



HOUSING
FIRST
SCOTLAND

HOUSING FIRST *connect*

Issue 2 May 2019

NEWS

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Welcome to the second issue of the twice-yearly update for Pathfinders and Leaders. We are at the forefront of transforming Scotland's response to homelessness and finding the path to achieve Housing First as the first response for people that need it most.

On the 27th March the five Pathfinders came together in Dundee for the second time to connect, inspire and learn from each other.

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People first ... experts by experience

At the first Connect event we committed to keeping the voice of lived experience central to the Housing First Scotland Pathfinder Programme.

At this second event, Martin, Duncan and Joanne from the Homeless Network shared their own stories of the value they have gained through getting involved and sharing the insight of their own lived experience.

Read more >>

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And we heard from Pathfinder cities how learning from lived experience is a crucial component of creating culture change, embedding flexible, creative ways of thinking and working as well as challenging what we think we know.

As Duncan described it:

“If you get on the number 2 bus in Glasgow you’ll eventually end up in Baillieston. If you get on the same bus the next day and expect to get to Easterhouse, where do you think you’ll end up? Baillieston.

Let’s get the bus to Easterhouse together.”

Pathfinder updates

Each Pathfinder city provided an update on progress so far, sharing their successes, challenges and inspiration.

Collective problem solving

- The establishment of a multi-agency screening group in **Aberdeen** – including the local authority, HSCP, Community Safety Partnership, third sector and housing associations – to ensure the widest reach to find and respond to those who will most benefit from Housing First
- Focusing on culture change in **Dundee** – collectively changing mind-sets first and then establishing new processes and procedures to match. Working together to move away from the ‘sausage factory’ mentality
- In **Edinburgh**, working together to minimise the time between a flat becoming available and the move in date, working closely with housing providers to prioritise individual choice while reducing voids and waiting times
- Working with partners in **Glasgow** to test the concept of Prison to Home, initiating Housing First assessment processes in prisons, arranging for virtual home viewings or escorted leave to view potential homes. Embedding the ambition of a home and support being available on day of release
- Responding to a slow start for Housing First referrals in **Stirling**, the steering group prioritised improving local understanding of Housing First across key partners. This led to an increase in referrals and provided an opportunity to further test and refine referral procedures to ensure they work as intended.

Connections and Observations

From their experiences so far Pathfinders identified a series of common themes.

- Responding to the mix of ‘excitement and scepticism’ experienced by people following an offer of Housing First, testing how to best maintain the positive momentum while waiting for an offer of housing.
- Developing the right local partnerships to offer people as much choice as possible when furnishing their home.
- Creating the most effective Housing First team, balancing the contribution of all partners as the Pathfinder grows and ensuring the optimum range of knowledge and skills is in place.



Collaboration

Across three workshops peers shared their experiences to better understand some of the successes achieved so far and what will help in the next phase.

Open Space

Doug Gibson & Martin Gavin, *the Homeless Network*

The Open Space workshop focused on the interconnected themes of creating culture change, building engagement & trust and operating by-name lists.

- Creating real culture change at a strategic, consortium and individual level across each of the five cities.
- But not losing sight of the positive momentum that already exists – building from this rather than starting from the beginning.
- Building engagement and trust with people who have been let down by current approaches requires us to **“show, rather than tell, that Housing First is different.”** Building enthusiasm and hope for the future so people can feel the difference.
- Creating flexibility in the operation of referral and assessment procedures, getting to those who will most benefit from Housing First without excluding people by creating unnecessary criteria or bureaucracy.



Best practice and guidance for housing providers

Elaine Inglis, Megan Gilhooley, Emma Thomson
Wheatley Group

Claire Frew, *the Homeless Network*

The Wheatley Group shared their early experiences of forging a strong partnership between housing and care staff to quickly provide a permanent tenancy for a man with recent experience of rough sleeping, exclusion from accommodation and emergency admittance to hospital following a health crisis. Strong communication and joint working between the housing and care staff underpinned a positive, flexible responses to a series of early challenges that were pivotal in protecting the tenant and the tenancy in the longer term.

