

Housing First Europe Hub Partnership & Network event

Event report

Glasgow, Scotland
26-28 April, 2023

Day 1 – 26 April, 2023

Site visits / Information sessions

On the day before the official start of the Housing First Europe Hub's first Partnership & Network event, the participants had the chance to visit different organisations working with Housing First in Glasgow, Scotland. The organisations offered information sessions about their work as well as discussions on how the implementation of rapid rehousing and Housing First is impacting the journey to permanent housing. The organisations that the participants were able to visit were:

- Turning Point Scotland. You can find more information about their work [here](#).
- Rock Trust & Almond Housing. You can find more information about their work [here](#).
- Salvation Army Scotland. You can find more information about their work [here](#).
- Simon Community Scotland. You can find more information about their work [here](#).
- Glasgow City Mission. You can find more information about their work [here](#).
- Blue Triangle Housing Association. You can find more information about their work [here](#).
- Homes for Good. You can find more information about their work [here](#).

Day 2 – 27 April, 2023

-Official start of the event-

Opening session

Introductions and welcome to Scotland, Systems change and Housing First - what's next for Scotland?, Insights on Housing First and systems change

Samara Jones, Coordinator - Housing First Europe; Paul McLennan, Minister for Housing - Scottish Government; Janine Kellett Head of Homelessness Unit - Scottish Government; Maggie Brünjes - Chief Exec, Homeless Network Scotland; Renaud Payre, Vice-President Metropolitan Region of Lyon

Samara Jones together with the Scottish Minister for Housing Paul McLennan wished the participants a warm welcome to Scotland.

Paul McLennan opened the event with his first public speaking engagement since appointment. He shared with the participants how Scotland's government is committed to build strong housing rights which will also benefit the social housing sector. He furthermore emphasised the government's efforts and backing off the implementation of the Housing First model in Scotland and how this is helping to end homelessness in Scotland through permanent housing and support.

Scotland can already look back on 1,403 started Housing First tenancies. The minister elaborated how tackling homelessness remains a priority for this government and that rapid re-housing strategies and Housing First therefore get supported with an investment of 52.5 million £.

Maggie Brünjes, Chief Exec, Homeless Network Scotland, was up next and shared a presentation with the participants about the vision of a new homelessness system. The old, ineffective approach to managing homelessness should be replaced with new effective, evidence-based approaches to end homelessness, namely rapid rehousing, choice for people accessing services and a focus on prevention.

Maggie furthermore, shared some conditions for a smooth and successful transition from old approaches to new ones: change is democratic - it needs collective leadership and will; respect pioneers that developed the current system; the pioneers are needed for a safe transition; and it is important to listen carefully to the pioneers of the new system as they act on the currently existing evidence, experience and energy.

Renaud Payre, Vice-President of the Metropolitan Region Lyon started his speech with the message that it is indeed possible to implement Housing First pilots on local level, however for a true change a change of scale to a European approach is needed.

France functions as a good example of how the state can implement Housing First programmes nationwide, in this case with the Metropolitan region of Lyon functioning as driver. This successful French approach was based on three pillars: affordable housing supply, supporting associations based on the core-principles of Housing First and supporting local actors in the transition from the traditional stair-case model towards Housing First.

However, this implementation had to face obstacles along the way: affordable housing supply is an ever growing problem in current times, different regulations apply for migrants and social work is often not sufficiently paid. Therefore, Renaud Payre stressed the importance of moving from a local level towards an European level once again and shared how the Metropolitan region of Lyon is moving towards the realisation of this approach by organising a special event in the European Parliament about housing and homelessness co-organised by FEANTSA, Eurocities, Housing Europe and The European Parliament Urban Intergroup in Brussels on Tuesday, 19 September.

How did you make the shift to a Housing First approach?- Group discussions on making the shift in terms of policy, housing supply, working culture, training, practice

Viewpoints and speakers:

Housing providers: Graeme Gardner - Aberdeen City Council, Homes for Good - Joey Lawrie

Support providers: Salvation Army - Fi Grimmond, Transform FV - Anne-Marie Sneddon

Local authorities: Renfrewshire Council - Elaine Sales, Falkirk Council - Joanna Stewart

Training providers: Turning Point Scotland - Sandra Green

Other sectors - lived experience - Michelle Major

This session was set up in a world cafe style which meant the participants got to choose freely which of the table discussions they would like to follow. In total it was possible to join three of the table discussions.

