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The Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First Pilot:

Interim Report

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of Shelter/Inspiring Change Manchester or the University of York. Responsibility for any errors rests with the authors.

Summary

- This interim report provides a summary of the emerging findings of the formative and summative independent evaluation of the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First pilot. These findings are provisional as fieldwork is not complete.
- Initial results from the research indicate that the Housing First pilot is generating strong, positive results, engaging successfully with homeless people with high and complex needs and ending their homelessness.
- Housing First is an innovative service model, first developed in the USA, which has become a mainstream service response to homelessness in an increasing number of countries. Housing First is increasingly coming into use in England and is a part of the homelessness policy response in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Inspiring Change Manchester developed a Housing First pilot to further its core goal to effectively support Manchester residents who have high and complex needs. Housing First was seen as a way to engage with people for whom existing service offers had not been effective.
- A decision was taken to follow a high fidelity approach, closely following the core principles of Housing First, drawing on European and British guidance, which closely reflects, but does not entirely replicate, the original North American model. Inspiring Change Manchester also placed emphasis on peer mentoring within the Housing First pilot.
- The Housing First pilot has dedicated resources, but is integrated into a wider programme of support that includes arts-based activities, education, training and employment services and support with mental health problems, also provided by Inspiring Change Manchester.
- As at October 2017, 16 people had engaged with the Housing First pilot and 15 had been housed. The research team had by that point, interviewed five individuals, around one third of the service users, along with front line and senior staff and representatives of partner agencies.
- There were some initial logistical problems with referrals to the Housing First pilot, but all reports indicated these had been swiftly resolved.
- People using Housing First praised the support in finding housing and the role of Housing First staff in tackling housing problems. Some issues around neighbourhoods were more difficult to address than issues with the housing itself.
- Waits for housing had been an average of 17 weeks. However, significant progress had been made in securing greater cooperation and support from social landlords,

including a recent collective pledge by those landlords to provide 15 one bedroomed flats to the Housing First pilot.

- People using the Housing First pilot had joined at different points, but initial results showed that rates of tenancy sustainment were very high.
- Access to funding and physical resources that enabled someone to establish an independent tenancy was seen as good.
- There was clear evidence that the pilot was engaging successfully with people with high and complex needs who had experienced the extremes of homelessness.
- The intensive, flexible support provided by the Housing First pilot was universally praised. Support was described as reliable, flexible, non-judgemental and as effective.
- While still in the process of being rolled out across the pilot, initial reports indicated that peer-mentoring was working successfully.
- Fidelity to the core principles of Housing First was high.
- There is clear potential for Housing First to reduce homelessness among people with high and complex needs across Greater Manchester. Initial results from this study reflect the wider UK and global evidence base which shows the effectiveness of the model.
- The evidence indicates that Housing First is most effective when employed as a key component of an integrated homelessness strategy, focused on homelessness among people with high and complex support needs, including both addiction and severe mental illness.
- Housing First has the potential to be used as a preventative service, alongside use when homelessness has become recurrent or sustained due to someone having high and complex needs, which orthodox services cannot fully meet.
- To make an effective contribution to ending rough sleeping in Greater Manchester by 2020 and in reducing and preventing homelessness among people with high and complex needs, Housing First will need to be deployed at strategic level within an integrated homelessness strategy.

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About this Report

This interim report provides a summary of the emerging findings of an independent evaluation of the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First pilot. This is an action research project, agreed between the University of York and Inspiring Change Manchester that is designed to provide formative and summative input to the design and operation of the Housing First pilot.

Fieldwork for this research is not complete. Additional interviews will be undertaken to represent all the people using Housing First and all the agencies which are engaged with Inspiring Change Manchester, with respect to the operation of the Housing First pilot. The initial results presented here may be subject to change when the fieldwork is complete. At this stage, it is noteworthy that all the sources of evidence explored point in the same direction, suggesting that the pilot is delivering strong, positive results in meeting the needs of homeless people with high and complex needs in Manchester.

The emerging evidence from this research and, importantly, the wider evidence base from the UK and – particularly - from international use of Housing First highlights the potential roles of Housing First in effectively tackling homelessness at strategic level in Greater Manchester. There is clear potential for Housing First to both reduce recurrent and sustained homelessness among people with high and complex needs and to prevent these forms of homelessness. The final part of this report discusses the potential roles of Housing First.

A final report will be produced when the pilot comes to an end in the Spring of 2018.

1 Introducing the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First Pilot

Introduction

This first section of the interim report provides an overview of the development of Housing First by Inspiring Change Manchester. A brief discussion of the origins and evidence base for Housing First is followed by a short history of the development of the Pilot.

Housing First

Services for homeless people tend to be treatment-led, i.e. when someone who has high and complex needs is referred to a homelessness service, it tends to be shared housing with on-site staffing, sometimes referred to as a hostel and sometimes as supported housing. These services provide accommodation, support and treatment which is designed to resettle someone in their own independent home. This activity focuses on ensuring someone is receiving (and cooperating with) treatment and changing any behaviours that are thought to place their capacity to sustain housing at risk, such as problematic drug and alcohol use. In this approach to service delivery, housing is provided last, after someone is assessed being made 'housing ready', i.e. reaches a point where they are able to live largely, or wholly, independently¹.

This 'housing last' approach to providing resettlement and tenancy sustainment for homeless people with complex needs is still widely used, both here in the UK, in Europe and in North America. However, it has become clear that while these services can often be effective, successes with homeless people who have high and complex needs are more limited. When these services are relatively strict, for example following a policy that requires total abstinence from drugs or alcohol, homeless people with complex needs are often either ejected, or leave, because they find compliance with service requirements difficult². Equally, individuals can become effectively stuck in a housing last service model, because they do not reach the point where they are assessed as housing ready.

