



**Homeful**

**Exploring housing-led approaches to  
resolve and prevent homelessness**

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Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing

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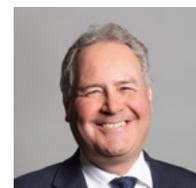
## Foreword

By **Bob Blackman MP** and **Neil Coyle MP**, Co-Chairs of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness

We very much welcome this timely report by the Chartered Institute of Housing, which sets out to explore some of the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, where we saw national and local government, organisations and individuals protect and support people experiencing homelessness through the 'Everyone In' initiative.

As we look beyond the pandemic, we must seek to embed the lessons we have learnt in policy and practice if we are to end homelessness for good, particularly as homelessness could rise as the economic impact of the pandemic hits. Street homelessness is the tip of the iceberg, more and more families are now being housed in temporary accommodation or find themselves sofa surfing, and young people are finding it harder to secure permanent affordable housing.

We are pleased to introduce this work led by CIH President Jo Richardson. We wish you all the very best with this endeavour, and look forward to working with you constructively on our joint goal – to end homelessness for good.



*Bob Blackman*



*Neil*

## Welcome



**Jo Richardson,**  
CIH President

The CIH presidential campaign for 2021-2022 focuses on a co-produced action research campaign, which explores housing-led approaches to resolving and preventing homelessness. The research examines all forms of homelessness, including 'hidden' homelessness such as precarious and temporary accommodation. We know that by working together, agile and sustainable solutions are possible – as has been seen during the pandemic. This short report, written with my colleagues at the Chartered Institute of Housing and World Habitat, introduces some of the issues we wish to explore further.

Please join me in this campaign to share the challenges, good practice, ideas and possible solutions that you have experienced.

**Thank you.**



# Resolving and preventing homelessness

2020 was a year unlike any other in recent memory. The social effects of a decade of austerity measures and the economic concerns about the fallout of Brexit created a heightened sense of precarity for those already just hanging on. When the COVID-19 pandemic started to impact the UK in March 2020, the resulting lockdowns and restrictions snapped the slender threads to jobs and housing for many. But 2020 was also a year of adaptive practice, collaborative working, learning and sharing ideas. We saw this with remarkable effect through the **'Everyone In'** initiative to offer emergency accommodation to anyone sleeping on the streets.

## A housing-led approach

Homelessness is a scourge on a modern, wealthy country like the UK. The most visible pinnacle is rough sleeping – but there are many more people who are experiencing 'hidden homelessness', living in unsafe, insecure, unaffordable or short-term accommodation. The social housing sector already does much to provide homes and support for people (including the good practice examples included in this report). But we can and should do more, to take both a housing-led response to resolve homelessness, and a support-led approach to prevent it. This is at the heart of the *Homeful* action research campaign:

- Resolving homelessness by providing affordable, stable housing, along with the necessary wrap-around, non-conditional support that each person requires
- Preventing homelessness by bringing support and advice to each person to help them sustain their tenancy, while leveraging the expertise and professional standards of the social housing sector to work with multiple agencies to help keep people in their home. Eviction must be the absolute last resort.

This report puts the UK's current homelessness problem in context and shows what we know we can do. It includes case studies from Britain and Europe, and it touches on some of the challenges. The message is that social housing providers can and should be at the heart of housing-led approaches to resolving and preventing homelessness. We can learn from one another, and this is what we will do through the Chartered Institute of Housing's *Homeful* campaign.

# How did we get here?

**36,855**  
applications for homelessness assistance in Scotland during 2019/20

**31,333 (98.5%)**  
of applications in Scotland eligible for assistance (up 4% on the previous year).

Source: **Scottish Government**

**SCOTLAND**

**2,688**

people slept on the streets of England on any one night during 2020.

Source: **Homeless Link**

**16,802**

presentations of homelessness in Northern Ireland during 2019/20. 11,323 accepted as being owed the full housing duty.

Source: **Department for Communities**

**N.IRELAND**

**IRELAND**

**12,399**

households assessed as homeless in Wales during 2019/20 (up 6% on the previous year).

Source: **Welsh Assembly**

**ENGLAND**

**WALES**

**288,470**

households owed either homelessness prevention or relief duty in England during 2019/20.

