Workforce development planning should also consider the steps needed to support the expansion of peer support.

In the city region pilots staff recruitment presented a significant challenge, impacting on the pace of delivery and quality of service in the early phase of the programme.²²⁷ It is an issue that will require further attention as part of any national programme to scale up Housing First.

6.6 Political and community engagement

Contributors to the research highlighted the importance of early efforts to build political and community understanding of Housing First, the rationale that underpins it and the ways in which it differs from current ways of addressing homelessness and housing need.

226 Op. cit. Homeless Link, Housing First Guidance for Support Providers, 2017

227 MHCLG, Evaluation of the Housing First Pilots, 2020

Against a backdrop of scarce resources and housing supply, there is the potential for Housing First to cause tension in local communities, for example where Housing First clients are prioritised for social housing. Concerns may also be raised about the risk of anti-social behaviour. Participants in our research emphasised the importance of local political ownership of Housing First to provide the foundations for service delivery, and for the wider systems change that is often needed to underpin it. This message echoes the findings of the independent evaluation of the city-region pilots, which highlighted that progress in scaling up was better enabled in areas with strong political support and senior staff commitment for Housing First.²²⁸

Early stakeholder engagement is therefore important to share evidence about the way Housing First works and its impact. Engagement processes should enable stakeholders to raise concerns about issues such as anti-social or criminal behaviour and how any problems will be addressed. Participants in our research emphasised the importance of providing reassurance that any evidence of anti-social behaviour will be swiftly addressed, and that where it cannot be resolved residents will be supported to move to alternative accommodation.

One respondent to our call for evidence provided a case study illustrating the positive impact that the support of local councillors and the local community can have not just for delivery generally, but also for individual clients (see **Dan's story**).

Dan's story

Dan (not his real name) is a young man in his 30s with a history of failed tenancies and has been sleeping rough in local woods for 3–4 years. He did not have a tent and just used what he could find to provide shelter, sleeping in all the clothes he owned to keep warm. Following an appeal on Facebook launched by his sister, Dan came to the attention of the Housing First team who identified that he would be suitable for the programme. It took time for Dan to trust the support on offer and to accept the idea that he might move into safe and secure housing again.

The arrival of COVID-19 in March hastened the situation and with a drive to get everyone rough sleeping moved into safe accommodation Dan was offered a small studio flat on a temporary basis. He was cautious about the move but moved in early April with the support of the Housing First worker and supported housing officer. As restrictions lifted his tenancy was reviewed and converted to a permanent tenancy.

Dan is delighted with his new home, both the size and location being close to the local facilities he needs. His support worker told us *'we have seen a huge improvement in Dan's well-being; his mental health has improved as well as his physical wellbeing. He is clean and tidy and loves to cook, mainly chips, in his home and enjoys being able to have a bath'*. Dan gets on well with his neighbours and the ward councillor is supporting him to do some voluntary work too. The security of his own home has given Dan greater self-confidence allowing him to have choice over what is in his home and who visits. For all partners involved this is a hugely successful tenancy.

²²⁸ Ibid

6.7 Solutions

Building on the learning of the RSI and RSAP, the Government should take the following steps:

Recommendations

- A Housing First Programme Director should be appointed within MHCLG to steer the development and implementation of a national Housing First programme;
- Oversight of delivery should involve representation from MHCLG, Department of Health & Social Care, Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions as well as engagement with representatives of local government and sectors involved in the delivery of services at local levels, including the social housing sector and the homelessness service sector;
- The Housing First programme should be fully aligned with the Government's wider strategic approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping, including with the RSI and RSAP. As noted in Chapter 4 Housing First funding streams from RSI and the RSAP should, in due course, be brought within a single consolidated Housing First funding stream to provide consistency of approach and longer-term certainty of funding;
- A national implementation plan should shape the delivery of funding, and should include:
 - **A shared vision for Housing First**, grounded in a high fidelity approach, and a commitment that Housing First will become the principal approach for people whose homelessness is compounded by multiple disadvantage;
 - **A standardised national framework for monitoring outcomes** including housing stability and prevention of eviction, health and well-being, anti-social behaviour and offending behaviour, and progress towards training or employment. Outcomes data should be published and publicly available;
 - **National and linked local targets for delivery of Housing First** informed by bottom up and top down analysis of need. Local needs assessments should be delivered and targets set by local homelessness partnerships in consultation with national agencies and in accordance with a commonly agreed methodology as described in Chapter 4;
 - **Proposals for phasing the roll out of Housing First**, combining realism about what can be delivered in the short-term with long-term ambition. In terms of the geographical distribution of places, this might in the first instance be focused on areas with the highest rough sleeping levels, while consolidating pre-existing services. At a local level, delivery plans should take account of the time needed to develop partnerships, protocols and operating systems, and build understanding of the Housing First model with local politicians, relevant agencies and the wider community;
 - **An assessment of housing supply requirements** for Housing First (and how these will be addressed at national and local level), making use of both the social and private rented sectors and formulated in partnership with Homes England, the GLA/London Mayor and City Region Combined Authorities where appropriate (see Chapter 5);
 - **Identification of workforce development needs** and how these will be met in partnership with local authorities, housing and homelessness sector membership and representative bodies. This should include growing the workforce of people with lived experience to provide peer support;