Housing First is the most significant innovation in service responses to homelessness, among people with high and complex needs, that has occurred in the last three decades. The key differences between Housing First and earlier service models centre on provision of rapid access to independent housing and on the ways in which services are designed. Housing First can be summarised as follows:

¹ Padgett, D.K.; Henwood, B.F. and Tsemberis, S (2016) *Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems and Changing Lives* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² Pleace, N. (2008) *Effective Services for Substance Misuse and Homelessness in Scotland: Evidence from an international review* Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

- Housing First provides rapid access to settled, independent housing, often using ordinary private rented and social rented housing.
- Access to housing is not conditional, i.e. someone using Housing First does not have to be assessed as 'housing ready' before housing is offered.
- Housing, treatment and support are separated, i.e. someone using Housing First is not required to show treatment compliance, or changes in behaviour, once they are housed.
- Support is provided using an intensive floating service, which visits people using Housing First at home, or at agreed venues, and provides case management, practical and emotional support.
- A harm reduction approach is employed.
- There is an emphasis on ensuring the possibility of positive change in someone's life is clearly conveyed, without any requirements being set in relation to behavioural or other changes, often referred to as a recovery orientation.
- Housing First follows the principles of coproduction³ and personalisation⁴.

The exact shape that a Housing First service should take is a matter of some debate. While the key components of Housing First are broadly established, opinion differs on the extent to which the operational detail of the original American model, developed by Sam Tsemberis, should be replicated⁵. The European guidance on Housing First⁶ takes a quite broad definition as its basis, reflecting differences in social housing, public health and welfare benefit systems in different countries, including the UK, but also drawing heavily on Tsemberis's original model⁷, defining the key principles as follows⁸:

- Housing is a human right
- Choice and control for service users
- Separation of housing and treatment
- Recovery orientation
- Harm reduction
- Active engagement without coercion
- Person-centred planning
- Flexible support for as long as required.

³ <https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/what-is-coproduction/>

⁴ <https://www.scie.org.uk/personalisation/introduction/what-is>

⁵ Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2017) 'What Do We Mean by Housing First? Considering the Significance of Variations in Housing First Services in the European Union' in J. Sylvestre; G. Nelson and T. Aubry (eds) *Housing for People with Serious Mental Illness: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 287-299.

⁶ <http://housingfirstguide.eu>

⁷ Tsemberis, S. (2010) *Housing First: The Pathways Model to End Homelessness for People with Mental Illness and Addiction* Hazelden: Minnesota

⁸ Pleace, N. (2016) *Housing First Guide Europe* Brussels: FEANTSA.

Housing First England, led by Homeless Link, draws on the European guidance in defining the principles of Housing First⁹:

- 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
- The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations
- An active engagement approach is used
- A harm reduction approach is used.

The evidence base for Housing First has been building up since the first project became operational in New York in the early 1990s, but has increased rapidly in recent years because of increased international policy interest in Housing First. Major experimental tests of Housing First (randomised control trials) have been run in Canada¹⁰ and in France¹¹, showing that, compared to orthodox homelessness services, Housing First is more effective at ending homelessness for people with high and complex needs. There is evidence that Housing First has reduced recurrent and long-term homelessness, associated with people with high and complex support needs, at national level, in both Finland¹² and the USA¹³.

British evidence is not as well developed as that from North America and some parts of Europe. In Britain, studies of Housing First have tended to be small scale, observational, studies of individual services. The available British evidence indicates that¹⁴:

- Housing First is able to engage effectively with people with experience of sustained and recurrent homelessness, who have high and complex needs.
- Housing First engages effectively with people with sustained and repeated use of homelessness services, whose homelessness has not been ended, i.e. people who have become stuck in a hostel or supported housing, or caught in a revolving door of homeless service use.
- Exits from homelessness can be sustained (at one year) for between seven and nine out of every 10 people that Housing First services engage with.
- Housing First services are generally well regarded by the people who use them.

⁹ Homeless Link (2016) *Housing First England: The principles* London: Homeless Link <http://hfe.homeless.org.uk>

¹⁰ Goering, P., Veldhuizen, S., Watson, A., Adair, C., Kopp, B., Latimer, E., Nelson, G., MacNaughton, E., Streiner, D. and Aubry, T. (2014) *National at Home/Chez Soi Final Report* Calgary, AB: Mental Health Commission of Canada.

¹¹ <https://housingfirstguide.eu/website/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/France.pdf>

¹² Pleace, N.; Culhane, D.P.; Granfelt, R. and Knutagård, M. (2015) *The Finnish Homelessness Strategy: An International Review* Helsinki: Ministry of the Environment.

¹³ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2016) *The 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress* HUD: Washington DC

¹⁴ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) *Housing First In England: An evaluation of nine services* York: University of York; Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) *Camden Housing First: A Housing First experiment in London* York, Centre for Housing Policy, University of York; Busch-Geertsema, V. (2013) *Housing First Europe: Final Report* <https://housingfirstguide.eu/website/housing-first-europe-report/>

- While results in enabling exits from homelessness are strong, the results in relation to drug/alcohol use and mental health can be more variable.

While the British evidence base is still developing, the findings of the work conducted so far mirror those of research conducted on Housing First elsewhere. For homeless people with high and complex needs, Housing First has been found to be the most consistently effective service model, in terms of actually ending homelessness, in Europe and North America, as well as in the UK. There is also potential for Housing First to deliver improvements in health, addiction, well-being and social integration, though these results are less consistent and can take longer to achieve than the housing outcomes¹⁵.

Housing First has a specific focus, on homelessness that is associated with high and complex support needs. As the recent exploration of the potential use of Housing First at strategic level in the Liverpool City Region combined authority¹⁶, noted Housing First is best understood as an effective *component* of an integrated homelessness strategy.

The roles of Housing First centre on ending homelessness among people with complex needs and on the potential prevention of homelessness among groups with high and complex support needs. Housing First is not an answer to all forms of homelessness, but has particular effectiveness with respect to the minority of high-need people whose homelessness may otherwise become recurrent or sustained. Finnish experience, where an integrated homelessness strategy, including Housing First, has been used to bring homelessness close to a functional zero, is the best working example of how Housing First can be effectively employed¹⁷.