Housing providers

Graem Gardner from the city council of Aberdeen described how they implemented the shift to Housing First through building pressure on the traditional system by closing hotels and as a result leaving the implementation of Housing First as the only option.

Joey Lawrie from Homes for Good talked about how Homes for Good functions as an innovative model of a social letting agency. Their business model is based on a 10 year investment return plan and the revenues of the housing allowance system.

Local authorities

Joanna Stewart from the Falkirk council talked about how the council started looking into the implementation of Housing First but realised that it is a difficult task to change the mindset of stakeholders including clients as they often already have a distrust of any public agencies. To counter this effect they organised workshops to bring together all relevant stakeholders and address their doubts.

Elaine Sales from the Renfrewshire council described similar problems and how they experienced that housing officers were the hardest to convince. The Renfrewshire council built up a support network that also involves hospitals, drug rehabilitation services and ministries. As a next step they would like to involve workers with lived experience.

Support providers

Fi Grimmond from the Salvation Army talked about how difficult it can be to change the language from terms used in working with the traditional staircase model to Housing First terms. One example is that many employees are still talking about 'being tenancy ready'. Recruitment can also be a challenge especially when it is not entirely clear what kind of profile they are looking for as well as difficulties with offering long term contracts which often stems from the short duration of Housing First funding. She furthermore stressed the benefits coming from working in multidisciplinary teams.

Anne-Marie Sneddon from Transform Forth Valley described how they managed to build up good relationships with their clients but are struggling with a lack of experience and knowledge about Housing First as their programme started only two years ago in 2021. Furthermore, they feel like all complex needs cases now get referred to them without checking if the client is suitable for Housing First programmes.

Audrey Heron from Rock Trust shared how Rock Trust teamed up with the Almond Housing Association for the start of their Housing First for Youth programme which helped with providing housing for the young people in the programme. Some challenges nevertheless exist stemming from the short duration of funding as well as getting different local authorities on board as they often have different interpretations and expectations of Housing First.

Lived experience

Michelle Major from Homeless Network Scotland stressed the importance of building relationships when including people with lived experience in the Housing First work. It has to be acknowledged that these

relationships are complex and it can be difficult to build them. Another important aspect is to ensure to decide on criteria for peer role before implementing a peer mentoring programme in an organisation. Criteria are also important to ensure that the peer programme gets properly invested in. Examples are job description, case load, authority. Furthermore, it has to be ensured that a peer worker is far enough along in their own healing journey to be able to deal with potentially triggering situations. But even then, triggers can still exist and be accounted for.

Next steps - planning and implementing systems change at local level

Speakers:

Nicky Miller - Turning Point Scotland; Gavin Smith - Fife Council

Nicky Miller and Gavin Smith gave insight into how they managed to implement a systems change on the local level and introduce a rapid rehousing approach.

Nicky Miller started by introducing Turning Point Scotland which is Scotland's leading social care developer and provider and has delivered Housing First across nine different local authorities in Scotland. You can find the presentation [here](#).

He shared how, from the view point of Turning Point Scotland, Housing First has evolved from being a homelessness service to becoming a health and social care intervention and how it is a great example of what it looks like for a health and social care service to protect homes and prevent homelessness.

After a successful implementation of the pathfinder, Turning Point Scotland now aims to include other social care and health agencies to change the wider system and show where their responsibilities are needed. In the presentation you can find an overview of the key messages Turning Point Scotland finds most important with an emphasis on system fidelity and how Housing First does not work for everyone. These are also key takeaways from the pathfinder evaluation. Turning Point Scotland aims to provide a new direction for governments and practitioners and the wider system by looking at Housing First from a governance perspective.

Gavin Smith's presentation followed, showing the success and obstacles that come with a rapid re-housing approach. The municipality of Fife switched to rapid-rehousing following the vision that it leads to the opportunity to offer a variety of housing that comes with psychological/ trauma informed support as well as reduce the amount of time spent in temporary accommodations. You can find the presentation [here](#).