Source: **Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government**

## Resolving street homelessness

Before the impact of COVID-19 there had been success in reducing rough sleeping in some English cities, although it was still rising in London, Birmingham and Manchester, and had stubbornly levelled off at 165% above the low point achieved in 2010<sup>1</sup>.

Government figures for 2020 show a significant reduction in the numbers of homeless people sleeping on the street. This was as a result of the 'Everyone In' initiative, which provided temporary relief but not a longer-term solution. **Homeless Link** reported that the number of households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness (62,250) fell by 9.2% compared to the previous year, but the number of households living in temporary accommodation (95,370) rose by 8%.

## A fragmented picture

There are divergent housing policies across the devolved countries of the UK. In Wales, the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 was the first piece of UK legislation to focus on duties to prevent as well as to relieve homelessness. England's 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act aimed to follow suit. In Northern Ireland, the amended Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 requires the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to provide housing assistance to all those in priority need.

The nation's most ambitious piece of legislation is in Scotland. The amended Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003, which came into force in 2012, abolished 'priority need' and focused strongly on prevention through a housing options approach, while recognising the need for an increased supply of social housing.

## Housing need and the role of the state

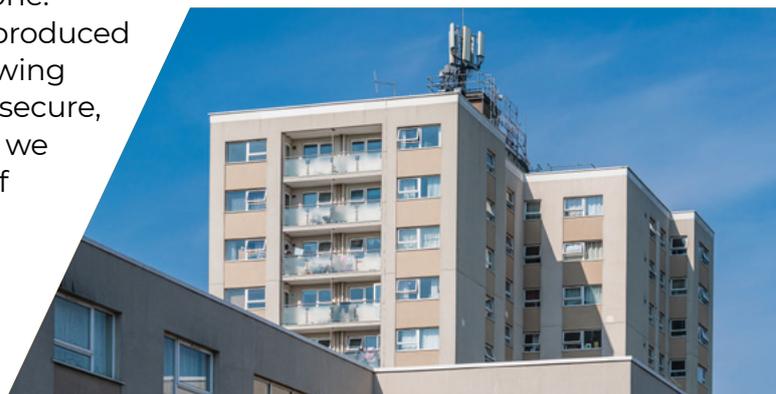
Many take government intervention in housing as a given, but it has not always been the case. Laws relating to housing and 'the working classes' came in during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mass, state-backed housing provision was seen after the First World War with the 'Homes for Heroes' campaign and in the 1950s and 60s. But we have not seen government-supported housebuilding on a similar scale since, despite the evidenced need for more social and affordable homes.

The impact of the Right to Buy legislation has further amplified the insufficient amount of affordable housing for rent. With more than one million households officially estimated to be on waiting lists in England alone.

**Research by Heriot-Watt University in 2019** produced a more accurate picture of housing need, showing that 3.6 million people in England need more secure, affordable housing. The research showed that we should be building 340,000 homes per year, of which 90,000 should be for social rent.

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<sup>1</sup> Fitzpatrick, S et al (2019) The Homelessness Monitor 2019, Crisis, London.



# What's possible?

## Housing's response to the coronavirus pandemic

COVID-19 laid bare the extreme health inequalities for people experiencing homelessness in the UK and elsewhere. People who are homeless have worse health than others, especially those experiencing street homelessness who have severely limited access to basic hygiene facilities and healthcare services, which compounds existing health conditions. Prior to the vaccination programmes, the strongest protection against COVID-19 was safe, stable and clean accommodation. And access to housing remains an important defence against the disease.

In the early stages of the pandemic, UK governments recognised a pressing need for places where people could self-isolate. This was particularly acute for people sharing communal night shelter facilities. So in March 2020, following funding and direction to local authorities, an immediate and wide-ranging 'Everyone In' campaign provided safe places to accommodate anyone found on the streets. Health services were also encouraged to work with homelessness organisations to rapidly convert available accommodation (such as hotels, bed and breakfasts and housing association spaces) into lifesaving accommodation. Between March and December 2020 **more than 33,000 people were able to occupy a range of temporary spaces.**

'Everyone In' demonstrated that with bold leadership and a clear shared goal of saving lives, a range of partners (including local authorities, housing associations, hoteliers, health care providers and homelessness organisations) could dramatically reduce the numbers of people sleeping on the streets. Providing accommodation to anyone who needs it quickly – without barriers or criteria for eligibility and access – can have a dramatic effect on people experiencing street homelessness. The initiative showed that by working together, services could also effectively engage with individuals who had previously struggled to access necessary health and social care support.