The Manchester Housing First Pilot

Inspiring Change Manchester

Inspiring Change Manchester is an eight-year programme commissioned and led by Shelter¹⁸ and funded through the Big Lottery Fund's *Fulfilling Lives* project. The Inspiring Change programme was developed to support people with high and complex needs in Manchester, which are defined as encompassing problematic drug and alcohol use, mental health and emotional wellbeing issues, accommodation problems – including homelessness – and offending¹⁹.

The programme follows the principles of coproduction, which involves service users, service providers, commissioners and strategists working together to develop more effective

¹⁵ Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (2016) Housing First and Social Integration: A Realistic Aim? *Social Inclusion* 4.4, DOI: 10.17645/si.v4i4.672; Pleace, N. and Quilgars, D. (2013) *Improving health and social integration through Housing First: A Review* Paris: DIHAL.

¹⁶ Blood, I.; Copeman, I.; Goldup, M.; Pleace, N.; Bretherton, J. and Dulson, S. (2017) *Housing First Feasibility Study for the Liverpool City Region* London: Crisis.

¹⁷ Pleace, N. *et al* (2015) *Op. cit.*

¹⁸ <https://england.shelter.org.uk>

¹⁹ <https://inspiringchangemanchester.shelter.org.uk>

service solutions. A key element of coproduction is the direct empowerment of service users in service design and in the day-to-day operation of services. The Social Care Institute for Excellence notes that while there is no single formula for coproduction, services based on this model tend to have the following key features²⁰:

- People who use services are recognised as having skills that can actively contribute to service design and delivery.
- Services are strength-based, i.e. they recognise the capacity of individuals using services and build upon that capacity.
- There is reciprocity and mutuality in service operation, i.e. contributions are valued and rewarded through the pursuit of goals that deliver shared benefits.
- Peer support and personal support are built into service design.
- Services act as agents for positive change, moving beyond simple service provision.

Inspiring Change Manchester saw the Housing First model as being highly compatible with the overall objectives of the programme, centred as it is on people with high and complex needs who can be facing homelessness and other acute accommodation problems. Alongside sharing the broad focus of Inspiring Change Manchester, Housing First also follows many of the core principles which are integral to the programme. In a blog post in January 2016, Inspiring Change Manchester announced²¹:

Inspiring Change Manchester is excited to be piloting Housing First in Manchester for our clients. Housing First ends homelessness for those with high support needs who have experienced recurrent homelessness by offering permanent accommodation together with personalised wrap-around support to help sustain the tenancy.

Until now, a 'stepped approach' has required tenants to progress through different types of accommodation- from hostels to shared accommodation and beyond – before being awarded their own tenancy, if they can comply with certain terms and conditions.

Housing First gives that permanent home straight away.

It uses a harm reduction rather than abstinence approach. It does not penalise clients who struggle to stop drinking or using drugs (although clients are strongly encouraged to reduce their intake in these areas). Clients are treated as any other tenant; tenancies are lost for the same reasons that any tenancy would fail. A Housing First tenant becomes indistinguishable from any other tenant. And these are clients who may have never held a tenancy successfully or who have been street homeless for decades.

²⁰ Source: SCIE, <https://www.scie.org.uk>

²¹ <http://icmblog.shelter.org.uk/housing-first/>

The Housing First Pilot

Inspiring Change Manchester sought to develop a Housing First pilot that would follow the core principles of the original service model, showing 'high fidelity' to the original American model²². The goal was to explore how a Housing First would work in Manchester, where there is considerable pressure on affordable housing supply, in both the private and social rented markets and there are people living rough and in homelessness services whose homelessness is recurrent, sustained and associated with high and complex support needs. Prior to Housing First beginning in operation, Inspiring Change Manchester developed links with the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York, which agreed to lead an independent evaluation of the pilot.

The goal of the pilot was to work with up to 20 people, beginning in April 2016 and coming to a close in March 2018. The pilot had a clear focus on providing intensive floating support to people with a history of homelessness and high and complex needs. A mix of ordinary private rented and social housing was to be employed.

The Housing First pilot was initially set up as a service within a service, using the existing case management and support services which Inspiring Change Manchester was providing for people with high and complex needs. This model, which has been used elsewhere in the UK²³, works on the basis that a set of existing floating case management and housing-related support services are intensified and modified for particular service users to provide a 'Housing First' service. However, some logistical issues were encountered which led to modification of this approach early on, with Housing First being reorganised within Inspiring Change Manchester around a Team Leader, Housing First Development Officer, two Housing First engagement workers (support workers) and a GROW²⁴ trainee. Client caseloads were six per worker, within the parameters, of between three to ten service users (dependent on the needs of each individual) recommended by existing guidance²⁵.

The Housing First service was also designed to provide peer mentoring, giving service users access to help from someone with shared life experiences who was not in a position to offer practical and emotional support. This aspect of Housing First, which is included in guidance, has seen uneven development in the UK to date, some services lack a formal peer-review element, while others, notably the Turning Point service in Scotland, place considerable emphasis on peer support²⁶. In the Manchester Housing First pilot, peer mentoring was intended to play a significant role.

The Housing First pilot is distinctive from some of the other experiments with the model that are occurring in the UK. The pilot, while having clearly demarcated staff resources,

²² Tsemberis, S. (2010) Op. cit.

²³ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) Op. cit.

²⁴ GROW (getting real opportunities of work) is an integrated initiative that is designed to enable individuals with high and complex needs to access education, training and employment.

