

ALL IN FOR CHANGE

CHANGE TEAM REPORT MARCH 2020



DATE OF NEXT ONLINE RETREAT | 23 APRIL 2020



A NEW WAY TO MEET

It was a warm hello and a virtual two metre hug as the Change Team met for the first time since the Covid-19 outbreak. Like everywhere else, this was the main topic of discussion.

It is becoming more widely recognised across society that key workers and those in vulnerable living situations will bear the impact of this pandemic.

So as a group of people with frontline responsibilities and personal experience of homelessness, this was an inspiring and at times poignant meeting.

We are proud to present the key messages from this facilitated discussion. Some of these the Change team continue to take responsibility for progressing and encouraging others to do the same. Some will be shared more widely with people that can help locally and nationally, including:

- Scottish Government's Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group
- Local Authority Housing Options Hubs
- Scottish Federation of Housing Associations



COVID-19 | IMPACT ON HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Change Leads across Scotland are witnessing and navigating the impact of COVID-19 on homelessness services and the people that need them.



BIG PICTURE

It is important that we don't forget that poverty, which has been magnified by the pandemic, is the biggest driver of homelessness even in 'normal' times. It has become clear how many households cannot afford to stockpile, depend on free school meals, are employed under zero-hour contracts and do not have access to what they need for a meaningful life. This is an opportunity to reframe how Scottish society views inequality and advocate for a fairer society, which in turn will prevent homelessness.

AND ON THE GROUND | OUR KEY FOCUS IS ON 5 THINGS

- 1 How housing applications and allocations are being affected. Faster, clearer information needs to reach people who need a house and those who support them.



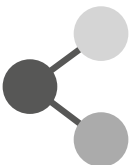
Local authorities and their partners are fast-tracking people in hostels and other temporary accommodation into their own homes to limit the spread of the virus and to make it as easy as possible to self-isolate if they are ill. While the current circumstances may limit some responses, we still want to make sure that furniture and starter packs are available as often as possible to reduce risk of tenancies breaking down.

- 2 How positive mental health and avoiding social isolation can be supported. Especially for the thousands of people in different types of temporary accommodation across the country.



Social distancing puts pressure on everyone's mental health and Change Leads are already seeing its impact on people who are vulnerable and working out how to counter loneliness and isolation when people are unable to leave their home. A strategy for how to do this well, including use of digital technology, would be useful to see us through this phase of the crisis, also thinking about how to promote health and wellbeing as social restrictions are lifted.

- 3 How resources can be committed to ensure local collaboration continues. The team are seeing big things at local micro-level



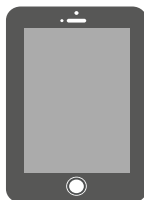
Change Leads are seeing many local examples of more people and more community organisations coming together to offer support. Can energy and resources be committed to ensure this collaboration and local infrastructure continues in the future as it will help all efforts to prevent homelessness in local places.

4 How a training and support programme can support the steep increase in use of remote and digital approaches to supporting people.



Everyone understands that changes are being made every day, from new processes and procedures to relaxing old rules to deliver services as effectively and safely as possible. A bit more thinking about how these changes are communicated across the homelessness sector would be welcome – and the Change Team can help with that! and support programme is really needed.

5 How information can get to people on the ground more quickly. Overarching plans to address gaps in essential services and provisions available need shared to avoid confusion.



Many frontline responses are now being delivered remotely and digitally, allowing staff to continue to deliver essential services, e.g. taking homelessness applications by telephone, using online chat functions to answer questions. This has the potential to offer an additional level of flexibility in the longer term as a more widely used option, But with the understanding that not everyone shares the same level of access and knowledge of digital technology, so a training and support programme is really needed.

COVID-19 | SUBGROUP

A subgroup of the Change Team will be formed made up Change Leads who are interested in collecting evidence of positive responses to homelessness as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. We know this evidence will be vital in informing future policy and practice.