- **A commitment to sharing learning and to co-production with people with lived experience**, underpinned by transparency about what is and is not working, with input from government advisors, sector led communities of practice and co-production panels that draw on the experiences of people who have been homeless.
- **Proposals for a research and evaluation programme** that captures:
 - The cost benefits of Housing First services, including by comparison with 'business-as-usual' models;
 - The longer-term trajectories of support needs of Housing First clients and outcomes achieved by services;
 - The examination of how Housing First can better improve outcomes in relation to health and substance dependency; and solutions for the minority of people with high and complex needs who do not sustain Housing First tenancies.

As the programme is rolled out, Government should work with local delivery partnerships to develop:

- **A national quality assurance framework** that supports local delivery agencies to ensure fidelity to the agreed vision for Housing First. This might include:
 - The development of materials and processes to support self-assessment, peer review and performance benchmarking;
 - An accreditation framework focused on assessing fidelity and outcomes, drawing on learning from the fidelity evaluations of the city region pilots and engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness;
 - A training academy, with accredited qualifications for Housing First roles.
- **Communication and engagement programmes** that raise community awareness of the experience and drivers of homelessness and rough sleeping, how homelessness is being addressed locally and how local agencies and individuals can play a part in this. The voice of people with lived experience should be at the heart of this activity.

annex

The City Region Housing First Pilots

Liverpool City Region Housing First Pilot

Key facts

MHCLG funding allocation	£7.7m
Target number of places to be delivered	330
Pilot delivery timescales	April 2019–Aug 2022
Number Housing First tenancies at Sept 2020	41
Of which:	
Council & housing association	40
Privately rented	1
% people sustaining tenancies at Sept 2020	88%

Summary

The Liverpool City Region Housing First pilot housed 41 people by September 2020 and is seeing positive early results on tenancy sustainment. The Combined Authority is the delivery agency, with the Housing First service delivered by an in-house team. Each local authority is working collaboratively with the Housing First local teams and a range of partner agencies to determine eligibility for the Housing First service in each locality area. The service is in the process of moving from a central to a locality-based service model.

Commissioning and delivery approach

The Liverpool City Region pilot is being delivered by the Combined Authority in partnership with the six city region local authorities: Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral. The relationship between the partners is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding, and individualised terms of reference and collaboration agreements.

The Combined Authority is the accountable body for MHCLG funding and is directly delivering the pilot in-house. Originally the in-house service was set up to deliver Phase 1 of the pilot for 60 service users and provide a test and learn dimension while preparations were made to commission out. It was agreed with MHCLG and partners instead that the Combined Authority's in-house service should be expanded to meet current demand and reach targets within agreed timeframes.

Recruitment has been completed to expand the service to deliver Phase 2. Following learning from phase 1 about reliance on a centrally based team the service has now moved to a locality model, with a staff team in each local authority area. The service is operating with a support worker to client ratio of 1:6. The service directly employs psychologists, but there is still a need to access specialist mainstream mental health services for some clients. This has been problematic in some cases, particularly for people with dual diagnosis of mental health issues and substance dependency.

A Lived Experience Group involving people with experience of homelessness have been involved in the governance, development and delivery of the pilot, including in the recruitment of Housing First support workers.