²⁵ <http://housingfirstguide.eu>

²⁶ <http://www.turningpointscotland.com/what-we-do/homelessness/glasgow-housing-first/>

remains a part of a larger programme. Inspiring Change Manchester includes *Back on Track*²⁷, an adult education and arts-based service designed to engage with people with high and complex needs, which among other options, provides training in peer-mentoring. Inspiring Change Manchester also coordinates with *Self-Help*²⁸ a user led mental health support service working in the North of England and *Community-Led Initiatives*²⁹ a mentoring, training and consultancy service created and led by former offenders for former offenders.

²⁷ <http://www.backontrackmanchester.org.uk/projects/inspiring-change-manchester/>

²⁸ <https://www.selfhelpservices.org.uk>

²⁹ <http://www.communityled.org.uk>

2 The Housing First Pilot: Perspectives and progress

Introduction

The Housing First pilot followed a coproduction approach, which means the distinctions between service user, staff and cooperating agencies should not be present in the same way as would have been the case with some earlier service models. The people receiving support from Housing First should be active in the design and operation of their own support services, a partnership existing between themselves, staff, peer mentors and external agencies that are also supporting Housing First. This section of the interim report explores opinions about the Housing First pilot, including interviews with the people using the service, the views of staff and peer mentors and the opinions and views of partner agencies.

By October 2017, the research team had successfully completed six interviews with five people using the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First pilot (i.e. one third of the people currently using Housing First). More interviews will be completed for the final report of this research, with the goal being to have talked to all current service users at the point the work comes to an end. In addition, the staff team providing the Housing First pilot were interviewed about the experience of delivering the service, with the management group with strategic responsibility for the pilot also participating in discussions and interviews. External partner agencies had also participated in interviews, which like the interviews with people using the Housing First pilot, were ongoing at the time of writing. Ethical approval for the research, incorporating mechanisms for informed consent, data sharing and collaboration between the University and Inspiring Change Manchester was provided through the University's ethical review process.

Using Housing First

Referrals to the service

By October 2017, the Housing First pilot had worked with 16 people³⁰. Five of the people using the Housing First pilot were women (30%) and the average age of those using the service was 40 (youngest aged 23; oldest aged 53). Almost everyone using the pilot was White; two people had a minority ethnic background.

The Housing First pilot had been developed with a view to meeting the needs of those people who were not accessing or benefitting from the array of support offered by Inspiring Change Manchester, itself a programme focused on Manchester residents with high and complex needs. A referral panel mechanism had been developed to take referrals from existing Inspiring Change Manchester service users and there had initially been some issues

³⁰ The University of York interrogated anonymised data provided by ICM; this data is also presented in Found, J. (2017) *Housing First: Getting it right for Manchester: Early learning*, Manchester: Shelter.

with information sharing and coordination. Four of the first referrals had not engaged with Housing First, at a point when processes for information sharing and access to the service were not yet fully operational. However, these initial teething troubles with referral procedures appeared to have been quickly overcome.

By the Autumn of 2017, the referral system was being reoriented to look further afield, as the existing Inspiring Change service users for whom Housing First was potentially suitable had been targeted by the service. Referral systems had been refined and revised and were viewed as working properly, with a high awareness of which people might benefit from the Housing First pilot.

Data collected by Inspiring Change Manchester, verified through fieldwork conducted by the University of York research team, show that the Housing First pilot is engaging with homeless people with high and complex needs. Six of the referrals to the pilot had been sleeping rough, four had been experiencing hidden homelessness and six were in temporary accommodation (bed and breakfast accommodation, hostel or night shelter). All 16 people using the pilot service self-reported issues with addiction, mental health problems and contact with the criminal justice system, with eight having served prison sentences. Three of the women using the pilot reported a history of experiencing domestic violence. Five of the people had been under social services care during their childhoods.

Finding and sustaining housing

Fifteen people had found their own independent housing, with the support of the service by October 2017. At that same point, all had maintained their tenancies, with one planned move, from a private rented sector tenancy to the social rented sector having occurred.

Service use had started at different points among the 16 people using Housing First. Some had been with the Housing First service since the Spring and early Summer of 2016, while others had started their service use in the course of 2017. Four people had been in their housing for more than 12 months in October 2017, another five for between six to 12 months, three for between three and six months and two for less than three months. Tenancy sustainment rates were very high, with the caveat that some people had not been in their housing for very long. Data collected by Inspiring Change Manchester show that six had entered private rented sector tenancies and the remaining nine who had secured housing were in the social rented sector.

The process of finding housing was viewed in positive terms, both in terms of the way in which Housing First had provided a route away from temporary accommodation, hidden homelessness or rough sleeping and in how the process of finding housing had been handled. People using Housing First emphasised the importance of the choices they had been given when looking for a home and also praised the relative speed with which they had been housed, three respondents reported that:

...they made sure I got a decent place.

I'm liking it a lot, just being out of the hostel – it was a dead-end place, once you were in there, it was very hard to get out, the way the housing [works], they put me in the lowest group, at the bottom, so it would have took me years before I would have been offered a property with the council so what these did for me was pretty good.

It's all I need...secure, stable, that's all you want isn't it?

The option to visit a potential home with a staff member from the Housing First pilot and assess the accommodation before moving in was valued. Knowing that they could reject a possible home because it was unsuitable was also viewed positively. For example, one respondent reported an example where possible housing had been damp, but that it been an easy matter to reject it and to work with the Housing First service to seek and secure an alternative.

Most service users had very few belongings on moving into their new tenancies, whilst most tenancies were offered unfurnished (or partly furnished). The process of securing housing had been enhanced significantly, according to staff, by the availability of a £1,500 budget per person³¹ to help with the move into independent housing. This could be used flexibly to buy furniture and/or white goods as well as to pay a deposit and month in advance rent in private rented housing. One client received help to get her new flat professionally cleaned before moving in. Staff could also help clients access other supports such as starter packs and services such as Mustard Tree³², which can provide furniture vouchers and the Big Change Fund Street Support³³ in Manchester, which can provide grants. Resource levels to set someone up in housing were seen as sufficient by the workers delivering Housing First.