Homelessness is a *public health* issue. Responding to a global crisis such as COVID-19 has taught us that local responses are most effective when key agencies from across towns and cities work together.



*Street survey of people sleeping rough in Leicester – photo by David Weight*

In the **East Midlands**, Leicester's Homelessness Charter united members of the community, charities, the City Council, healthcare providers and other public services, faith groups, and businesses to tackle homelessness as one city with a shared purpose. This solid foundation of cross-sector collaboration led **to more than 545 people experiencing homelessness being swiftly housed in emergency accommodation** between March and October 2020.



Based in **Plymouth**, Trevi specialises in rehabilitation for women and their children who've experienced domestic abuse. The organisation has expanded and diversified to provide the Daffodil Family Centre (a mother and baby residential parenting assessment centre) and the Sunflower Women's Centre (providing support to any woman who needs it with an on-site trauma-informed crèche). In collaboration with two other agencies, Trevi is also developing a property to offer trauma-informed support for vulnerable women at risk of domestic abuse.

An Ending Women's Homelessness Grant funds a trauma-informed resettlement worker to build effective strategic relationships across third sector agencies, local authority, housing and hostels in Plymouth. This role helps women in recovery at the Sunflower Centre who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to navigate the housing landscape and remove barriers. Many of the women that come into the centre are not even aware they are considered homeless, due to the hidden nature of their homelessness and vulnerable housing situations.

In partnership with a local housing provider and Plymouth City Council, Trevi has been instrumental in getting a five-bedroom house opened in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This demonstrates a shift in thinking about provision for women. Gender-specific provision is still uncommon, so the project is developing relationships and working to bring about change, by providing evidence that it works. Trevi believes that there should be a women's centre in every city.

Despite its apparent success in the UK, the 'Everyone In' approach was not universally adopted across Europe in the early days of the pandemic. As the public were directed to stay at home, homelessness organisations and social work agencies across many countries were left to provide what support they could.

In the Slovakian capital **Bratislava**, homelessness organisations were forced to mitigate overly zealous police services, whose response to the pandemic was to fine street homeless people who had nowhere else to go. Agencies provided homeless people with information, protective masks, food, sleeping bags and tents. One organisation extended its reach to cover 90% of the city, filling a gap resulting from the withdrawal of social services.



This experience from across the UK and Europe teaches us that when we have the commitment, purpose and direction to pursue a shared goal, transformational change can happen quickly. It has not solved the overarching housing crisis, but it's shown how agencies and organisations that have worked together for years can go so much further when the urgency and government commitment are clear. The energy of 'Everyone In' must be harnessed to ensure it becomes 'never again'.

# There is another way

## Housing-led approaches

To truly understand how we move to a situation where housing is seen as a home, and not as a temporary space, we must look beyond the emergency response to COVID-19. Key housing challenges that lie at the roots of the homelessness crisis have not gone away – the shortage of affordable housing supply, inadequate Local Housing Allowance rates and over-reliance on temporary accommodation. While significant injections of funding from central government have produced results in the past, short-term funding will always lead to short-term solutions. There is another way – a strategic, longer-term, housing-led approach to resolve and prevent homelessness.

A housing-led approach provides people experiencing (or at risk of experiencing) homelessness with stable, appropriate accommodation and any necessary support as quickly as possible. This approach (sometimes called ‘rapid rehousing,’ particularly in Scotland and Wales) turns the traditional response on its head by removing the conditions normally attached to accessing a home. The support element of a housing-led approach will vary according to the needs of the person experiencing homelessness, for example services to young people – like those provided by the charities within End Youth Homelessness – will flex to meet the specific needs of each young person.

For people at risk of becoming homeless, a housing-led approach means housing providers and support agencies doing preventative work to bring in the necessary support and advice to help maintain their current home. Any system of support must be broad and deep enough to respond to the many interconnected issues that can sometimes lead to homelessness – such as family breakdown, early-life trauma, mental ill health, substance misuse and repeated contact with criminal justice systems. A truly housing-led system is one that can quickly offer stable accommodation and support, no matter how complex an individual’s personal situation.