The pilot was set up with the ambition to deliver wider systems change in the delivery of homelessness and housing services. Delivery of the Housing First pilot is seen as part of achieving a wider shift to a housing-led response to all forms of homelessness, with work underway to examine how to drive change in allocations practice.

Assessing eligibility

Each local authority is responsible for chairing a referral panel in its area. Panels are responsible for determining access both to Housing First and other services for people with complex and enduring needs. Any agency or individual can refer into the Housing First service, and the Housing First teams lead on the assessment process, jointly working with referral agencies.

In some local authority areas Housing First panels have joined existing complex needs panels, and in some areas the panels have been set up as Housing First panels.

The profile of agencies involved on panels varies between councils.

Housing supply

Obtaining access to housing is a key challenge. Housing associations²²⁹ have provided the vast majority of lettings to date, with only one letting to a private tenancy. There is an aspiration to grow the number of private tenancies. A key challenge in delivering the housing service has been the lack of the right types of home in the right location. There has been a particular issue with the shortage of accessible homes for people with

229 All 6 councils in Liverpool City Region have transferred ownership of their housing stock to housing associations.

long-term physical disabilities. While there are 41 tenancies currently in place, more than 70 clients are being supported by the service, with the projection that the service will have capacity to support over 150 clients by December 2020.

A Charter outlines how social landlords will engage with the Housing First programme, and the Combined Authority also has a Service Level Agreement with each partner landlord. Allocations take place outside the city-region allocations policy, with direct nominations being made for Housing First clients. Despite this, there have been some difficulties securing access to social housing tenancies for some clients, with some landlords refusing individual clients. Refusals can be due to availability of appropriate accommodation or issues around understanding of the Housing First model. The Combined Authority has identified that there is further work to do to build understanding of Housing First and develop relationships with social landlords.

Early evidence of outcomes and impact

The team are working to develop the evidence base on outcomes and impact but are seeing some early evidence of the positive impact of the service on tenancy sustainment. To date there have been no evictions, with 88 per cent of clients retaining their tenancies.

Key lessons for scaling up

Improving understanding of the role and principles of Housing First

The operation of the pilot has been affected by Housing First initially working in isolation from the homelessness sector, with a lack of understanding within the homelessness and housing sectors of the role of Housing First, and the way that it fits alongside other homelessness interventions. Although there are some positive examples of partnership working, more needs to be done to improve understanding of the role of Housing First, as well as to embed asset-based thinking and trauma informed working across the sector. It is expected that multi agency panels with joint decision making responsibility and joint accountability will start to improve partnership working. The pilot has offered support to the homelessness sector to deliver workforce development in relation to good practice and there is an ambition to influence working practice across the region.

Clarifying what happens at the end of the pilot

There is a tension between the Housing First commitment to provide continuing support for as long as it's needed and the three-year funding term which is due to end in 2022.

Developing multi-agency partnerships

Improved integration with mental health services, adult social care and criminal justice is seen as critical to the longer-term sustainability of the service.

Improving the availability of housing

Getting access to a sufficient supply of affordable one-bedroom homes in some areas is problematic. The shortage of accessible housing for clients with long-term disabilities has impacted on the ability to provide permanent tenancies for some clients being supported by the service.

Louise's story

As a young child Louise (not her real name) was regularly moved between her mother and father in different cities. Louise's father had a long-term mental health issue and her mother was a long term heroin user who died when Louise was 13. To cope with the death of her mother Louise started using heroin herself at the age of 14. She began offending to fund her addiction and became the victim of domestic violence in abusive relationships where she was nearly killed on a number of occasions.

She has three children who are all in care and Louise has spent the last 11 years in prison. When she came to Housing First she was in a cycle of sofa surfing and rough sleeping, offending so she would have somewhere to spend the night. At the age of 42, Louise had never worked or claimed benefits and was suffering ill health with unstable personality disorder, anxiety, psychosis, COPD and arthritis.

Housing First helped Louise choose a home of her own and she picked where she wanted to live. Louise's support worker gave her daily responsive support such as staying with her all day to access medical services and carried out daily welfare checks.

Housing First challenged her lifestyle without judgement and supported Louise to want to change. Her support worker helped her manage her own safety by putting her in touch with substance misuse services to control addiction and went with her to the appointments so she wasn't alone. Her support worker helped her access benefits as a source of income and encouraged her to see her own strengths of being kind and having a brilliant sense of humour.

