



HOUSING  
FIRST  
SCOTLAND

# HOUSING FIRST *know-how*



*for* Scotland's Social Housing Professionals



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing  
Scotland



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# Foreword

## Homelessness at the centre of housing policy



In Scotland, we are proud of our laws which ensure that everyone has a right to housing. With this strong foundation, we are ideally placed to go even further and to achieve our aim that everybody has a warm, safe place to call home.

We know that for people with multiple and complex needs, just providing housing is not enough to stop homelessness. That is why I support the Housing First model as such an important development in tackling and preventing homelessness amongst the most vulnerable in our society. By prioritising settled accommodation, Housing First is a base from which to address other issues that may lead to homelessness, providing tailored and sometimes intensive support for those that require it. The role of housing professionals will be vital to help deliver this, working in partnership with peer support workers and others.

The Scottish Government has already taken a significant step, working with our partners, to provide support and funding for the development of Housing First in five pathfinder cities across Scotland. More broadly, our Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan was launched in November 2018 responding to the wide ranging recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group which we appointed in 2017. Central to this has been the development of five year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans, by local authorities and their partners. As part of this process, all areas of Scotland have the opportunity to consider how Housing First may be best delivered depending on local circumstances. The Housing First pathfinder will give us invaluable experience and learning as we move to embed Housing First as the first default option across Scotland for those with multiple and complex needs who are facing homelessness and rough sleeping.

I welcome this guidance as an important contribution to the development of the Housing First model in Scotland. With this approach we have an opportunity to ensure that everybody, even when faced with the greatest of challenges, will be able to rebuild their lives after homelessness.

**Kevin Stewart**

Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning





Every year, thousands of our fellow citizens are forced to make a homelessness application and for many this crisis is compounded by severe and multiple needs such as poor mental health or having experienced domestic abuse. But with the right support, funding and commitment, homelessness can be a thing of the past.

That is why this manual, this guidance for housing practitioners on Housing First, is so important. Those who are homeless and rough sleeping cannot afford to wait any longer. Housing First gives people a secure, stable home and then builds care and support services around that person's needs.

These first steps in Scotland are groundbreaking. We are mapping the scale of the problem and building a new culture and policy environment. Housing professionals' roles are vital in ensuring that everyone receives the right response first time round to help meet the ambition set out by Housing First.

Of course, this can only occur if our dedication is matched by funding and support from the Scottish Government. But if that is realised, then the possibility of actually ending homelessness in our lifetime is in sight.

**Jim Strang**

President, Chartered Institute of Housing  
CEO, Parkhead Housing Association



Everyone needs a place to call home, and some people need more support alongside them than others. This is the perfect simplicity of Scotland's transition to Housing First, which fits under the broader umbrella of a rapid rehousing response for everyone whose homelessness was not prevented.

Homelessness is a problem with a solution and the solution is housing. That is why the very first in our 'Housing First Know-How' series has been carefully prepared for, and in consultation with, Scotland's Social Housing Professionals.

We know this to be a profession that cares deeply about local people and local places, which has already shown leadership and friendship that will help build the momentum we need to fully transition and transform our response to homelessness in Scotland.

Together with the Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland, we hope you'll find here an easy reference guide as well as some pointers to become part of Scotland's Housing First story. We want this to be a live manual and will update it regularly. So thank you for opening it – and stay in touch.

**Maggie Brünjes**

Chief Executive, The Homeless Network

# Part 1

## Why Housing First is Better for Housing Providers

### 1) Welcome to this guide

The Scottish Social Housing Charter begins with a pledge on equality:

**"Every tenant and other customer will have their individual need recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services."**

**Housing First** helps ensure fair access by redressing what often stems from a lifetime of structural disadvantage. It is also sensitive to life experiences people have had, experiencing greater challenges than most.

While no story is the same, the common threads will include experiences of trauma, abuse, mental and physical ill health, addictions and homelessness. Some may not have known the safety and security of their own home for many years and others will never have known it at all.

To ensure that all of us in Scotland experience the equality, fairness and respect pledged in the Charter requires us to think and act a little differently – to be flexible, open-minded and solutions focused.

But this is not new to housing providers and professionals who have recognised the centrality of their role in improving our health and wellbeing for years. For example, delivering strategies and innovations for people living with dementia and people experiencing domestic abuse.

Much of what housing providers have learned from this offers a strong foundation for providing safe, secure **Housing First tenancies**.

The key to success for Housing First tenancies is often to be found in creating an environment where people trust this security and feel the benefit of it in their own lives. Landlords should move to provide strong security of tenure and ensure all their policies and procedures are designed to promote and protect this security.