## Housing First

**Housing First** is an effective, rights-based intervention for people with multiple and complex needs. It provides permanent, independent housing and flexible, wrap-around support services. Housing First is an alternative to the traditional ‘staircase’ model of homelessness services, where people receiving support progress stage-by-stage until they are deemed ‘housing ready’. The ‘staircase’ framework assesses applicants and requests that they receive support before accessing a home. This condition puts people at risk of failing in the support requirements and so jeopardises their chance of a home.

By providing a home immediately and with the necessary support, Housing First gives people with complex needs more choice and control over their lives and ultimately a genuine chance of breaking the cycle of chronic homelessness.



There are **seven key principles to Housing First** in England:

1. **People have a right to a home**
2. **Support is provided as long as it is needed**
3. **Housing is not conditional on engagement with support**
4. **Individuals have choice and control**
5. **Strengths based, person-centred planning**
6. **Proactive engagement**
7. **Harm reduction**



For people experiencing homelessness with lower or no support needs, there are a range of housing-led schemes which provide less intensive support than Housing First. These include housing with communal spaces or amenities and peer support. It's imperative that Housing First and other solutions that prioritise reducing time on the streets are not seen as 'add-ons' to any local housing system, but fundamental parts of a truly housing-led approach.

The **Housing First model has grown steadily in the UK**, with pilot schemes in the Liverpool City Region, West Midlands and Greater Manchester. Since 2017 there has been **a six-fold increase in the number of projects** distributed across the country. Two thirds of funding for these schemes comes from local authorities, with 81% using social housing stock. A key challenge though is that the funding of many of the 105 active services is short term, **directly at odds with the key principle of guaranteed tenure**. The learning from this expansion is that without security of long-term funding, growth of the approach, and fidelity to the core principle of long-term support is challenging. This is why it's so important for government funding to move towards supporting secure, longer-term tenures.



In the **West Midlands**, the Combined Authority (WMCA) set up a homelessness taskforce to bring agencies together to 'design out homelessness, in all its forms'. During the pandemic, service providers in the West Midlands moved quickly to offer support and accommodation to every person experiencing rough sleeping in the region. Approximately 1,000 people were supported into safe accommodation during that time. The WMCA Homeless Taskforce continues to collaborate on preventative homelessness interventions.

**Sovereign's** Housing First model works on the basis that the best place to prepare for independent living is in your own home. But managing your own place is not always easy. For this reason, the organisation's executive board approved a move into Housing First provision only on the condition that the programme was managed by the supported housing team. It was recognised that the team had the skills, experience, knowledge and longstanding relationships with support providers and local authorities needed to really make Housing First work.

As an 'active landlord' Sovereign works in partnership with skilled partners who supply the support element of Housing First. Sovereign's role is to provide the home, but every Housing First tenant also has a dedicated supported housing officer with whom they can build a relationship. The team delivers an end-to-end service, finding the right property and supporting each person from initial letting and as needed during their tenancy. Taking a trauma-informed approach, Sovereign simplified processes to focus on the strengths and aspirations of new residents. The support team engages individuals by offering flexible support for as long as it's required, through a person-centred, psychologically informed approach.



In **Oxfordshire, Soha Housing** is now in the second phase of its housing-led approach to homelessness based on the Housing First model. They piloted the project in 2019 with joint funding from South Oxfordshire District Council and learnt a lot about what vulnerable people (often with complex lived experiences) need to sustain a tenancy. Aspire Oxfordshire (a social enterprise with a track record in working with people with multiple disadvantage) provides intensive and long-term support to keep tenancies viable. Each of the pilot project tenancies has been maintained, with residents achieving personal milestones such as rebuilding links with families, starting their own business and learning new skills. The scheme has now been extended, funded by central government, Soha and Vale of White Horse District Council.

The traditional approach to homelessness – an offer of emergency accommodation, then supported accommodation, then a long-term home – makes a home the reward for an individual's stability and purposefulness. However, people with long-term fundamental challenges typically do not have the family or professional advocates to encourage this transition from the streets. Housing First acknowledges that while settling into a permanent home is a great success for an individual previously sleeping rough, there are additional benefits to society through a reduction in the costs of policing, social care and NHS healthcare.

Soha provides a small budget for white goods and furniture as well as the property itself. Homes are allocated based on where people need to live and what would achieve the best outcomes for them. When someone no longer needs support, Soha can offer the opportunity to other homeless people and help more people to thrive.



