

# THE HIGHLIGHTS

There are so many important things that we learn from the Change Team retreats and condensing these down into a briefing is becoming increasingly difficult – a good problem to have!

We have therefore created **'The Highlights'** where every first page of an AIFC briefing will summarise the main points discussed in a retreat. The following pages will go into a bit more detail for those of you who want it.

## WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

The morning meeting gave Change Leads an opportunity to bring something that they wanted to discuss to the table. We identified 3 topics and divided into smaller groups to simulate the round table discussions we would have when meeting in person.

All the topics had a strong focus on our People First and Good Vibes! New Directions.

**Connections and Consultations** | We recognise that making use of connections with our networks and consulting other people about what issues they're dealing with will be more difficult while physical distancing and other restrictions are in place.

**What works, and what doesn't** | We are currently seeing many examples of good practice in homeless services, but also, with current strains on the homeless sector, have identified things which could be improved.

**Shared Values at the heart of homeless services** | Values can be local or national, individual or organisational. It is therefore difficult to define shared values in sector dealing with a multitude of complex individual needs.

More on page 2

## NEWS!

We were sad to announce that David Kidd will be stepping back from his role as facilitator of the Change Team, to focus on the new Glasgow Alliance to End Homelessness, and making sure people with lived experience of homelessness shape that.

**The AIFC programme will be continuing!** And we will be in touch with all Change Leads to find out what involvement you would like to have going forward.

Last week Joyce, Deek, Martin and Shea joined Kevin Stewart in a group conversation about their personal experiences and their hopes for the future.

## GOOD VIBES!

Beth wanted to highlight 3 important messages in her presentation on Good Vibes! – our last New Direction, and a favourite for many Change Leads!

- **People aren't to blame for experiencing homelessness and don't deserve bad vibes.** It is very clear. People end up homeless because of a combination of complex factors – it is not about people making bad decisions.
- **Good vibes in services are really important and make a big difference to people.** Everyone deserves to be treated well and respectfully by friendly and approachable support networks.
- **We really can reduce and prevent homelessness effectively.** There are reasons to be optimistic to end homelessness in Scotland because we know what is needed to achieve this goal.

More on page 4

## GOOD THINGS ON THE GROUND

We were introduced to the **Everyone Home campaign** and talked about how we could get involved. We then split into breakout sessions and reflected on the good things currently happening on the ground, and our hopes and fears for the future.

More on page 5

**We will be discussing how the Change Team influences this campaign over the next month.**

# WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

## CONNECTIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

Building up relationships with people outside the Change Team is crucial to help find solutions and make change. It will:

- help us gather information from others about what works
- allow us to contribute our knowledge, expertise and experience to our wider networks
- raise the profile of the Change Team and our 4 New Directions

We question how we can protect trust between services and people experiencing homelessness which might have been damaged during the pandemic through lack of physical contact.

We are overwhelmed by the amount of information, both directly and indirectly related to homelessness, currently being shared. We suggest that this information needs to contain less jargon and be written in a way which is easier to digest for anyone who is interested.

By giving people the opportunity to come off the streets during the pandemic, providing them with food and a safe space to adjust, we might see a shift in.

We are interested in how we can maintain person centred relationships being built in hotel accommodation and find out what the next steps should be to ensure this good work is not undone.

**ACTION: Can Change Leads connect with our network of people on the ground and ask them to share their stories, and in turn promote our knowledge of better practice?**

**ACTION: Could Change Leads join virtual meetings / join webinars with other groups in the sector and contribute our knowledge and experience?**

**ACTION: We would like to speak to local councils and providers of hotel accommodation to understand what it has been like for them, what challenges they are having, and what their plans are going forward.**

**ACTION: Could we promote the use of using simple, accessible language? – with the example of our 4 New Directions.**

## WHAT WORKS, AND WHAT DOESN'T

We are currently seeing examples of good practice where services have been able to adapt and continue to run during lockdown, by ensuring they are following Government guidelines, checking that their employees are in good physical and mental health, and providing them with appropriate PPE.

When the pandemic hit, local authorities and housing providers understandably slowed down, or stopped, allocating housing due to various legal, practical and safety issues.

For people waiting on housing, this may negatively impact their mental health.

**ACTION: As we move through the crisis, can we learn from housing providers who are still allocating properties and share safest practices to allow the flow of housing to begin again?**

**ACTION: Can we find out how having fewer housing allocations has affected resources? How does this balance up with the changes to eviction rules that prevent evictions in Scotland until at least September?**

What we must avoid is void properties being used as temporary accommodation beyond the period where it may be necessary. The Change Team know that permanent, mainstream housing works best for most of us.

People moving into a new home want to know that their local area is safe and suitable – especially when coming out of homelessness.

Good practice is not just making sure a person has a roof over their head but also providing support and resources to allow that person to integrate into their new community successfully.

Here, Housing First is an example of what works, where there has been some continuity of services and contact with tenants, by phone and home visits. This is maintaining a high level of trust between HF support workers and people in the Housing First programme.

We want a continuation of housing providers being able to easily access flexible support, and allow tenants the option to indicate what is important to them.

During Covid we have seen the huge impact of services providing mobile phones and data packages to people experiencing homelessness. Other examples are flints being providing for vapes, to prevent people from returning to smoking, and help in writing letters.