### *A different starting point*

Megan, a Housing Officer from Edinburgh described a routine meeting with a tenant about a neighbour complaint. She followed all policies and procedures in her usual professional way, but was struck by the Housing First tenant's immediate question: "Does this mean I have to leave?" Megan had never experienced someone's immediate worry in this way and hadn't understood the lack of security the tenant felt. But having seen it first-hand she is now actively considering how she can approach similar conversations in the future. Megan said:

**"It's simple changes that make the difference, allaying concerns early. I now know to start a conversation with something like 'don't worry we're not asking you to leave, this is still your home - we just want to help sort a few things out.'"**

This is a live help manual that will be updated at **housingfirst.scot**. It is intended for social and local authority housing providers and the range of housing professionals working for them. To help prepare for and support Housing First this guidance will:

- refresh you on what Housing First is, why it is different, and what it might mean for landlords
- point to where Housing First fits into our strategic and policy context
- share learning from those already delivering Housing First.

## II) What is Housing First?

**Housing First** provides ordinary, settled housing as a *first* response for people whose experience of homelessness is compounded by other challenges. This includes people whose range of life experiences include childhood and early years trauma, domestic abuse, mental ill health, addictions as well as time spent in local authority care or prison.

Their experience of homelessness may be long-lasting or repeating, and may include periods of rough sleeping and the use of congregate accommodation options such as shelters, hostels and B&B.

Importantly, Housing First is not only housing. Alongside ordinary housing is easy access to personalised and resilient support, directed by the Housing First tenant.

### Why a *first response*?

The reason we say *first response* is that traditionally a range of temporary, often shared accommodation options are offered with support to 'fix' the issues people are experiencing. Only when this is thought to have been achieved would someone be offered a home of their own.

In practice this has meant offering permanent housing as a *last response*, essentially seeing housing as a reward to be earned rather than the most effective solution. This is an informal but stubborn practice sometimes described as 'tenancy readiness'.

This means living to a different set of rules than the rest of us, without a place to call home as a base to build and live their lives. When we consider the existing structural, social and economic disadvantage – and other issues to contend with – it becomes clearer why some people's homelessness is harder to end.

Housing First removes the subjective burden from frontline housing staff of deciding another person's competency to create their own space, in their own home. Housing First is fairer for everyone.

### How is Housing First different?

Instead, Housing First recognises a safe, secure home accompanied by personalised, intensive, open-ended support is the best base for recovery and healing and the best foundation from which people can flourish.

At the heart of Housing First in Scotland there are seven principles which are central to ending people's experiences of homelessness:



## The seven Housing First Principles

When people talk about 'fidelity' to Housing First, they mean ensuring each of these seven principles is being followed.

- 1/ People have a right to a home
- 2/ Flexible support provided for as long as is needed
- 3/ Housing and support are separated
- 4/ Individuals have choice and control
- 5/ An active engagement approach is used
- 6/ The service is based on people's strengths, goals, and aspirations
- 7/ A Harm Reduction approach is used

### III) How we know it works

There is now a substantial body of international evidence from across The USA, Canada, Australia and Europe (including the UK) that shows that, with close fidelity to the principles Housing First is effective.

- We have seen 80% to 90% housing retention rates after two years (with some early projects showing similar retention rates after five years).
- Improving health outcomes.
- Decreasing involvement in criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.
- Improved cost-effectiveness of service delivery and cost savings.

The consistency of the success of Housing First wherever in the world it is implemented has built a greater consideration and understanding of **why** it works. Professor Sarah Johnsen from I-SPHERE at Heriot-Watt University and expert on Housing First, concludes it works because of four key characteristics.

#### *Why Housing First Works*



- 1/ The **longevity** of the housing and support removes the uncertainty and anxiety that comes with rough sleeping and temporary accommodation, freeing up the space for people to fully focus on recovery.
- 2/ The **flexibility** of support in terms of frequency, intensity and type gives people a greater sense of choice and control over their own lives.
- 3/ The **stickability** of Housing First support comes as a (welcome) shock to people whose negative experiences have led them to conclude that services have given up on them during the bad times. The sensitive but persistent offer of support and the rethinking of conditionality promotes a greater level of honesty and helps overcome people's low expectations.
- 4/ The **normality** of Housing First is integral to its success as it offers people a safe, secure home that is not differentiated in any way from others in the neighbourhood, offering an 'escape' from potentially destructive cultures on the street and in congregate forms of accommodation. Normality combats ingrained stigma and helps facilitate integration into communities.