Nine months on, Louise is now maintaining her own tenancy in the area of her choice. She has chosen to address her substance misuse issues and is on a methadone script for the first time. She has fewer hospital stays as she has stopped overdosing and is starting to make her own decisions about her life. Louise is engaging with Housing First and is attending appointments with her support worker and other organisations. She is now in receipt of benefits and is budgeting her money, stopping shoplifting to get money to live on.

Louise's goals

I'd like to help mentor others in the same way that has been done for me. I do have strengths and things I can do well, I can be capable and I deserve a chance to try and do the best I can with my life.

Greater Manchester Housing First Pilot

Key facts

MHCLG funding allocation	£7.6m
Target number of places to be delivered	330
Pilot delivery timescales	April 2019–March 2022
Number Housing First tenancies at Sept 2020	124
Of which:	
Council & housing association	115
Privately rented	9
% people sustaining tenancies at Sept 2020	89%

Summary

The Greater Manchester City Region Housing First pilot was supporting 124 people in tenancies in September 2020 and is seeing positive early results on tenancy sustainment. The Combined Authority has commissioned services in collaboration with the ten city-region local authorities, with a single contract let to a Partnership of service providers who work within geographical zones. Each local authority is responsible for determining eligibility for the Housing First service in its area, working within an assessment framework agreed at city region level.

Commissioning and delivery approach

The Greater Manchester Housing First Pilot is being delivered for the Combined Authority and the ten Greater Manchester Local Authorities: Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Manchester, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan.

The Combined Authority is the accountable body for MHCLG grant funding. The decision was taken to commission the service at City-Region level, with local authorities closely involved in agreeing the delivery framework for the pilot and developing the specification for the service. This embeds aspects of Housing First fidelity into delivery arrangements.

The decision was taken to create a single delivery partnership, Greater Manchester Housing First Partnership, as the contractor for the pilot. The Partnership is led by social housing provider Great Places, and responsibility for delivering support for the first tranche of places is shared between four social housing providers and the Bond Board (a private rented sector access charity), divided geographically as follows:

- Zone A Manchester – Riverside
- Zone B Bolton, Bury & Rochdale – Regenda and the Bond Board
- Zone C Oldham, Stockport and Tameside – Jigsaw
- Zone D Salford, Trafford and Wigan – Great Places

A standard job description and pay rate are used across the Partnership, and the Partnership project team operates a quality assurance framework. This builds on the fidelity review framework developed by Homeless Link and incorporates oversight by the City-Region's co-production panel. Staff to client ratios are 1:6 with the flexibility to increase this to 1:7.

Other agencies involved in the Partnership are Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust (contracted to provide services to Housing First clients across all four zones) and Stockport Homes (Stockport Council's Arm's Length Management Organisation). The pilot is also supported by Greater Manchester Housing Providers Partnership, representing most social housing landlords in the area, which committed to deliver homes for the pilot.

Further contracts are being let during 2020 to deliver the remaining tranche of places in each of the four zones, with contracts lasting for fifteen months from January 2021 to April 2022.

Assessing eligibility

Each local authority has an allocations quota calculated using a formula agreed by all parties at the outset (drawing on rough sleeping statistics and wider data sources). Multi-agency assessment panels in each council area are responsible for overseeing access to Housing First as part of a 'no wrong door approach.' Panels identify the best housing and support option for each client taking account of their individual needs. To provide a level of consistency in determining access to Housing First across the city-region, all authorities use the New Directions Team Assessment²³⁰ – with a guideline that a score of 38 and above is normally required (though this is implemented with flexibility). Panels are at different stages of maturity across the city region, and membership is shaped according to local circumstances.

Housing supply

Social housing lettings have provided the main source of supply to date, with the city-region's social housing partnership committing to support delivery of Housing First. Over 80 per cent of the 124 tenancies are provided by housing associations, with 10 per cent from councils/ALMOs (13) and nine privately rented.

Social housing lettings take place outside the normal allocations process using direct lets.

The supply of private tenancies has been smaller than expected to date, with the City Region's new Ethical Lettings Agency not yet fully operational. The Partnership is in discussion with local authorities about accessing private lettings via council teams.