**A2Dominion** and **Spelthorne Borough Council** in Surrey recognised that maximising fidelity to the Housing First principles is not just about the support provider's operational delivery. The professionals and services that wrap around the core support and the individual receiving it, also need to adhere to the principles. To embed the service within local delivery and communities, partnership working was required.

The two organisations held a joint workshop to explore their working practices and cultures as the template for their partnership. The outcomes included:

- A shared recruitment process with representatives of both organisations on staff interview panel
- Joint induction for staff including access to both organisations' systems and email accounts
- Housing First presentations to key teams in both organisations
- Co-production of key communications and promotional material, outcome assessment tools and working processes (including a Housing First e-panel that meets regularly and at short notice to jointly discuss new referrals).

A2Dominion and the Council are also designing a shared reflective practice group. The partnership's collaborative approach has brought greater equality to the traditional dynamic between commissioner and provider, which reflects into the relationships built with people receiving support.



Scotland is on a mission to ensure that people with the most complex needs across the country have access to the housing they need, so Housing First is now a firm national policy objective. Starting with a small successful pilot in Glasgow in 2010, it has scaled up into the **Housing First Pathfinder with 457 tenancies across five regions**. There were no recorded evictions up to May 2020. The success of the Pathfinder is clear, not just in the numbers of people housed, but also as a catalyst for the adoption of Housing First across all 32 Scottish local authorities as the **default approach to addressing homelessness**. The Scottish Government's **Housing to 2040** strategy focuses on the continued implementation of the Homelessness Together Action Plan. It recognises the needs of people who have been traditionally marginalised (for example, by making £20 million available over the next five years for more and better Gypsy and Traveller accommodation).



In Glasgow, 19 key homelessness agencies from across the city formed a collective under the banner of **'Everyone Home'** to address the multiple challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. This swift partnership working provided a united voice to ensure that there was 'no going back' and that housing remained foremost in the COVID-19 response. The framework to prevent people going back onto the streets (and others from becoming homeless) is based on three main priorities:

- **More homes for good health**
- **No return to rough sleeping**
- **No evictions into homelessness.**

By the end of 2020, 478 people continued to be accommodated in hotels (down from a high of 618 in October) and homelessness services recorded **just four people sleeping on the streets in the entire city.**

The Welsh Government is encouraging the development of Housing First through its **2018 Rough Sleeping Action Plan**, with initial funding for ten projects. It also set up the **Welsh Homelessness Action Group** to work independently of government to provide policy recommendations on ending homelessness. One project covering the counties of Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire is the first of its kind in Wales to provide an integrated approach across boundaries. It's also the first project in Wales to be **accredited by the Cymorth Cymru 'Housing First Network'**, which has developed a process to assess how projects meet the key principles of the model.

Although smaller in size, Housing First has now transitioned from pilot to full service in Northern Ireland too. Beginning as a pilot in 2013 and being fully commissioned in 2014, it is now established in Derry-Londonderry and funded by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Supporting People Programme. The approach has been found to be effective for individuals with complex and multiple needs as it breaks the cycle of homelessness within temporary accommodation by placing people into more secure, sustainable and safe arrangements.

As part of the **Northern Ireland Housing Executive's** (NIHE) response to COVID-19 and in addition to the ongoing Supporting People-funded Housing First provision, the capacity of the service was extended to support individuals with complex needs. If someone was inappropriately placed in unsupported, non-standard accommodation such as a bed and breakfast, this enabled them to move to a more permanent arrangement. This in turn reduced the requirement for non-standard accommodation or enabled it to be allocated more appropriately.

During the pandemic NIHE Housing Solutions staff also worked closely with the Housing First team from the **youth homelessness charity Depaul** to support a number of particularly vulnerable homeless people. For example, a referral to Housing First was discussed with one service user living in temporary accommodation who after intense support accepted the offer of a one-bedroom housing association apartment in December 2020.

Depaul then organised wraparound support from **Extern Harm Reduction** and the **Welcome Organisation's Floating Support service** to help the person sustain her tenancy and avoid previous problems with anti-social behaviour. The support will continue as long as the service user requires, adapting as necessary to meet her needs.

The international housing research charity **World Habitat** supports housing and homelessness organisations across Europe as part of the 'European End Street Homelessness' campaign.