There were a few ongoing housing issues, for example, the need for repairs, problems with utilities/ hot water and/or difficulties in paying for heating. A couple of people also reported problems with other neighbours or unwelcome visitors. These issues had either been resolved or Housing First staff were helping clients to resolve them.

Where there were problems with crime and nuisance in the wider neighbourhood, there was scope to raise issues with Housing First staff, who could draw the attention of the local authorities or other relevant agencies. However, problems with the surrounding neighbourhood were not something that a single service like the Housing First pilot was able to resolve.

The people using Housing First were broadly content with their housing and expressing gratitude for it. However, issues like neighbour problems, the quality of the area surrounding their housing and a few problems with the quality of the accommodation

³¹ This was a guidance figure per person but staff had flexibility in utilising this resource, for example, those moving into private rented sector property might have higher costs due to deposit needed – staff could allocate sums above this figure when people still needed furniture and white goods.

³² <http://www.mustardtree.org.uk>

³³ <https://streetsupport.net>

meant that housing was viewed as adequate rather than outstanding. A couple of the people expressed a wish to eventually move from the area they were living in. One respondent was still in temporary accommodation when they were interviewed.

Interviews with the staff team confirmed this picture, with workers reporting the same emphasis on choice of housing and providing support that made housing suitable and sustainable. One respondent summarised the approach as follows:

We don't push people into getting the accommodation... we are very into sustaining the accommodation, by giving them something that they really want, there is no point in giving them something that they are not going to sustain, or cherish, we hope this will work better...

Initially, securing housing had been described as a somewhat ad hoc process, with networks being established with social landlords (registered providers) and with letting and estate agents, and a couple of individual private landlords, to access the private rented sector. Working within the confines of the Manchester City Council area had also created some logistical challenges, as demand for housing across Greater Manchester is highest within the city centre. This had sometimes created a need for Housing First workers to ensure that the people using the pilot service remained engaged, although only one of the 16 people using the service awaiting housing in October 2017.

Following a coproduction model, choice must be integrated into the process of securing housing, which of course means that people using the Housing First pilot do sometimes reject housing, which slows things down. However, securing housing had been a relatively time consuming process, something also reported in the first London experiment with Housing First³⁴, and, in the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing pilot, could take longer with people living rough and experiencing hidden homelessness, than for those in temporary accommodation.

Access to housing has very recently been enhanced by the Manchester Housing Providers' Partnership³⁵, which in support of the Manchester Homelessness Charter has made a series of pledges³⁶. Pledge seven is to make 15, one-bedroomed properties available every year to the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First pilot.

Delivering support that makes a difference

The research team found a high degree of fidelity with the core principles of Housing First was being followed by the Inspiring Change Manchester pilot. The service followed the guidelines in the European guidance and the key principles produced by Homeless Link,

³⁴ Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) Op. cit.

³⁵ This brings together all the registered providers working in the Manchester City Council boundaries, http://mhpp.org.uk/info/1/the_forum/7/about_us

³⁶ http://www.manchester.gov.uk/mhpp/download/downloads/id/168/10b_mhpp_homelessness_pledges_report.pdf

both of which were produced with the involvement of Sam Tsemberis, who established the original North American service.

From the perspective of those delivering the pilot Housing First service, the flexibility, comprehensiveness, tolerance and the persistence in the model were seen to be the main strengths. People who had not been reached effectively by other service models could potentially be reached and supported by Housing First, as one worker put it:

...the fact that when people sort of 'misbehave'... it may be getting angry, a lot of shouting, we don't close the door, if you know what I mean, we give them some time to calm down and they do come back, and when they are calmer we try to understand the reasons why... flexibility, and also respecting what they want is what works, for sure.

Workers also emphasised the importance of choice and control, the personalisation and coproduction, the 'consumer choice' and 'separation of housing and treatment' that lies at the heart of the original Housing First services developed in North America. As one reported:

...the beauty of the service is that the client is in the driving seat...

[the] approach we have towards people, about staying true to Housing First principles...makes it successful.

Housing First was, in common with a growing number of homelessness services for people with high and complex needs, following a psychology informed environment (PIE) model, which aims to improve the psychological and emotional well-being of people using homelessness services³⁷. This awareness of need, a recognition of strengths and capacity among Housing First service users, within a framework that was tolerant and flexible, were seen as important for successful engagement by the staff delivering and managing the pilot service.

For the people using Housing First, the main benefits of the support they received centred on three areas:

- Consistency in contact, with the same worker being available on a sustained basis, unlike the inconsistent support they had sometimes received from other services.
- Intensive support that provides regular checks on their wellbeing and was quickly available.
- Support that recognised their opinions, was non-judgemental and which took account of their needs, which was again expressed in positive comparisons with previous service use.

³⁷ <http://www.homeless.org.uk/trauma-informed-care-and-psychologically-informed-environments>

The five service users that had been interviewed as at October 2017 were universally positive about the Housing First pilot service. They expressed their opinions as follows, each statement being from a different respondent:

People come and go [in other services]...and that's what I like about here, there's always someone I can see, [worker] is a constant.

[other services], they just want to tick a box, these don't [Housing First workers] want to know in their own mind that you are alright...

They treat you with total respect, there is no looking down at you, there is nothing false about them, they are all nice people.

They will help you with any problem that you put in front of you, it's not like Probation where they say, like, you have to be here for 10 o'clock or you are going back to jail or something, it's not like that, they work around you and make you feel comfortable, so I think that is a good thing, personally.

...the relationship has really bonded and gone up.... like in the last couple of weeks I've had my little offs with everyone but that's for other reasons... they work their socks off to do what needs to be done, granted it might take her a couple of months, or a year maybe, but they still get it done...