In reality several obstacles had to be overcome such as an initial increase in rough sleeping and the use of temporary accommodation. As a result, Fife started implementing Housing First for Youth with Rock Trust and then incorporated Housing First with other providers as part of their rapid re-housing approach. Turning Point Scotland was one of the partners in the journey to establishing Housing First as a whole system change approach in Fife.

Q&A with Scottish partners and experts

Speakers

Kate Polson - Rock Trust Scotland (Chair); Laure Brillot - DIHAL, France; Mike Allen - Focus Ireland; Kjell Larsson - Stadsmissioner Sverige, Sweden; Nicky Miller - Turning Point Scotland; Joey Lawrie - Homes for Good, Scotland; Michelle Major - Homeless Network Scotland; Eleanor Lee - Glasgow HSCP, Scotland; Graeme Gardner - Aberdeen City Council, Scotland; Melanie Schmitt - Housing First Nederlands, Netherlands; Gavin Smith - Fife Council, Scotland; Gary Quinn - City of Glasgow, Scotland

How has the shelter sector developed in the last 10 years in Scotland and how do you work with shelter/hostel providers?

Shelters in Scotland involve many people sleeping on the floor in one room, usually a church or dining hall and shelters in the classical sense have not been used in Scotland for the last 11 years. In Scotland, most temporary and emergency accommodation is provided in hostels or supported accommodation where each person has their own room but there are shared bathrooms and communal spaces with staff on site. Even before the implementation of Housing First, homelessness organisations realised that investing in temporary accommodation is investing money in the wrong place. They get viewed, if necessary, as a stepstone shortly before the move to permanent accommodation.

Over the last 10 years, the number of large hostels has reduced as we move toward smaller, supported accommodation models, rapid rehousing units and housing first. Some hostels were closed and the residents moved out into tenancies with housing first support but the housing shortage and pandemic impacts have increased the number of temporary spaces and the length of time spent there.

Which legal/ financial incentives are successful in driving systems change?

Turning Point Scotland for example focuses on a human rights based approach with housing as a human right when trying to convince other sectors to make the shift. Another approach is to try to identify where and how organisations (e.g. social landlords) currently spend money and how spendings could be reduced by implementing Housing First.

How do you implement peer support in Housing First programmes?

Turning Point Scotland realised that they were operating with two different Peer models across their organisation, one where people with lived experience were carrying full case loads (Homelessness services, mainly due to funding models) and another where people with lived experience were carrying no caseload (Alcohol and Other Drugs and Justice Services) and act as community connectors. It was felt that Peers carrying a full caseload were completing the same roles as Support / Lead Practitioners who often have lived experience themselves. It was agreed that roles where people carried a full caseload would be discontinued and there would be a significant emphasis on how important lived experience is across their operational roles. Where funding was available for Peers to operate as community connectors within Homelessness services, these roles will be implemented using this approach.

Since Housing First has been successfully implemented in Scotland, are you worried that people will come from different parts of the country to Scotland to use the social system?

Whilst Scotland has implemented a programme of Housing First, homelessness and temporary accommodations still exist. Each Local Authority (city or town) has a plan for how they will move closer to housing first as a default and these are making progress at varied rates. The systems need to be changed before we can truly say that we have implemented Housing First. Alongside the Housing First and systems change work, we are also working to adapt our legislation and make prevention a priority which should bring us closer.

Do you have experience with Housing First in rural areas?

Homes for Good is providing Housing First services also in rural areas. Some challenges in these areas are that there is often a lack of sufficient transport options, shops and activities. As a strategy to tackle these challenges they try to create more support opportunities and strengthen the communities.

Turning Point Scotland is also operating in rural communities. One potential pitfall is that in rural communities people have been waiting on housing for a long term through general homelessness and it can come across that people supported by Housing First are 'skipping' the Housing queue. Also, there are examples where Turning Point Scotland has limited the area where people supported through Housing First are housed meaning there were challenges with integration into the wider community due to the proximity of the tenancies to each other. In addition, it is necessary to create a different staffing structure than in more populated areas so it can be more expensive as staff spend more time travelling. In the past Turning Point Scotland has used technology to ensure the tenants get the support they need regardless of the distance.