## IV) What it means for Housing Professionals & Providers

### Principle 1 People have a right to a home

**This principle focuses on people being offered a home of their own in local communities as quickly as possible with no additional requirements other than a willingness to sustain a tenancy.**

*What this means for housing professionals & providers*

- Housing First tenancies will be the same Scottish Secure Tenancies as offered to other tenants. There is no requirement for someone to first be offered a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy.
- No additional expectations or requirements are placed on Housing First tenancies and any action to recover the tenancy, if necessary, will be based on the same legal procedures as for all other Scottish Secure Tenancies.
- If a landlord is providing more than one Housing First tenancy, care should be taken to ensure they are as dispersed as possible and not concentrated in one geographical area.
- With Housing First being focused on people with a range of multiple needs, consideration should be given to allocations policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to the creation of the tenancy. For example, it is possible that potential Housing First tenants will have a history of tenancy failures and/or rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, and this should not preclude someone from being offered a Housing First tenancy.
- Housing First is based on the principles of Rapid Rehousing and consideration should be given to any policies or procedures that may slow down the offer of a tenancy.
- Many Housing First tenants will be in receipt of benefits so landlords should not request any rent payments in advance.

### Principle 2 Flexible support is provided for as long as is needed

**Support offered to people is not time-bound and is flexible enough to work with someone at different levels of intensity based on their own individual situations and experiences. New tenants direct this support, including their right to refuse it. Support is resilient in those cases, as experience has shown that some practical or emotional support will be sought later, if not initially. People can choose when they no longer wish to receive support if their situation has improved.**

*What this means for housing professionals & providers*

- Housing First support offers landlords the security of knowing that their tenant will be supported in the long-term to sustain their tenancy and there will be no mandatory cut-off period e.g. at six or nine months.



### Principle 3 Housing and support are separated

**Landlord and support functions are delivered separately, and choices people make about support do not affect housing security. The offer of support stays with the person – if they decide to move to a new area or their tenancy fails, they are supported to avoid homelessness crisis by finding and maintaining a new home.**

*What this means for housing professionals & providers*

- The security of a Housing First tenancy is not contingent upon the tenant's engagement with support and, as with all tenancies, someone can decide that they do not want support at any given time. Unless this leads to a situation that is in breach of a Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement then it should not lead to any action being taken by the landlord.
- If a tenancy is failing in a particular area, landlords have an important role to play in proactively securing a tenancy in an alternative location – either within their own stock or with a partner social landlord – to avoid someone returning to homelessness crisis.
- The Housing First tenant is an ordinary tenant in every way, and should have equal application of and access to all the landlord's relevant housing policies and procedures – including Management Transfers, local nomination agreements, etc.
- While the landlord and support functions are delivered separately, that does not preclude a strong, positive working relationship between housing officers and support workers with a shared responsibility for ensuring success of the tenancy. This has proven to be beneficial to the success of Housing First.

### Principle 4 Individuals have choice and control

**People get to choose a home and a location that best suits their circumstances, have choice over where, when and how support is provided, and through person-centred planning are in control of the support they receive.**

*What this means for housing professionals & providers*

- Housing available at any given time will always be limited in some way – by location, size, type – and landlords can play a crucial role in ensuring people can make the most informed choice possible about their housing options.

## Principle 5 An active engagement approach is used

**Support staff have small caseloads (1:7 maximum) allowing them to be proactive and persistent in offering support; doing 'whatever it takes' as many times as necessary to build a positive relationship with people. Cases will remain open even when engagement is low.**

*What this means for housing professionals & providers*

- As with principle two, a focus on active engagement and small caseloads provides additional security for landlords that if they do have concerns the support staff will have the capacity to address them.

## Principle 6 The service is based on people's strengths, goals, and aspirations

**Support is based on the understanding that there is always the possibility of positive change and improved health and wellbeing, relationships and social and economic integration. Support staff work alongside people to build on their strengths and successes, to identify goals and skills, building self-esteem and confidence.**

*What this means for housing professionals & providers*

- While this will mainly be led by the Housing First support provider, social landlords are recognised 'community anchors' with a wealth of knowledge about local opportunities to promote health & wellbeing and social & economic integration. A partnership with the Housing First support provider has been shown to be beneficial.

## Principle 7 A Harm Reduction approach is used

**All engagement is based on the principle of reducing harm from alcohol and drugs and supporting people to minimise self-harm. Support is based on promoting recovery in physical and mental health and wellbeing.**

*What this means for housing professionals & providers*

- As with principle six, many landlords are at the heart of recovery communities and can play an important role in making links with local resources.