²³⁰ The New Directions Team assessment (formerly the Chaos Index) assesses need by looking at behaviour across a range of areas, and by considering engagement across a range of services. It aims to identify people with complex and multiple needs who require targeted support. www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/documents/Annual-Report-2016.pdf?mtime=20181031094658

Early evidence of outcomes and impact

Based on early evidence, the Greater Manchester partnership views the pilot Housing First service as an effective way to prevent and end homelessness and rough sleeping for the target client group of people with the most complex support needs. Staff noted that tenancy sustainment outcomes for the Greater Manchester pilot – currently at 89 per cent – are comparable with the international evidence. Evidence is also beginning to emerge that positive softer outcomes are being delivered.

A further positive outcome reported by staff has been to broaden awareness of the value of person-centred, strengths-based approaches to service delivery, with these principles becoming embedded more widely across housing and health services.

Key lessons for scaling up

Increasing the supply of housing

A key challenge flagged by the Partnership is delivering the supply of one bedroom homes needed for the Housing First client group, whilst at the same time meeting competing needs from local housing registers and people being assisted through other programmes. Investment in additional housing supply is seen as critical.

Providing sustainable funding for support

The pilots are funded to deliver support over a three year period, but there are unanswered questions about longer term funding – both around the future funding of those already housed, and the scope to grow provision beyond the pilot. This is a key concern given the wider pressures on local authority budgets. Staff highlighted that a key requirement for further rollout of the programme would be a long term Housing First funding pot, focused on the delivery of outcomes across homelessness, health and criminal justice, and designed to encourage statutory and other relevant agencies to work together.

Tackling the lack of understanding of what Housing First is

Staff highlighted the importance of ensuring there is a clear understanding what Housing First is to underpin effective delivery. There is a concern that delivery of target numbers might be prioritized over fidelity, with the risk that Housing First is diluted and outcomes are not achieved or, alternatively, that it no longer serves the client group for which it was intended. There is felt to be a need to do more work to embed understanding of the difference between ‘housing led responses’ targeted at those with lower support needs and Housing First for those with high and multiple needs, and to raise awareness that both types of intervention are needed to address rough sleeping.

Allowing time for set up

Staff emphasised the importance of allowing time to build the infrastructure and relationships needed to deliver Housing First effectively, as well as to engage with prospective clients: *“What makes or breaks a Housing First programme is relationships at every level – between the Housing First worker and the person on the programme, and relationships between stakeholders.”*

Sharing learning about what works

Staff highlighted the importance of a test and learn approach to delivery, with the ability to adapt and develop implementation as a response. There is an appetite for greater sharing of learning across the pilots. Looking ahead, it was felt there is a case for a national steer to provide clarity on what constitutes Housing First and on quality assurance and to highlight examples of positive practice.

Liam's story

Liam (not his real name) has been homeless on and off since he was 18, dependent on heroin for around 25 years and has struggled to have any stability during his adult life. He is well known to local services and the statutory drug and alcohol provider but has never managed to stabilise on a treatment programme. He has had considerable contact with the police and with the criminal justice system in the past but was not offending when referred. He is well known for begging in the town centre and has a high profile with locals because of his situation over the years.

Liam was referred to the Housing First service in June 2019 by the Council Rough Sleeper team. The Housing First Worker built relationship and got to know Liam on a personal level, meeting him where he was and taking time to understand him as a person. They discussed the locations where Liam would like to live, and helped him fill in forms to apply for housing. Liam turned down the first property he was offered, as felt this was not in an area he wanted. He then accepted another offer which was closer to the town centre. Liam was given access to a personal budget and he chose to use it to furnish his flat and purchase a TV. His support worker has been persistent in staying in touch during periods of time when Liam would avoid contact as a result of not being stable around his drug misuse.

Liam has been supported to engage with the statutory drug and alcohol service, and he has been on a stable methadone prescription since December 2019. This is the longest he has ever sustained his engagement concurrently with the provider or any drug and alcohol service.

Issues started to occur when Liam's acquaintances began using his flat to misuse substances. Liam did not feel confident asking these people to leave and struggled to control his own front door. It became unsafe for Liam to return to the property, so the Housing First worker supported him to access emergency temporary accommodation through the local authority. Another property became available in the private rented sector, and the support worker helped Liam to source second hand furniture and a van to transport it with the help of a local housing provider. Before his new home was ready, Liam was asked to leave the temp accommodation due to substance misuse and ended up rough sleeping for four days. When the support worker found out, they were able to arrange a sign up for the next day, despite COVID-19 restrictions, and Liam moved into his new home.