Highlights from the Housing First Europe Hub

Activities and plans

New structure and how to engage: Samara Jones - Housing First Europe Hub; Vanesa Cenjor del Rey - Hogar Sí

Knowledge development: Francesca Albanese - Crisis UK; Saija Turunen - Y-Foundation

Advocacy: Mike Allen - Focus Ireland; Vanesa Cenjor del Rey - Hogar Sí

Capacity building & Community of Practice for HF managers: Juha Kahila - Y-Foundation

Housing First for Youth: Kate Polson - Rock Trust

Training: Samara Jones - Housing First Europe Hub

The Housing First Europe Hub's conference in Madrid last year marked the start of shifting the current work on Housing First from the homelessness and housing sector towards a whole systems approach. This means that Housing First should be used as an approach across all sectors (e.g. health, mental health, criminal justice, ...). It can be seen as a compass rather than a blueprint for governments and practitioners and move away from the aim to manage homelessness towards eliminating it. For more information about systems change and Housing First, you can read the Hub's policy and practice guide [here](#) as well as Demos Helsinki's report on a new systems perspective [here](#).

The Housing First Europe Hub is working on *eliminating* homelessness across Europe among other things through different work groups.

The *Advocacy & Policy Development* group is led by Vanesa Cenjor del Rey and Mike Allen. The Advocacy Work Group is a place to exchange ideas and good practice about advocacy on regional, national and EU level, and it is also a place to plan initiatives which can be collectively launched to support the members' work.

Another work group focuses on *knowledge development* with Francesca Albanese and Saija Turunen as the leaders. The goal of this work group is to gather data and research and ensure the mobilisation of knowledge and an efficient and effective flow of information. The members of this group categorise, monitor, evaluate research that can be used as resources for the Housing First Europe Hub partners and associates as well as for the advocacy and capacity work groups.

The capacity building work of the Housing First Europe Hub consists of producing different resources about Housing First such as the Housing First introduction guide which is available in different languages [here](#). In addition to that, Juha Kahila leads regular Community of Practice meetings for Housing First managers. This Community of Practice focuses on providing support to frontline workers and other Housing First staff and training modules for managers. The work group furthermore started a regular webinar series in March.

One important pillar of the Housing First Europe Hub are its *training* programmes. Five years ago the Hub started a Housing First Train the Trainer programme to ensure fidelity to the Housing First core principles in different countries across Europe. By training a pool of Housing First trainers each year that then can teach about Housing First in their home countries in different languages, Housing First fidelity gets secured and Housing First reaches a broader audience. The pool of trainers who completed the Housing First Train the Trainer programme are also available for training on demand and can be contacted through the trainers' directory on the hub's [website](#).

Adapted from the Housing First approach, *Housing First for Youth* is a right-based intervention that focuses specifically on the needs of young adolescents who are at risk or are experiencing homelessness. The Housing First Europe Hub is advocating also for the implementation of Housing First for Youth programmes. For this purpose, an introductory guide to Housing First for Youth is available on the hub's [website](#) and the hub organises monthly Community of Practice meetings on Housing First for Youth.

Day 3 – 28 April, 2023

Workshops

Key issues and topics on systems change for Hub Partners & Associates

How to influence & advocate for the Housing First approach to funders and decision-makers. E.g. making cross-sectoral and cross-departmental funding possible (social care, health, housing, etc.): Mike Allen - Focus Ireland; Kate Polson - Rock Trust

Housing First and high quality services in a systems approach; Using Fidelity Assessment to Develop and Improve Housing First Programs: Nicky Miller - Turning Point Scotland; Karen Swift - Turning Point Scotland; Tim Aubry - University of Ottawa

National Housing First networks and platforms - Netherlands, Scotland, Ireland, Finland, Belgium, England, Italy: Juha Kahila - Y-Foundation, Melanie Schmit - Housing First Netherlands

Housing & Housing First - fireproof examples and examples with untapped potential: Arturo Coteago - Provienda; Vanesa Cenjor del Rey - Hogar Sí

During this workshop session, the participants had the opportunity to sign up for two of the workshops and discuss the topics together with the workshop leaders and the other participants. The focus was on identifying action points the Housing First Europe Hub can passport its partners and associates in implementing.