# Part 2: The policy drivers for Housing First

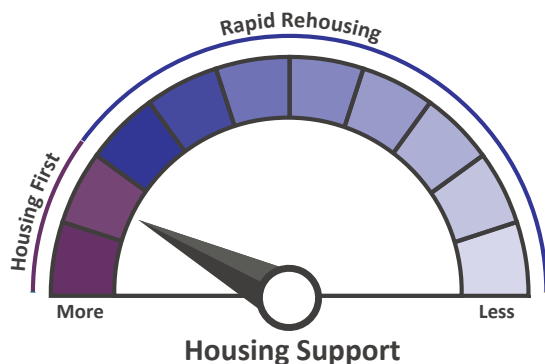
## 1) Housing & homelessness policy

In February 2018 the Local Government and Communities Committee of the Scottish Parliament, then convened by Bob Doris MSP, recommended that the Scottish Government, in partnership with local government, implements a Scottish Housing First policy.

Building from this recommendation, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group recommended a transition to Rapid Rehousing for all homeless households which means:

- a settled, mainstream housing outcome as quickly as possible
- time spent in any form of temporary accommodation is reduced to a minimum, with the fewer transitions the better
- when temporary accommodation is needed, the optimum type is mainstream, furnished and within a local community.

Within this vision for Rapid Rehousing, Housing First becoming the first response for people experiencing complex needs and multiple disadvantage.



The transition to Rapid Rehousing and Housing First is planned for within each local authority's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP).

The RRTP will use all available data on the prevalence and scale of severe and multiple disadvantage to forecast the number of people in their area who would benefit most from Housing First, setting out a five-year plan to meet that demand.

The prevalence of Homelessness with Severe and Multiple Disadvantage is estimated to be approximately 5,700 across a single year, and while most closely associated with larger industrial cities and towns, it exists in every local authority area in Scotland (Heriot-Watt University, 2018).

The £10 million Housing First Scotland Pathfinder Programme is a first step in meeting this demand, delivering 830 tenancies across Aberdeen/shire, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling by March 2021.

As well as delivering Housing First to a scale that has never been seen in Scotland, the Pathfinder cities will also test the development of locally sensitive approaches in line with Housing First principles, partnership working, collective problem solving and sharing successes.

Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans will be aligned with and/or integrated into:

- local Outcome Improvement Plans and Local Housing Strategies, committing to collaborative approaches to intervene early, providing homeless households with support from Community Planning Partners to prevent escalating negative outcomes and reduce future demand for costly crisis services.
- strategic Housing Investment Plans where the RRTP will be reviewed annually as part of the SHIP process.
- HSCP Strategic Plans through Housing Contribution Statements, aiding the identification of health and social care resources to help households live independently in their own homes in community settings.