The peer mentoring element of the service been used by seven people by October 2017, including two of the people using Housing First interviewed for this research. For those two respondents, the experience had been a positive one, with the peer mentor providing additional practical and emotional support, and an element of companionship which was also valued. The role of peer mentoring in counteracting social isolation was highlighted by one person using the service. The worry that by using ordinary housing, Housing First may lead to some service users being isolated has been used as a criticism of Housing First³⁸. Housing First guidance emphasises the need to support social integration, partnerships, families and friendships to reduce this potential risk³⁹.

I have a peer mentor, we go out for days, we have days out doing different things..., it's okay, it helps, it helps get me out of here, cos I'm like a prisoner in the place you know, I mean, it's like a prison in a way, you know, just cos I just don't go out, they keep trying to get me to go out...

[peer mentor goes with person using Housing First to the gym, on bike rides and to the cinema]...he is nice, he is fun to get along with.

Both staff and peer mentors also supported service users with social and family relationships more generally. For example, one worker had attended church with one

³⁸ Pleace, N. and Bretherton, J. (2013) *Finding the way home: Housing led responses and homelessness strategy in Ireland*, Dublin: Simon Community.

³⁹ <http://housingfirstguide.eu>

person. People's birthdays were also celebrated. One client explained that the support had assisted them with family relationships:

I'm in touch with my daughters, my grand-kids, my family now, that is all through these [workers], I wasn't in touch with any of them before... and it makes a big difference to your head, because before I didn't even know where they was.

Some further positive outcomes had also been recorded by Inspiring Change Manchester, as at October 2017⁴⁰. Three people using the pilot had engaged with education, training and activity services. Eight people received support around their mental health, although in three cases this was in place prior to engagement with the Housing First pilot.

As has been the case with other Housing First service pilots in the UK, positive outcomes in respect of mental health, addiction and other support and treatment needs were not always being rapidly achieved, which also reflects the global evidence base for Housing First⁴¹. There were however clear gains, particularly in creating and in some instances sustaining exits from homelessness and in successfully engaging with people who had high and complex needs, and it must also be remembered that Housing First is designed as a relatively sustained intervention, working with homeless people with complex needs towards an end to homelessness, greater social integration and improved health and wellbeing.

Two of the people using the service summed up their view of the Housing First pilot in the following terms:

If it wasn't for these I would still be in my sleeping bag... when you've got your own flat with everything you need, it's a big, from here to here kind of thing, it's amazing, be sat on the street... its done a hell of a lot for me... and it's a different mind-set to other places where they just growl at you... and it's good as it just calms your head down...

*It is brilliant, it gives me a lot of confidence, and well-being, 'cos I was homeless, do you know what I mean, I was taking drugs every day... I've been involved with other institutions and you always get that initial we are going to help you, but you never even get a call back, do you know what I mean, but these people here they are texting me every day, or phoning me back every second day and saying that there is this on, there is that on, getting involved in all sorts. I think they are a really ****ing good team.*

⁴⁰ Found, J. (2017) Op. cit.

⁴¹ Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (2016) Op. cit.

Wider Perspectives

From a strategic standpoint Housing First was achieving the goals that Inspiring Change Manchester had set for the service pilot. Successful engagement was occurring with people who had very high and complex needs and for whom existing services had not delivered the housing stability and range of support that they required. The pilot had taken some time to get going, with some initial issues in finding the right referrals with the right level of information, there had also been some challenges in securing adequate housing, reflected in waits of several months for people using the service, before they were housed. Yet by October 2017 a steady and productive state had been reached, referrals were working well, new arrangements were set to make access to suitable housing faster and more certain and initial results in terms of housing sustainment and service user feedback were excellent.

Social landlords working in the Manchester City Council area were positive about the Housing First pilot, evidenced in their pledge to make 15 single bed properties available each year to support the service. Arrangements for referrals to housing from the Housing First service were viewed as providing clear, detailed information that enabled social landlords to make a clear judgement. Seeing the service sustain tenancies for people with high and complex needs had bolstered confidence that the Housing First service concept could work and brought engagement from the social landlords. In a context where affordable, adequate housing supply, is highly constrained, particularly with respect to housing offering the security of tenure and lower rents found in the social rented sector, securing the support of social landlords is vital to enable Housing First to function properly. As one respondent from the social landlord sector noted:

This is about people who we would not normally re-house.. and that is what we are here for... the more we can do and prove that this approach works, the more we can do in the future...

Communication about the Housing First model and what it could achieve had been challenging in some cases. The emphasis on providing support for as long as needed, on providing housing before someone had engaged with treatment and they were not, in the sense employed by orthodox service models, 'housing ready' and the requirement for patience, because Housing First does not, in any situation, produce instant results across every aspect of need had been challenged in some instances. Inspiring Change Manchester had needed to persuade, argue and illustrate what it was trying to do.

One stakeholder also commented that delivering and using the service necessitated a process of adaptation. Staff delivering the service needed good training to think differently in terms of how they worked with service users. And the degree of choice and control could also require adjustments to be made by service users, after sustained contact and use of services which had set parameters and requirements to a greater extent than was the case for the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First pilot.

...learning to listen to what people are telling you and to go with it, however crazy it might feel... in community care [that approach] was really quite transformative... many of them have been kind of institutionalised, in and out of hostels, even the way that they approach services is quite institutional so it's about helping them to break that cycle...

3 The Strategic Potential of Housing First in Manchester

Introduction

This final section of the interim report briefly explores the potential of Housing First within Greater Manchester, introducing current homelessness strategy in Greater Manchester as well as presenting evidence of effective strategic integration of Housing First in North America and Europe. The report ends with considering the potential for the future development of Housing First at strategic level in Greater Manchester.

Homelessness Strategy in Greater Manchester

The creation of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) stems from central government policy to create new economic hubs outside London, the so-called 'Northern Powerhouse' model. GMCA consists of ten councils; Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan and has an elected mayor, covering the entire combined authority. The mayor has focused attention on the issue of homelessness in general, and street homelessness in particular, across GMCA.