In **Barcelona**, homelessness organisation Arrels Fundació offers a range of housing support to anyone they find sleeping on the city's streets. It's one of the oldest homeless service organisations in Barcelona, and a key promoter of Housing First in Catalonia since 2015. Helping more than a thousand people each year, they engage with 440 people through their outreach services and **provided accommodation for 211 people in 2020**.

Arrels also provides innovative emergency assessment spaces for those who cannot sustain accommodation. This 'Flat Zero' model builds on international good practice like 'No Second Night Out', using low-threshold access to safe spaces for immediate assessment and recuperation, while support workers develop appropriate move-on options. **Evidence from Arrels Fundació's street surveys show that homelessness is growing in Catalonia**, exacerbated by COVID-19 and the ongoing migration crisis.



## Preventing homelessness

The most effective housing-led approach of all is one that supports people in the home they already have and enables them to avoid reaching a crisis point by accessing the necessary services. Poverty and deprivation are long standing drivers of housing inequality and homelessness, requiring agile and supportive responses from local authorities and housing providers.



**Newcastle City Council** has a decade-long partnership approach to helping residents live stable lives, with agencies across the city working to identify and support those at risk of homelessness. More than a hundred local organisations work together to promote financial inclusion, tackle debt and increase access to welfare support. Since 2014, this ground-breaking approach has helped more than 24,000 households to avoid becoming homeless – **the highest proportionate rate of homelessness prevention in all of England's core cities.**



Preventing homelessness cannot be the responsibility of one agency or provider. **Newcastle's award-winning approach** facilitates greater co-operation and collaboration across the city and across sectors, bringing everyone together with the same aim. It has achieved system change locally, and informed policy change at a local and national level.



In Wales, **Cadwyn Housing Association** works hard with tenants to prevent homelessness. For example, one tenant who owed over £3,000 in rent arrears and lived with her adult sons was not responding to the organisation's communication. A home visit revealed that illness meant she could not leave her bed. A little while after the home visit, and after a further suspension of Housing Benefit, the tenant decided she would like to apply for the personal independence payment (PIP). The PIP was awarded, and all non-dependant charges were removed. The arrears were cleared in full, with a month's credit paid to the account.

Since 2019 the family has been able to live free of rental debt and without the fear of eviction or uncertainty around their housing. The persistence of the housing and rent teams, good joint working and a clear focus on avoiding eviction resulted in a positive outcome for both the family and Cadwyn.

# It's not necessarily easy

Getting housing-led solutions to homelessness such as Housing First off the ground is not necessarily easy, but it is possible. Most Housing First projects are funded by local authorities through housing-related support budgets, but there are also **grants available to support schemes, from grant-making charities**. These funding streams are vulnerable in terms of their sustainability. Budgets for housing-related support are non-ringfenced (and so are subject to cuts) and tend to be short term, while **charitable grants are normally time limited**. A small number of Housing First schemes have funding from outside of these two sources with **contributions from adult social care teams, Better Care, local Clinical Care Commissioners and Police budgets**.

Networks and information for organisations interested in Housing First have developed, including **Housing First England** and **Homes for Cathy**.



**Homes for Cathy** is a group of housing associations and homelessness charities united by an aim to end homelessness. Formed in 2016, the group has grown to 116 members, which together own and manage over 1.34 million homes. Homes for Cathy members sign up to nine homelessness commitments developed with Crisis, which guide and benchmark best practice within and between their organisations.

Members meet for workshops to share knowledge around meeting the commitments, tackling a range of subjects including reducing evictions, maintaining flexible allocations and eligibility policies, offering furnished tenancies to people experiencing homelessness and working in partnership to deliver initiatives such as Housing First.

Alongside events, members share knowledge through the Homes for Cathy online news hub. A recent campaign focused on how members provide accommodation and support for people who are homeless with **Next Steps funding**. Homes for Cathy has lobbied for people experiencing homelessness to be recognised as housing association consumers and stakeholders under proposals emerging from the Social Housing White Paper, particularly with regard to the changing role of the Regulator of Social Housing.

In England, the government committed £28 million in the Autumn 2017 budget to three pilot projects (in Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and West Midlands Combined Authority) and a feasibility study in the Liverpool City Region. The [interim evaluation report on the pilots](#) found that positive stories were emerging but all three pilots were behind the anticipated schedule with their implementation – perhaps reflecting the complexities of their work even with secure funding.