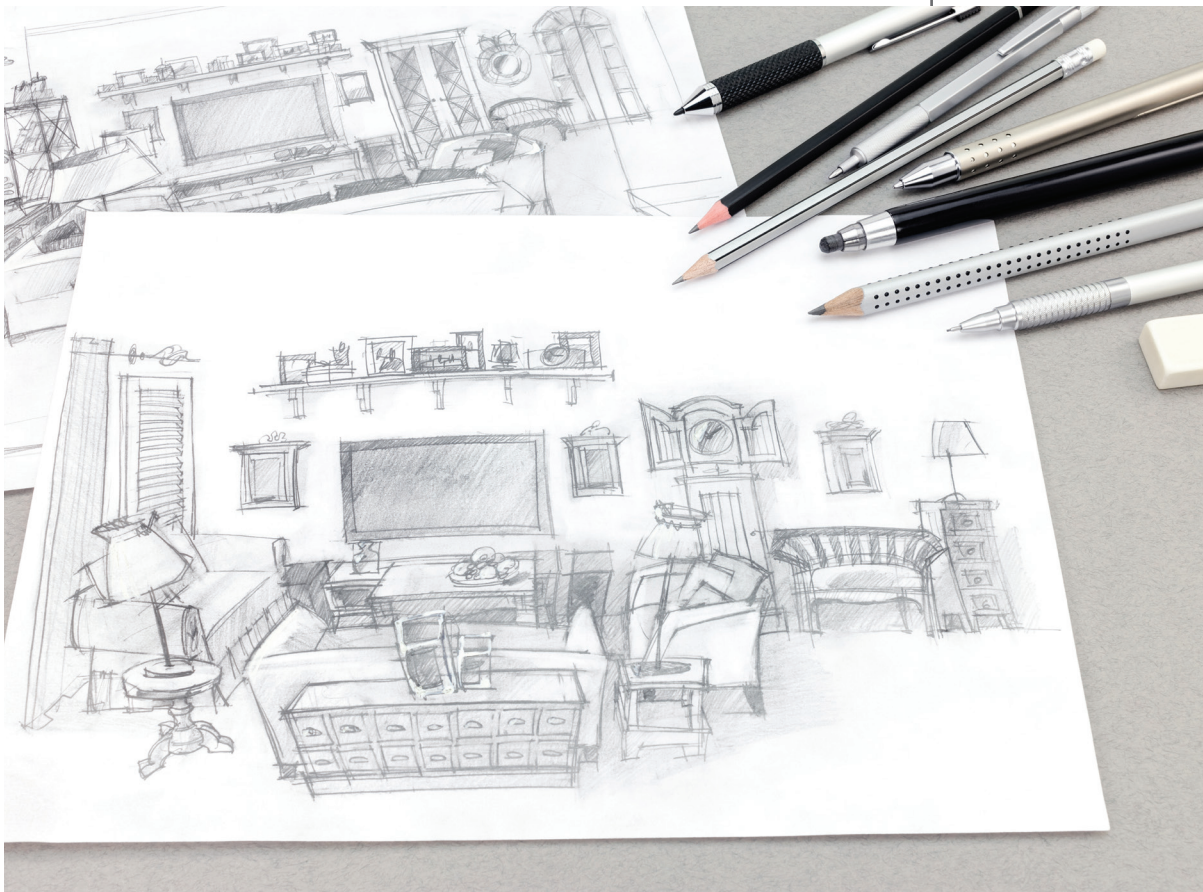
## II) Health & Social Care Policy

The transition to Rapid Rehousing and Housing First in line with Scotland's Health and Social Care Delivery Plan is built on a number of aims including:

- treatment, care and support are provided in a community setting, minimising and shortening times spent in residential settings
- people are in their own homes in local communities as quickly as possible and appropriate
- people are at the centre of all decisions that affect them.

To support the development and implementation of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans a Cross-Ministerial letter to Chief Executives and Chief Officers of all Health Boards, Local Authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships across Scotland was sent in April 2019 by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport and the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning.

The letter seeks collaboration and shared leadership between Housing and Health on Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans to ensure that at a local level providers collaborate to make sure their services work for people who may have difficulty engaging with traditional models of delivery.



## Part 3: Making it work every day

### I) Housing First for frontline housing staff

Housing First tenancies have existed in Scotland since 2010, so we have already built up a good picture of what we can expect.

What do we know?

- The first thing we know is that the majority of Housing First tenancies are not distinguishable from any other tenancies, with minimal disruption or challenge in terms of routine housing management functions. In fact, it is not unusual for frontline housing staff to observe that without prior knowledge they would not have identified many of the tenancies as being Housing First.
- This means we can be confident that the existing highly skilled, highly committed Housing Officers are already well equipped to manage Housing First tenancies.
- But we also know that there are a smaller number of tenancies where things might become more challenging.

Almost a decade of learning from the existing Housing First project in Glasgow has prompted partners contributing to the Housing First Scotland Pathfinder Programme to begin developing a protocol between the support providers and Housing Associations to outline the roles of the difference partners in ensuring that the tenancy is a success, including:

- finding a suitable home, in line with the person's choice of location, as quickly as possible
- committing to regular review of tenancies and building ongoing, positive communication channels between support staff and Housing Officers
- finding flexible, creative solutions to any challenges that arise
- committing to providing an alternative, suitable home (with continued Housing First support) if the tenant wishes to move or if a new location will increase the chances of the tenancy succeeding.



*While the separation of housing and support functions is a core principle of Housing First and core to its success, it does NOT mean that housing and support staff don't work together or talk to each other. We know that the tenancy is far more likely to succeed if they do.*



## II) Seven Real-life Sketches

Here are some examples of real-life scenarios and situations that have come up for housing professionals and providers involved in Housing First in Scotland so far, including some of the more challenging situations. It is hoped that they could provide some prompts, reassurance or ideas.



### Finding the right home and moving in

#### sketch 1

Ensuring the core Housing First principles of rapid rehousing and choice and control over where you live in areas of high housing market pressures is always going to present a series of challenges.

In East Dunbartonshire the local authority established a special letting initiative called the Escalations and Offers process to maximise the chances of an offer of housing being made quickly. The Housing First support workers build an understanding of where someone wants to live and why and liaise with allocations staff to inform them about people's housing priorities. The Escalations and Offers process deliberately prioritises offers of high quality tenancies across a range of local areas, avoiding properties and areas classed as 'hard to let' to maximise the chance of tenancies being sustained.

The implementation of this process has contributed to a 100% tenancy sustainment rate for Housing First in East Dunbartonshire.

#### sketch 2

Sometimes people's preferred housing choices can lie across local authority lines from where they experienced homelessness. One Housing First client in East Dunbartonshire identified that their best chance of tenancy sustainment lay in being housed in Glasgow where they had greater social support networks.

The Housing First support worker discussed the situation with the local authority and offered to work with the person to make housing applications to housing associations in the preferred areas of Glasgow. This was agreed as the best way forward and an offer of housing was quickly received and accepted, with the Housing First support being seamlessly transferred to Glasgow.