The new flat is away from the town centre, reducing the risk of cuckoo'ing, and represents a big turnaround in Liam who stated he would never consider living away from the town centre. Liam has been introduced to the Dual Diagnosis Practitioner within Housing First, who recently carried out a mental health assessment. This is the first time Liam has ever engaged with any service around his mental health. He has recently expressed a wish to detox from substances and is currently demonstrating this commitment by continued engagement with the drug and alcohol service.

Liam's goals

Have my own home and be comfortable. To stop using heroin and other substances eventually. To improve my physical health. To build a new life for myself and be able to be independent.

West Midlands Housing First Pilot

Key facts

MHCLG funding allocation	£9.6m
Target number of places to be delivered	500 (reduced from 617)
Pilot delivery timescales	2018–2023
Number Housing First tenancies at Sept 2020	231
Of which:	
Council & housing association	225
Privately rented	6
% people sustaining tenancies at Sept 2020	86%

Summary

The West Midlands Housing First pilot was supporting 231 people in tenancies by September 2020 and is seeing positive early results on tenancy sustainment. Birmingham City Council has delegated authority on behalf of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to lead the programme, while individual local authorities are the lead commissioners and have shaped delivery and eligibility arrangements according to local circumstances and priorities. Programme co-ordination and monitoring is delivered at city-region level by a project manager with support and oversight provided by the combined authority.

Commissioning and delivery approach

The West Midlands Housing First pilot is being delivered the seven local authorities that make up the West Midlands city region – Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton – in collaboration with WMCA. WMCA provides an oversight and scrutiny role and is the awarded body, while Birmingham City Council is the accountable body for MHCLG funding and performance. Delivery is local authority led, with grant divided between the seven councils and each local authority responsible for commissioning Housing First services in their area. The allocation of resources is based on the original funding bid for each area. The first services began operating in late 2018, with the rest beginning in 2019. There is agreement with MHCLG that as the service is scaled up in each area, new contracts can be let for three years. This means that services can provide three years support for people entering the service in years two and three and that the final phase of the programme can run until 2023 (a five year programme).

Regional collaboration is coordinated by Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) which provides project management. BVSC's role includes programme monitoring and supporting the development of the lived experience voice in the pilot.

The size of services ranges from a target of 200 places in Birmingham to just 12 in Dudley, and each local authority has shaped its own approach to commissioning Housing First. Four of the seven authorities have outsourced services, while two councils are

delivering in house. Additionally one council originally outsourced its service but, following performance concerns, is in the process of bringing it in house, introducing in-house support staff to clients on a 'double running' basis with the intention of delivering a wholly in-house model by July 2021.

All services are expected to deliver a support worker to client ratio of 1:5–1:7, but staff grades and pay are determined at local level. In some areas providers have experienced difficulties recruiting and retaining suitably skilled staff. Varying approaches have been adopted to procuring mental health services for Housing First clients across the region, and in some areas there have been difficulties securing access to mental health provision.

Assessing eligibility

Each authority has devised its own approach to managing referrals into the service and determining eligibility. In some cases, councils already had or have set up multi-agency or in-house panels to assess referrals, in other cases referrals into Housing First are assessed by outreach or homelessness teams. One local authority has adopted the assessment and scoring process used by the Greater Manchester pilot and has found it helpful to provide consistency.

Housing supply

Of the 231 tenancies currently in place, just over half (125) are council/ALMO tenancies, with 100 provided by housing associations and six privately rented. Council staff report that providing housing has been a key challenge, as Housing First clients are competing with others in housing need for a diminishing supply of one-bedroom homes:

The social housing stock gets smaller and smaller year on year, even with the best use of right to buy receipts.

In addition to the challenge of an overall shortage of social housing, some housing providers are reported to have been reluctant to engage with the Housing First programme, and commissioners have had significant work to do to educate housing staff about Housing First. Very few people have been housed into private tenancies so far, and although commissioners expect to increase this, finding landlords who will let at Local Housing Allowance rates remains a challenge. As with access to social lettings, there are competing priorities for private sector tenancies that have to be managed by Housing Options teams.