In common with the rest of England, GMCA will see a strategic reorientation towards greater use of preventative services as the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act come into effect. Housing First has been successfully integrated into the prevention-led strategies that have reduced homelessness among people with high and complex needs in Finland and the USA.

Specific initiatives include the development of the Mayor of Greater Manchester's Homelessness Fund, an initiative designed to enhance funding for homelessness services across Manchester. Three of the most significant developments at the time of writing are:

- A mayoral objective to end rough sleeping by 2020.
- The announcement of a £1.8 million social impact bond (SIB) that is intended to provide accommodation, health services and employment, education and training opportunities for homeless people.
- A central government announcement in October 2017 that Greater Manchester will receive what is described as a 'landmark' funding package of almost £3.8 million, to help develop a new city region-wide approach to preventing homelessness and reducing rough sleeping.

Government is committed to piloting Housing First at national level in England. The Communities Secretary has visited Finland, which is the most successful example of the use of Housing First within an integrated homelessness strategy. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are integrating Housing First into their homelessness strategies.

These developments create a context in which the potential of Housing First as an effective service intervention for homeless people, with high and complex needs, can be fully

realised at strategic level. A modelling exercise on the strategic use of Housing First has been undertaken in the Liverpool City Region (LCR), but in a context, unlike that in GMCA, in which Housing First services are not yet actually operational⁴².

Manchester, by contrast has Housing First services which are being piloted and rolled out. Alongside the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First pilot, the Threshold Housing First model, which focuses on homeless women ex-offenders with high and complex needs, is currently operational in three of the GMCA authorities⁴³.

The Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First pilot provides a service model that can end the homelessness of many of those people with the highest and most complex needs. The potential roles of Housing First in GMCA can be summarised as follows:

- Tackling recurrent and sustained rough sleeping and meeting the needs of people with high and complex needs who are caught in repeated, unsuccessful, use of existing homelessness services.
- Functioning as a preventative intervention within the wider reforms to homelessness strategy that will occur as the Homelessness Reduction Act is rolled out. This centres on the use of Housing First when someone with high and complex needs is at heightened risk of homelessness, which may encompass some former offenders with high needs, people with a history of mental health problems and people with a history of addiction.

Effective Strategic Integration of Housing First

Roles within an Integrated Homelessness Strategy

Housing First does not constitute an effective response to homelessness in itself, because it has a specific focus on a particular aspect of homelessness, i.e. people with high and complex needs. Homelessness has multiple dimensions, including family homelessness, which unlike sustained homelessness among lone adults is not associated with severe mental illness or addiction, and shorter term experiences of homelessness which can be associated with poverty and precariousness of income.

This means that to be an effective response to homelessness, Housing First must be integrated into a wider homelessness strategy that includes the following elements:

- Preventative services designed to reduce the occurrence of eviction because of financial difficulties, inappropriate or illegal landlord behaviour, or in some cases due to unmet support needs.
- Family and relationship mediation services designed to stop relationship breakdown from triggering homelessness, for example, when appropriate, to stop

⁴² Blood, I. *et al* (2017) Op. cit.

⁴³ Quilgars, D. and Pleave, N. (Forthcoming, 2017) *Threshold Housing First: Report of the University of York Evaluation*

a young person making an unplanned move from the parental home that might result in homelessness.

- Domestic violence services that can intervene when there is a risk of homelessness due to violence in the home, these will mainly focus on women, reflecting the much higher rates at which women are at risk of violence, and include interventions like the sanctuary scheme model.
- Short-term, low intensity support services that can facilitate rapid rehousing for people who experience homelessness who need some support, but do not require intensive, sustained support i.e. floating support or tenancy sustainment services.
- Accommodation based services, i.e. supported housing and homeless hostels that can provide emergency accommodation when required and/or provide intensive support for, and monitoring of, high risk individuals.
- Housing First services that are targeted on homeless people with high and complex support needs, including people at risk of sustained and recurrent homelessness, 'entrenched' rough sleepers and people 'stuck' in existing homelessness services, or caught in a 'revolving door' of repeated, unsuccessful contacts with existing homelessness services.

Where Housing First has proven most effective at tackling sustained and recurrent homelessness, referred to as 'chronic' homelessness in North America and 'long-term' homelessness in Finland, it has been part of an integrated homelessness strategy. In the US, the greatest success has been with meeting the needs of veterans with high and complex needs who have become homeless⁴⁴, whereas Finland has shown broad success in tackling long-term and recurrent homelessness at national level⁴⁵.

The Housing First model is being used successfully in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Italy, Spain and is integral to the homelessness strategies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland⁴⁶. At pan-European level, there is support for the Housing First approach from the European Commission and from FEANTSA, the European Federation of Homelessness Organisations, which is part of the Housing First Hub for Europe⁴⁷.

Housing First and Mental Health

Another set of potential benefits from the employment of Housing First at strategic level centre on mental health services. Two major experimental programmes in Canada and France, the *At Home/Chez Soi* programme⁴⁸ and the *Un chez-soi d'abord* programme⁴⁹ have

⁴⁴ Byrne, T., Roberts, C.B., Culhane, D.P. and Kane, V. (2014) *Estimating cost savings associated with HUD-VASH placement*. Research Brief, National Center on Homelessness among Veterans.

⁴⁵ Pleace, N. *et al* (2015) Op. cit.

⁴⁶ Busch-Geertsema, V. (2016) *Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion Synthesis Report: Housing First Belgium* Brussels: European Commission <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15710&langId=en>

⁴⁷ <http://housingfirsteurope.eu>

⁴⁸ <http://www.housingfirsttoolkit.ca>

⁴⁹ <https://housingfirstguide.eu/website/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/France.pdf>

been targeted on homeless people with severe mental illness. Both these national programmes, have been the subject of major experimental (randomised control) trials which compared Housing First with existing service responses. The Canadian and French programmes have reported major successes in reducing homelessness among people with severe mental illness, alongside benefits to mental health services, which were able to engage with these groups of homeless people on a more effective and efficient basis. A particular achievement of Housing First in France has been to reduce contact with hospitals in overall terms and to reduce emergency admissions for psychiatric treatment needs.