With the ongoing support the tenancy is being sustained three years later.

## Day-to-day tenancy management

### sketch 3

A landlord in Aberdeen was struggling to arrange a legally required annual gas safety check within the home of a Housing First tenant. All of the usual methods of communication had been tried but with no response. The next stage in the Association's Gas Safety Policy was to force entry to ensure legal compliance.

Before going ahead the Housing Officer, concerned about the financial implications for the tenant of having to cover the costs of the repairs to the front door, called the Housing First support staff to discuss alternative options.

A way forward was found where the Housing First support worker explained the importance of the gas safety check at their next support session, worked out a convenient time for the appointment and was there with the tenant at the agreed time to ensure access.

This was a positive outcome for the landlord as it fulfilled their legal gas safety requirements. And was an equally positive outcome for the tenant who was able to avoid the financial burden of paying for front door repairs.

### sketch 4

Having received a neighbour complaint about a Housing First tenancy, a landlord in Dundee contacted the Housing First support staff to find the most positive way of starting discussions with the tenant and identifying potential solutions.

The Housing First staff initiated the conversation with the tenant with the aim of arranging a joint meeting with the Housing Officer. Through these early conversations it was discovered that the Housing First tenant was experiencing difficulties with other tenants and residents who were blocking use of communal areas and responding aggressively to attempted apologies for a small disturbance that the tenant was attempting to take responsibility for. New to the area following a long period of homelessness and worried about difficult relationships with neighbours, they did not want to make a formal complaint or be seen to cause any trouble.

The Housing First staff were able to support the tenant to share their experiences with the Housing Officer at the arranged joint meeting.

This was a positive outcome for the landlord as it provided staff with additional information, allowing them to make a more informed decision about what steps to take next. And it was a positive outcome for the tenant who had their concerns listened to, helping build trust that their experiences would be taken on board and responded to.

### sketch 5

Having identified that a rent account had fallen into arrears a standard reminder letter had been sent to a Housing First tenant, with arrangements for a home visit attempted when there was no response. Separately, Housing First support staff spotted a series of official letters unopened in the tenant's home and encouraged them to read them. A letter from the DWP had been sent to advise that some benefits had been stopped until additional information was supplied, and this had resulted in rent arrears accruing.

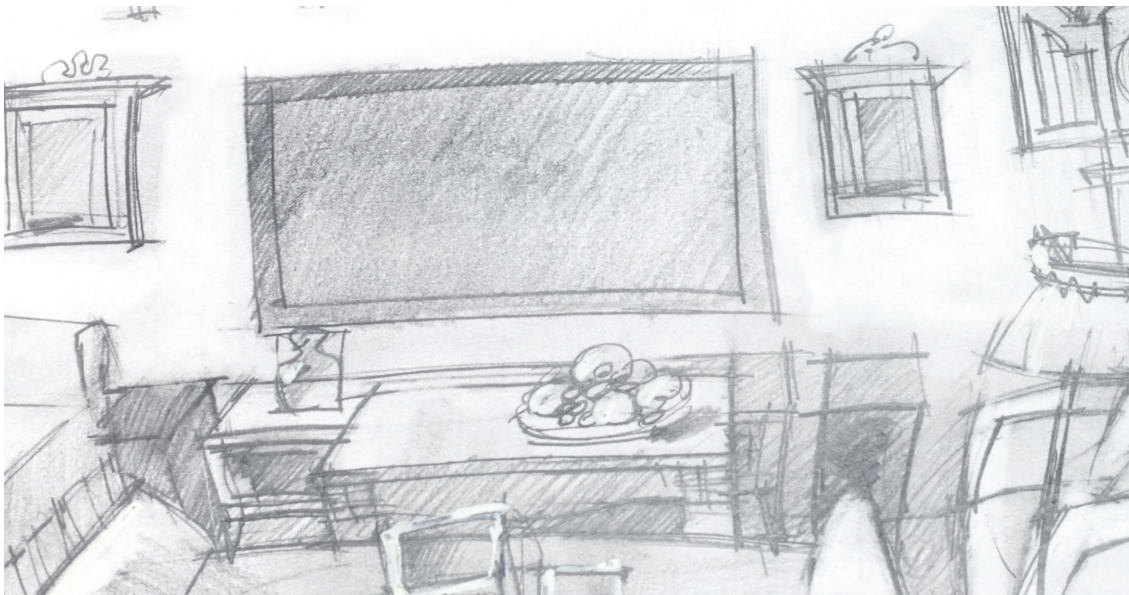
The Housing First staff immediately worked with the tenant to resolve the benefit issues with the DWP and set up a meeting with the Housing Officer to explain the situation and agree the next steps in managing the rent arrears without the tenancy being put at risk.