The future of funding for Housing First in England is unclear. At the beginning of 2021, [The Centre for Social Justice](#) recommended that government should deliver ‘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’. This was the first of four key recommendations to support and scale up Housing First. The Centre’s other three recommendations included giving sufficient time for schemes to mobilise, adhering to the principles with high fidelity and importantly ‘national stewardship involving the range of government departments’.

## Next steps

The COVID-19 pandemic has given some food for thought. The Government responded to a highly communicable disease and its ‘Everyone In’ programme was a great success - showing the value of a housing-led approach tackling at least the most visible form of homelessness. The Government provided local authorities with an additional funding of £3.2 million to house people experiencing rough sleeping during the pandemic. Its own coronavirus emergency accommodation statistics show that more than 30,000 people were helped off the streets, and lives were saved <sup>2</sup>.

The Government has launched the [‘Next Steps Accommodation Programme’](#), with two streams for the 20/21 financial year:

- **Current temporary accommodation**
- **Capital and revenue funding for move-on accommodation.**

But the programme’s focus is not long-term enough for truly housing-led approaches like Housing First where there should be no time limit on the property offered to a person. Both homes and support should be available for as long as an individual needs it. So the future of funding for housing-led responses to homelessness remains unclear, in England at least.

<sup>2</sup> Lewer, D et al (2020) COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness in England: a modelling study, *The Lancet* 8(12) pp.1181-1191.

In Scotland, the landscape looks different. In its vision for Housing to 2040, the **Scottish Government reaffirmed its commitment to an action plan to end homelessness**. The plan is backed by a multi-year £50 million 'Ending Homelessness Together' fund. The aim of the Scottish Government is for Housing First to be "the default option for people with multiple and complex need [providing] mainstream tenancies and the wrap around support they need."

The Welsh Government has funded **ten Housing First pilots** across the country and established a 'Homelessness Action Group' to advise on the implementation of Housing First in Wales. The group has recommended that the Welsh Government should provide **national leadership on scaling up Housing First** and match the Scottish Government's ambition for Housing First to be the default approach to tackling rough sleeping. The Welsh Government has accepted these recommendations in principle, but no long-term funding has so far been committed. Local authorities can apply to a **£20 million homelessness transformation fund to launch Housing First projects**.

In Northern Ireland, while the Depaul Housing First pilot scheme has been evaluated as broadly successful, the three-year suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly has impacted on progress of a number of issues, including development of Housing First. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland 2017-22 does however commit to building on the Housing First pathway. The Executive has also published a **'Reset Plan'** setting out its homelessness response to COVID-19.



# Learning from each other

The *Homeful* campaign seeks to build on the success of the pandemic response by engaging with housing and other agencies to collate and share evidence and support for housing-led solutions to homelessness and rough sleeping.

The action research campaign begins in September 2021 and concludes by December 2022. Its goal is to include as many housing providers, homeless organisations, partner agencies, charities, service users and people who have experienced homelessness across the UK as possible. Imagine the resource of practical examples, enhanced networks and connections to share and learn we can create if we bring our heads together.

The findings from this collective resource of information will add rich frontline and service user voices to the existing data and evidence (for example, that produced by the [Centre for Homelessness Impact](#)). *Homeful* provides an opportunity for organisations and individuals to connect together across the UK to help each other through peer learning. Findings and recommendations will be published at the end of the action research campaign.

## What you can do now

If you're interested in or concerned about the issues covered in this report, please:

- Get involved! Visit [www.cih.org/homeful](http://www.cih.org/homeful) and email [homeful@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:homeful@dmu.ac.uk) if you have information and ideas you'd like to share
- Support charities providing services and support to people experiencing homelessness. *Homeful* is proud to support [End Youth Homelessness](#)
- Keep an eye on the [Homeful](#) webpage for information about fundraising and activities.



**Praxis and Commonweal's No Recourse To Public Funds Housing Project** in London helps single women and migrant families with children who are at risk of exploitation and homelessness. The project provides them with safe, free accommodation and immigration support and advice.

  
**Homeful**

↑ [www.cih.org/homeful](http://www.cih.org/homeful) ✉ [homeful@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:homeful@dmu.ac.uk)

Report written by Jo Richardson, Patrick Duce and Yoric Irving-Clarke, 2021  
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