BUSINESS AS USUAL

It was also business as usual for the change team. The meeting explored the second of 4 new directions being taken to end homelessness in Scotland – **People First**. Advisor to the Change Team, Dr Beth Watts from Heriot-Watt University, summarised what the evidence tells us about People First and the best ways to support people. Evidence shows people need choice and autonomy over their lives, support should be open-ended, flexible and persistent.

For better coordinated support we need cross sector collaboration and commissioning. Some good examples of People First models are:

- **Personalised Housing Plans (PHPs)** in England for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. PHPs are person-centred, developed in collaboration with agreed actions for the council and the individual to take to resolve the housing issue and are a living document that can change with people's circumstances

In Scotland, this is in the Plan to End Homelessness. Shelter Scotland are working on a framework for Personal Housing Plans on behalf of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group. An update is invited by the Change Team.

- **Personalised Budgets** allow support workers to access budgets which can be spent in different ways to help secure and maintain accommodation. This approach is usually used with people who sleep rough and while the evidence base is limited by minimal implementation, where it has been tested it has worked well.

In Scotland, this is in the Plan to End Homelessness. Street outreach services including Simon Community Scotland and Aberdeen Cyrenians received funding from Scottish Government to provide personalised budgets. An update or evaluation report is invited by the Change Team.

- **Newcastle City Council's Multidisciplinary Team** is part of a city-wide effort to prevent homelessness more effectively. The Team specialises in housing, welfare rights, debt advice and employment and benefits providing integrated casework for those at early risk of homelessness. This intensive model takes a proactive approach and uses data on arrears levels, eviction risk and those subject to welfare reform to find households who need support to keep their home rather than waiting for people to approach the team for help.



CONNECTING WITH HPSG

As nominated at our February Retreat, David Pentland represented the Change Team at the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group. David presented the group with the Change Team Key Messages:

- People are seeing change at the margins, but traditional systems are still causing stress and anxiety
- Until the new systems are fully up and running, advocacy can really help people navigate the old system
- Housing First works when services are properly linked in
- Positive “people, places and things” are vital for all of us and we need to focus on building lives as well as finding homes
- Homelessness is a 24/7 issue, with a 9-5 response
- We can make better use of recovery communities and preventative local policies

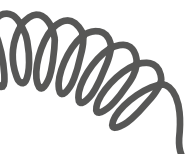


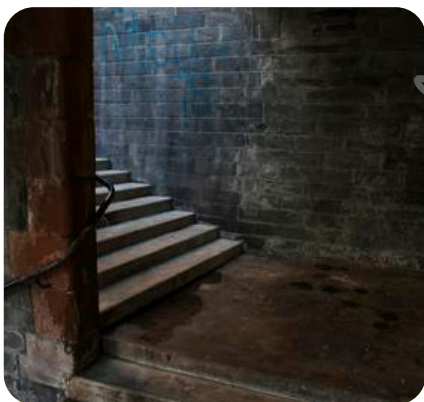
FEEDBACK FROM HPSG

- Feeding back about attending the HPSG, David noted that the Change Team remain high on the agenda and key messages were well received.
- The Team discussed the possibility of pace slowing as resources are reallocated to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic – and wants to know what this means for transforming the system in Scotland. Should we expect progress to slow down or speed up given the circumstances?
- Viki Fox and Joyce Juma-Phiri look forward to representing the Team at future meetings.

YOUR SHOUT!

Each month Change Leads are invited to use time at the Retreat to share knowledge and experience on something that really matters to them. This month Martin Boyle took the slot and showcased his photography – some of which features in the Hard Edges Scotland report which highlights how different types of experiences (homelessness, substance misuse, criminal justice) interact and impact on people's lives. Being involved in the development of the report was another positive way for Martin to contribute some of his experiences of using services in the past to influence how they are delivered in the future .





A FINAL THOUGHT

We are currently in a critical and unusual window of opportunity to influence positive change to how homelessness services are designed and delivered. around homeless services and delivery. So we need to be bold and aspirational and **SHOUT** about what is making a difference and what works!



THE CHANGE TEAM | KEEP IN TOUCH

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