### sketch 6

A Concierge employed by a landlord in a tower block in Edinburgh spotted that the behaviour of one of the Housing First tenants was out of character. They spoke to the tenant most days as they entered and left the building and knew that their interaction was not as would normally be expected.

Having built up a good working relationship with the Housing First support staff following an information session held by the landlord, they called to let them know things didn't seem quite right and they wanted to make sure that the tenant was safe.

The support staff immediately followed up and found that they were in the early stages of a decline in their mental health. They responded by increasing their support hours and linking in with health services to ensure the tenant had access to all medication and support required and they could continue to live safely at home until their health improved.



## Finding a new home or ending a tenancy

### sketch 7

While few and far between, there are occasions where tenancies come to an end. One tenant in Glasgow received a prison sentence following a particularly difficult and chaotic period, during which rent arrears had built up and there had been multiple neighbour complaints.

The landlord had reached the point of preparing to issue a Notice of Proceedings to begin the legal eviction process and the tenant acknowledged that they had broken the terms of their tenancy agreement. The Housing First support staff, who continued to deliver support during the prison sentence, worked with the tenant to give notice on the tenancy to avoid legal eviction proceedings.

This was a positive outcome for the landlord as it ensured a swift, positive conclusion that avoided the costs of legal proceedings. It was also a positive outcome for the tenant who could have a fresh start upon release from prison.



## Part 4: TOP TIPS & FAQs

### I) Top Tips from Housing Peers



We asked housing professionals already delivering Housing First for their top tips.

- Carry out regular Housing First training and awareness raising or networking events with all housing staff. These ensure everyone is up-to-date and build positive working relationships with the Housing First support team. These are particularly useful when staff teams change, and knowledge and networks can easily be lost.
- If you have them, don't forget about concierge staff. Their role means they are often the first to identify potential risks and can be sitting on a goldmine of intelligence, so consider designing a formal process of consulting with this group.
- Arrange regular updates between housing and support staff to share good news and not so good news. Four weeks tends to work well. Even if nothing has changed since the last update the regular contact fosters strong, positive working relationships.





- While it will only be needed on rare occasions, look at an appropriate case conferencing model that will work for you; getting to the heart of the most challenging situations and ensuring Housing Officers are fully involved in finding and delivering flexible, creative solutions.
- Make Housing First support staff your first port of call to anticipate potential problems and find flexible solutions. The support staff have positive relationships with the tenants that can be utilised to find personalised, sustainable solutions.
- Review your data sharing protocols and procedures to confirm all proper consent is in place and make communication between housing and support staff is as easy as possible.
- Take positive risks to make the tenancy a success.



## II) Frequently Asked Questions

One size fits all approaches generally don't work. Instead, Housing First is a highly personalised approach that ends people's homelessness with housing rapidly. It also assigns a highly trained support worker to get alongside the new tenant to make settling into their new home easier.

Here are some frequently asked questions about Housing First:

### **Q: Who is Housing First for?**

Housing First will be the first response for people whose homelessness is experienced alongside other severe and multiple disadvantage. While everyone's experiences will be different the common threads include trauma, abuse, addictions, mental ill health and experience of local authority care and prison. It is estimated that this affects around 5,700 people in Scotland, across a single year.

### **Q: How are tenancies allocated for Housing First?**

Tenancies used for Housing First are general needs mainstream tenancies and are allocated in line with landlord's existing allocations policies. Housing First is currently operating successfully in a range of allocations settings including Points Based Allocations systems, Choice Based Lettings and Common Housing Registers. Some landlords may decide to create a specific process or protocol within their own allocations policy for Housing First, but this will be based on local context. Going forward, it is hoped that landlords will work closely with local partners to identify any changes to allocations policy that might be identified.

### **Q: What kind of tenancy do Housing First tenants have?**

A Housing First tenancy in the social rented sector is a Scottish Secure Tenancy with all the same protections, conditions and security as any mainstream tenancy. People will be accommodated with a Private Residential Tenancy in the private rented sector. In the normal way, tenancies will be available for as long as someone wants to live there.

### **Q: How are people matched with tenancies?**

Local authorities, alongside support providers, are encouraged to develop 'by-name' lists of people in their area that have needs beyond housing and whose experience of homelessness may be long-term and/or repeating. This is in line with Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group recommendations and the Scottish Government/COSLA High Level Action Plan.

As well as area 'by-name' lists, straightforward referral processes are being developed to enable people to refer and self-refer into Housing First. Where Housing First is not an appropriate route, rapid rehousing solutions and/or further support should be identified, as per a 'no wrong door' approach. Choice is a key principle for Housing First. Local partners work closely with individuals to realistically identify the location and characteristics of a property that they could make a home.