Key-takeaways:

Housing First and high quality services in a systems approach; Using Fidelity Assessment to Develop and Improve Housing First Programs:

- Design a method of assessing a service with the likes of a self-assessment tool so that service fidelity supports systems fidelity. In that service can identify collectively barriers/blockages within systems.
- Learn to evidence Fidelity.
- Determine a method of being able to draw comparisons of services across networks. Eg. Canada drew comparisons with Ireland.
- Wales have a method of accreditation around fidelity. Idea: further auditing procedures for services who already have other audit tools or KPIs to reach.
- Write a paper analysing fidelity assessment processes in different countries, contrasting this from matured and unmatured homelessness systems
- Define what system change looks like at a service level, regional level and whole system level and get some case studies to showcase how these are / have been done. The next step would be to consider setting out guidance at each level on how to approach this.

Housing & Housing First

- Promising practices can be found around Europe, for example a real estate investment trust in Spain; or a law that influences housing allocation in Aberdeen
- Renovating empty homes has also been a successful practice in different countries
- Difficulties are coming from lack of housing, bureaucracy
- Joint efforts are needed to find solutions for the lack of housing for Housing First programmes

How to influence & advocate for the Housing First approach to funders and decision-makers. E.g. making cross-sectoral and cross-departmental funding possible (social care, health, housing, etc.)

- One of the most effective ways to ensure that the value of Housing First is clear is to ensure that all stakeholders witness the difference it makes to their day to day work. Seeing the same people come through the revolving doors again and again and then noticing when it stops.
- Data collection is very valuable, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of any approach and sharing this enables learning and builds evidence which can be used to advocate. .
- Many countries are experiencing housing shortages and continued resistance from housing providers and landlords. It is key to identify how Housing First can help them to reach their aims and objectives. We need to have an understanding of their priorities and challenges in order to identify where aims align and make the benefits clear to them
- Information and training on the benefits of collective impact is required and should inform planning strategies and services. Working with health, social care and housing departments to align aims and identify where mutual support can be offered.
- Success stories, both individual or city/country wide, should be shared alongside the data to enable others to learn and have examples of the difference it makes.

National Housing First networks and platforms

- Housing First Netherlands established a national network including Dutch organisations working with Housing First to facilitate exchange and knowledge
- There is a general interest in countries that participated in the workshop to start their own national networks
- Alex Smith from Homeless Link UK together with the hub organises regular national network calls to facilitate exchange between managers of different national networks on Housing First in Europe and beyond

Next steps

Overall, the partnership event was a great success, with positive feedback from speakers and participants alike. But the conversations that we had and ideas that were shared will not just be left in Glasgow but instead used as an impulse for the work that the Housing First Europe Hub is going to focus on during the next months and next year.

The Housing First Europe Hub

The Housing First Europe Hub is a partnership of housing providers, foundations, governments, national platforms, cities, national government ministries, and experts working together to promote the scaling up of Housing First as an effective systemic response to homelessness across Europe.

We support this effort through:

- **Training:** for Housing First service providers, cities, governments, housing providers, etc.
- **Partnership Network:** we work with our partners to advocate for and support the implementation of Housing First as a means to transform existing housing and homelessness systems to focus on ending and preventing homelessness across Europe. We also support national and regional Housing First networks as they share practice and knowledge for scaling up Housing First.
- **Research:** as Housing First is strongly evidence-based, ongoing research is crucial to the innovation and improvement of the approach.
- **Community of practice:** where practitioners can exchange knowledge and experiences with one another to help improve outcomes for service users.

Interested in joining the Housing First Europe Hub as a partner or associate?

Partners should agree to commit to the core principles of Housing First, as set out in the Housing First Europe Guide, and be engaged in or working towards scaling up Housing First in their community. Partners have access to all Hub services including:

- All communication including the website and newsletter;
- The option to include their logo on the Hub website;
- The opportunity to co-produce tools with the Hub through participation in work clusters;
- Access to Train-the-Trainer courses and other activities;
- Invitation to all events, workshops etc., organised around the annual Steering Group meeting.

For questions, or to apply to become a partner or associate of the Housing First Europe Hub, please feel free to reach out to our Programme Coordinator:

- Arturo Coego, armaco@provivienda.org