We know there's some good approaches to end homelessness being taken in England and Wales, and further afield.

**ACTION: Can Change Leads bring an example of where they have experienced good practice on the ground and feed it back to the rest of the group?**

**ACTION: We would like to invite guest speakers from the sector to our own online retreats to find out about how their approaches could work in Scotland.**

**ACTION: We want to find out what incentives and resources are needed to encourage services to continue to provide valuable support, and why it has been easier for some services to adapt than others**

## SHARED VALUES AND HOW WE KEEP THEM AT THE HEART OF HOMELESS SERVICES.

Skills can be taught, values can't. If we are supporting vulnerable people, we should have high standards of the values we share. It has become even more evident, during crisis, which services prioritise strong values.

**ACTION: Through our networks, we want to understand the shared values of the homelessness sector, so we are able to celebrate and promote this further.**

# GOOD VIBES!

If you haven't had a chance to see Beth's video presentation you can find it here: [homelessnetwork.scot/change-team-retreat/](https://homelessnetwork.scot/change-team-retreat/)

## 1

### PEOPLE AREN'T TO BLAME FOR EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AND DON'T DESERVE BAD VIBES

It is very clear. People end up homeless because of a combination of complex factors - it is not about people making bad decisions. Some people can make a lot of the same decisions over and over again but because of their social, economic and environmental situation they won't become homeless. People aren't to blame for being homeless – they deserve Good Vibes!

## 2

### GOOD VIBES IN SERVICES ARE REALLY IMPORTANT AND MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE

Everyone deserves to be treated well and respectfully by friendly and approachable support networks. These services have capacity, time and resources and are driven by supporting an individual through their problems. Good Vibes! in service delivery helps with wellbeing but also helps create practical solutions for people.

## 3

### WE REALLY CAN REDUCE AND PREVENT HOMELESSNESS EFFECTIVELY

There are reasons to be optimistic to end homelessness in Scotland because we know what is needed to achieve this goal. Good Vibes! help us believe change is possible.

## COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM THE CHANGE TEAM:

Those who've experienced homelessness tell us **it can be overwhelming to begin the process of engaging with services** and support, and too often the services available are rigid and system-centred rather than person-centred.

To prevent anyone returning to sleeping rough, or going back to the start of a homelessness application process, support services should:

- respond rapidly and appropriately
- be trauma-informed
- be based on individual need and circumstance

One of the most important things that people need to overcome trauma is **relationships and support networks**.

We need to find a way through Good Vibes! and No Wrong Door approaches to establish services which provide **strong, consistent, non-judgemental relationships** that pragmatically deal with people's issues as they arise.

These relationships help to unlock different paths for people.

Although the common narrative says that we are all 2 pay checks away from homelessness, research indicates that this is not true and in fact **childhood poverty is the strongest indicator that someone will become homeless**.

The Change Team would like to engage in a wider educational framework and support early intervention to help prevent homelessness.

Society shows compassion for children growing up in poverty and deprivation, recognising that they are not to blame for this.

However, as soon as these children reach 18 and are expected to integrate within a wider society, they are often **criticised for not having the confidence to do so and making wrong decisions**.

More understanding is needed on the effects of childhood poverty and trauma as a cause to homelessness in later life.

# GOOD THINGS ON THE GROUND

## **We want to see slimmed down, personalised services**

Limitations on what services have been able to provide during the pandemic has meant that we have been forced to take a step back and consider how we operate in a new world. Can we ensure that we continue to prioritise taking time to have conversations and identifying people's individual needs, focusing on the quick fixes and challenging the status quo?

## **We want to see the solidarity between communities continued**

Can we support people to continue to work in partnership with a common goal to end homelessness?

## **We want changes in Universal Credit and Local Housing Allowance made permanent**

We are pleased that rates of Universal Credit and Local Housing Allowance have been increased in response to the pandemic. We want these changes to become permanent as it allows people to access a broader range of housing options.

## **We want to see wiser choices made at a quicker pace**

Can we maintain the speed that the statutory sector has been seen to put things in place during the pandemic and how quickly support has been able to shift because of this?

## **We want to see as many void properties as possible going to homeless applicants**

Can we capitalise on the fact that allocations are not currently being made to other housing waiting list groups and allocate as many void properties as possible to homeless applicants?

## **We want people to have the option to stay put**

Can we push to flip temporary accommodation into permanent accommodation wherever suitable, to prevent more upheaval and trauma for individuals and families experiencing homelessness?

## **BUT / we have some concerns and questions:**

- 1 There are still small numbers of people sleeping rough and we want to learn more about why this is and make sure that our safety net is protecting everyone.
- 2 People experiencing rough sleeping should always be a priority in Government spending. We want to know how long the financial resources provided during the pandemic will continue for, and be part of considering what services and support will be prioritised when things return to 'normal'.
- 3 People working on the front-line fear that there will be a spike in homeless applications after Covid. Although we are seeing more temporary accommodation becoming available, we ask whether there is enough staff to support people moving into these properties.
- 4 What can we do in Scotland to make things easier for of people with No Recourse to Public Funds when the important decisions are made by the Westminster government?
- 5 We will probably always need an emergency response to homelessness. This shouldn't be night shelters and large hostels. We need to think more creatively in ways to provide immediate shelter, but at a much higher standard.

## **THE CHANGE TEAM | KEEP IN TOUCH**

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