### **Q: What about tenancy-readiness?**

Housing First works in a new environment which understands that most of us, with the right support, can manage our own home. The means removing ideas of 'tenancy-readiness' and giving people a chance in their own place.

### Q: Do tenants have to accept Housing First support?

No, the tenancy is not conditional on someone engaging with Housing First support. Support providers work to the principles of active engagement and respectful persistence and all cases remain open even when engagement is low. Local partners actively seek to identify what support looks like to an individual and what/how they are willing to accept.

In reality, most tenants engage with support in a personalised way and the removal of conditionality and focus on choice and control enables people to find what is of most value to them as they settle into their new home. There is no pre-existing support plan for people to follow or set number of hours of support to fulfil. We are using a best-practice maximum caseload of seven tenants per support worker at any one time; this is a key factor in the success of Housing First.

### Q: Does Housing First work?

There is now an overwhelming body of international evidence showing that, with close fidelity to the Housing First principles, the approach delivers:

- 80% - 90% housing retention rates after two years (with some early projects showing similar retention rates after five years)
- improving health outcomes
- decreasing involvement in criminal activity and anti-social behaviour
- improved cost-effectiveness of service delivery and cost savings.

### Q: What if the Housing First tenancy isn't working?

Like any tenancy, there are a number of factors that contribute to its success. If the landlord and the support provider have concerns about the sustainability of the tenancy, landlords can make use of existing policies and procedures such as Management Transfers and local nomination agreements to secure a tenancy in an alternative location. The landlord retains the right to end the tenancy in line with their existing policies and procedures and legal obligations. These instances are very rare, and the principles of Housing First ensure that the person will continue to be supported and rehoused.



### **Q: What effect does Housing First have on housing waiting lists?**

None. The people housed through Housing First are not 'new' people being added to existing housing demand. They have always been there with a right to a home, but often without equal opportunity — a 'level playing field' to exercise those rights. Housing First just provides a mechanism for ensuring everyone can quickly access a home and the support they need.

Many people have struggled to maintain accommodation and have repeatedly accessed different accommodation routes and services. Housing First has been proven to help people maintain tenancies and access appropriate services. This should have a positive impact and free up capacity and time for services.

### **Q: What about supported housing and hostels?**

Where Housing First is not the best solution, or mainstream housing isn't wanted, then the size and quality of shared, supported accommodation is key. Overarching Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans will progress toward smaller, specialist units within a psychologically informed environment. Local Health and Social Care Partnerships will also consider whether those units continue to be part of their local homelessness response, or whether the specialist nature aligns them with broader health and social care strategy and commissioning frameworks.

### **Q: What is Housing First Scotland?**

Housing First Scotland belongs to everyone who is helping Housing First become the first response for people whose homelessness is compounded by experiences such as trauma, abuse, addictions and mental ill health. It is hosted by the Homeless Network (GHN) since 2016, set up in partnership with Turning Point Scotland and I-SPHERE at Heriot-Watt University, leading academics on housing, homelessness and related issues. Social Investment Scotland joined our partnership to explore how social investment could be used as a mechanism to scale up Housing First.

### **Q: What is Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder?**

The flagship £10 million Housing First Pathfinder in Scotland was catalysed by Social Bite in 2018 to accelerate Housing First delivery in six local authority areas including five cities. It is funded by the Scottish Government (<£6.5m), Social Bite (£3m) and Merchants House Glasgow (£200k). The Homeless Network and Corra Foundation were appointed as Project and Fund Managers. It is a three-year programme in the first instance, with an official start date of 1 April 2019.

The multi-agency Pathfinders are scaling up to deliver over 800 tenancies across Aberdeen/shire, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling by March 2021. Homes have been pledged by housing associations and local authorities, with a smaller number pledged by private sector landlords too. 15 services across 5 local consortia were commissioned to deliver the Housing First intensive casework support in line with Housing First principles. The services have a lead organisation in each area (in same order): Aberdeen Cyrenians, Transform Community Development, Cyrenians, Turning Point Scotland and Loretto Care.

The Pathfinder partnerships are testing how to deliver Housing First at a scale never seen before in Scotland, setting the pace, testing new ways of working and sharing solutions to the challenges and questions that come from changing systems at scale. With a head-start to find the best path, we want to quickly connect their learning and expertise with all other Scottish local authorities preparing to scale up Housing First.

### **Q: Will Housing First end Homelessness in Scotland?**

Not on its own, as most people who become homeless have no or low support needs beyond their need for housing. However, any attempt to end homelessness that does not include Housing First will not work for the population in Scotland who are up against the hardest structural, social and economic disadvantage.

*Your notes*



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