A major issue in some areas of the region is the growth of the 'exempt' sector which is reducing the supply of potential general needs tenancies.

Early evidence of outcomes and impact

Commissioning staff report that the pilot has had a positive impact on individual lives and on rough sleeping in the West Midlands. Although some clients are still relatively new to the service, there are many stories of lives changed for the better, and 86 per cent

of people housed so far have sustained their tenancies. Staff noted that there have been challenges too, including responding to the social isolation experienced by some tenants. Staff also commented that more analysis is needed of wider outcomes and the cost benefits of the pilot compared with other types of intervention. This is felt to be critical to address the question of longer-term funding for Housing First at a time of great pressure on local authority budgets.

Staff also emphasised that while Housing First is helping to reduce rough sleeping in the West Midlands, investment in a wider menu of longer term funded housing and support interventions will be critical to bring rough sleeping under control. This should include ensuring there is a pathway to permanent housing for people forced to sleep rough who do not have the level of support need that would trigger eligibility for Housing First. Solutions are also needed for the small minority of people who have not sustained tenancies within the Housing First service.

Key lessons for scaling up

Addressing how funding will be delivered in the long term

The pilot has demonstrated that many clients are likely to have long term support needs. Indeed some may require long term social care. More analysis is needed of the longer-term costs of support and care needs and how national government anticipates meeting these once the three-year funding programme comes to an end. Housing First commissioners would also like to see more direction from national government to ensure Housing First is grounded in multi-agency commissioning and delivery – involving the health service and adult social care rather than being housing-discipline led.

Scaling up should not just be a numbers game

There has been a strong focus on delivering numbers through the pilots to date, but staff highlighted the need for an equally strong focus on outcomes and quality. They argued there's a risk that a race for growth could dilute and undermine Housing First, and move it away from addressing entrenched rough sleeping. The focus on outcomes should acknowledge that individuals' journeys aren't always linear – and also look beyond tenancy sustainment to wider outcomes.

Allow time to get systems set up

Housing First represents a step change in the way homelessness services have been delivered, and this needs to be recognised in the way new services are set up. Because of timescales for delivery the pilot was taking in clients at the same time as developing relationships and delivery systems. A longer lead in time would have been preferable.

Using the pilots as an opportunity to share learning

Partners would have welcomed more opportunity to share learning between pilots, and hear more from the external evaluation during the course of the project. This includes learning on effective ways of balancing local control/engagement with regional consistency.

Increasing the availability of skilled staff

Agencies expressed concern that the pool of people with the right skills to deliver Housing First isn't there in parts of the West Midlands, and there have been challenges recruiting to Housing First posts as well as wider homelessness and housing options roles.

Increasing the availability of housing

The Housing First programme is one of many chasing a limited pool of property. Providers are seeing a net reduction in the social housing stock each year, and it is a challenge to get access to private tenancies within Local Housing Allowance Rates.

Alice's story

Alice (not her real name) has held several tenancies in the past which have failed. She has complex mental health issues and has been known to Mental Health Services since the age of 18. Although she has been accessing Mental Health Services, she did not feel she was getting enough support. Alice is a drug and alcohol user. She has a difficult relationship with her family which at times was the cause of her homelessness.

Housing First started working with Alice for two months before suitable accommodation was located. She was supported with harm reduction in relation to her alcohol and drug intake, and to access additional support services available to her within the community.

Alice has maintained a successful tenancy since November 2019. She has decorated the flat and maintained the garden, and pays her bills with the support of Housing First. Alice has not used drugs or alcohol for over 8-months.

She has recently suffered a mental health breakdown following domestic violence from her former partner. She spoke with her Housing First officer who in turn contacted her Doctors and Mental Health Support to address her medication and offer additional support during her difficult time. She is having daily contact with her Housing First Officer via WhatsApp and weekly visits take place.

Due to ongoing domestic abuse, it has been agreed that Alice can be offered a move outside the normal two year residence rule, and her Housing First officer is helping her to locate an alternative property.

Alice is a member of a church and has been attending services via Zoom during Lockdown. She has taken steps to volunteer with the Youth Offending Team as she would like to support others using her own life experiences. She has also compiled a CV and is looking for work in security sector.



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