When supported by Housing First services, stable housing, specialist support and integration with mainstream health services can reduce the rates at which long-term and recurrently homeless people have emergency contact with mental health services. This links to some wider potential benefits that centre on reduced use of A&E departments by long-term and recurrently homeless people as a result of engaging with Housing First. One caveat is that the Canadian and French services employed two levels of Housing First intervention, an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model and Intensive Case Management (ICM) model. The original service model for Housing First, developed by Sam Tsemberis, was based on a mental health intervention using floating support and incorporating both an ACT and ICM approach⁵⁰

ACT provides integrated mental health and addiction services, i.e. they are built into Housing First service delivery with dedicated staffing written into the Housing First service, whereas ICM is an intensive form of case management, the approach that the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First pilot employs. Some new comparative research from Canada suggests similar levels of effectiveness for the ACT model (not widely used outside North America at present⁵¹) and the ICM model, including for homeless people presenting with both addiction and severe mental illness⁵²

From an NHS perspective, within the wider reforms that are changing the strategic planning and integration of health and other public services across the GMCA area, Housing First has the potential to reduce unplanned, emergency contacts between mental health services and homeless people. The provision of stable housing also provides a platform to enable continuity of care and facilitate the delivery of preventative interventions. Finally, Housing First also provides a service model that can intervene effectively with homeless people presenting with both addiction issues and a severe mental illness.

Housing First and Criminal Justice

The Threshold Housing First project in Manchester has shown effectiveness in reducing offending and reoffending among women with high and complex needs who are former

⁵⁰ Tsemberis, S. (2010) Op. cit.

⁵¹ With the exceptions of Denmark and France.

⁵² Urbanoski, K., Veldhuizen, S., Krausz, M., Schutz, C., Somers, J.M., Kirst, M., Fleury, M.J., Stergiopoulos, V., Patterson, M., Strehlau, V. and Goering, P. (2017) Effects of comorbid substance use disorders on outcomes in a Housing First intervention for homeless people with mental illness. *Addiction*.

offenders⁵³. More generally, Housing First, by producing benefits in respect of changes to addiction and gains in mental health, for at least some service users, alongside the stability of a settled home and reliable, flexible support, appears to reduce contact with the criminal justice system⁵⁴.

Housing First across GMCA

Although central government is now committed to piloting Housing First and the weight of the homelessness sector, across the UK and in England, is now behind the concept⁵⁵, Housing First is in a somewhat precarious position. There are current examples of local authority commissioned Housing First services, such as the Changing Lives Housing First service in Newcastle and 11 Housing First services run under local authority contract by St Mungos in London and the South East. However, much of the experience of Housing First in the UK has been restricted to small, pilot programmes, without sustained funding in place. Some successful pilot services, evaluated in 2015, experienced funding sunsets, i.e. their pilot programme funding became exhausted, was not renewed, and the pilot service collapsed⁵⁶. Part of the issue has been the nature of funding available, but, importantly, there have also been issues related to scale.

The level at which Housing First services have so far been developed in the UK is generally small, services often have as few as 10 places and generally no more than 20. These services, while they appear to be effective, do not have a clear strategic impact, i.e. they generally work for the people they are targeted on, but not on a sufficient scale to deliver the marked reductions in long-term and recurrent homelessness seen when Housing First is actually used at a strategic scale, as in Finland.

The arguments for employing Housing First at strategic scale are starting to be made in the UK, with the recent, hypothetical, exercise centred on scoping the strategic use of Housing First in the Liverpool City Region, drawing some attention⁵⁷. However, as noted, GMCA, unlike Liverpool, has active Housing First services which are running now, including the successful example of the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First pilot. There is scope to explore scaling up Housing First at strategic level, given what the UK and global evidence base says about likely effectiveness in five key respects:

- Reducing long-term and recurrent homelessness associated with high support needs
- Reducing entrenched rough sleeping
- Increasing efficiency for mental health services
- Potential benefits for criminal justice services

⁵³ Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (forthcoming 2017) Op. cit.

⁵⁴ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) Op. cit.

⁵⁵ <http://hfe.homeless.org.uk>

⁵⁶ Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2015) Op. cit.

⁵⁷ Blood, I. *et al* (2017) Op. cit.

- Preventing homelessness among people with high and complex needs.

It is important to contextualise and to be straightforward about these potential gains from using Housing First. Key to understanding what Housing First can achieve, and has achieved in other countries, is to view the service model as reducing homelessness among people with high and complex needs in a more *efficient* way than previous service models. Efficiency and effectiveness from using Housing First centres on the reductions in long-term and recurrent homelessness, in entrenched rough sleeping and the preventative potential of the service model. These gains in efficiency, more is achieved by the expenditure on homelessness services, is not the same thing as Housing First necessarily producing significant reductions in public spending.

Equally, it is important to note that Housing First is, of course, not 100 per cent effective. There are some people for whom Housing First does not work - typically around two out of every 10 individuals according to the current evidence base - and, while the rates at which Housing First ends homelessness are high, the outcomes around mental health, addiction and health can be more uneven and may take more time to be delivered⁵⁸.

Using Housing First at strategic scale in GMCA may be the best way in which to fully realise the target to end rough sleeping by 2020, enabling support of those homeless people with high and complex needs to be properly supported. Housing First must, the evidence shows, be deployed within an integrated homelessness strategy if it is to be at its most effective, but if scaled-up, it could be instrumental in reducing and preventing homelessness across Greater Manchester.

The Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First pilot shows that the approach is workable and potentially highly effective in GMCA region. While this interim report is only presenting initial results and the final stages of the analysis are yet to be completed, it is important to consider the potential for the Housing First model at strategic level in Greater Manchester.

⁵⁸ Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (2016) Op. cit.