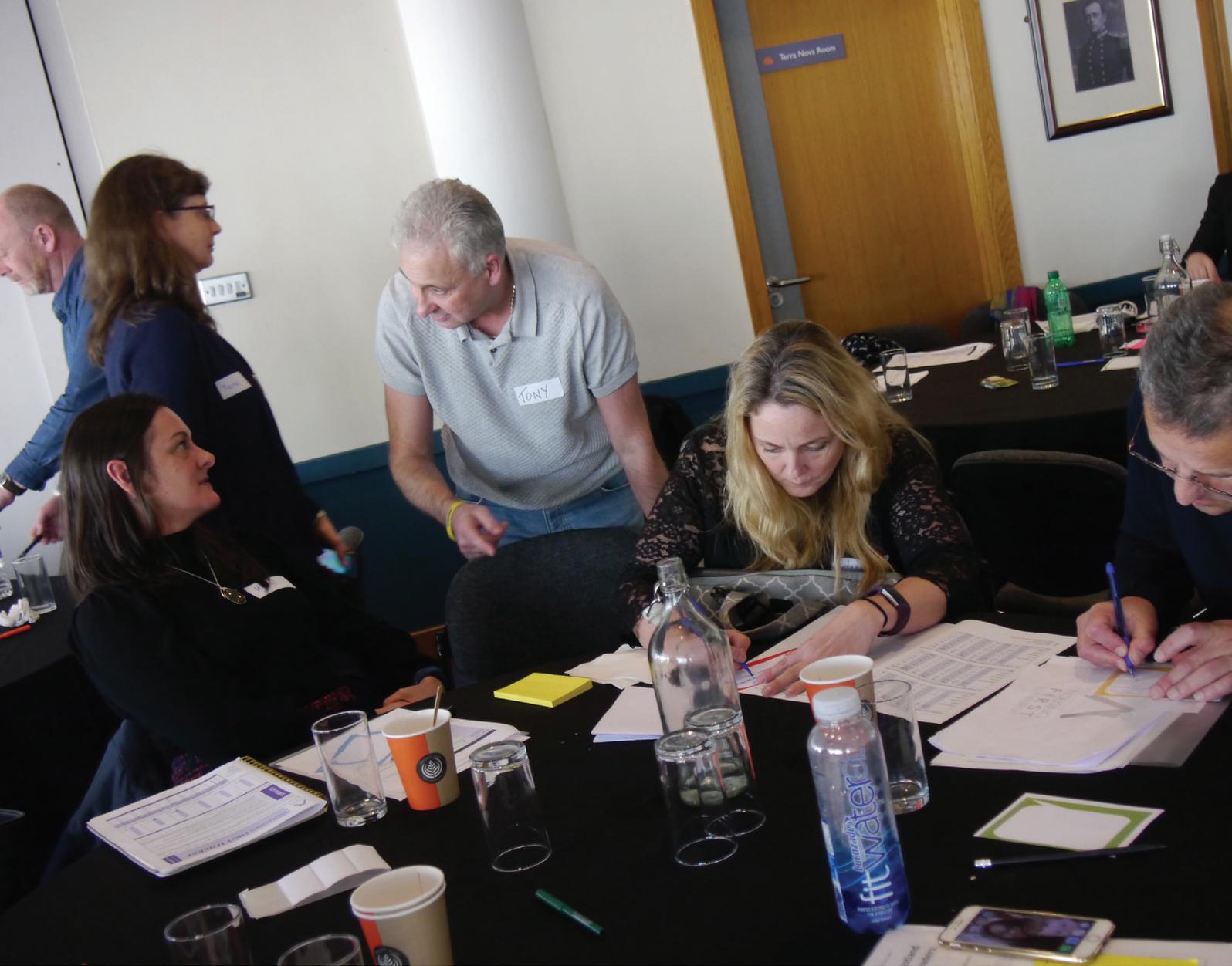
Key message

Work closely with your colleagues, expect the unexpected and be prepared to be flexible.

The shared learning about the value of housing and care staff working together illustrated the purpose of a Housing First Guidance being produced for housing providers in partnership with CIH Scotland. The guidance is being designed to support landlords to ensure that every Housing First tenancy is successful; identifying where landlords have already been finding flexibility and creativity in existing policies and procedures to make the tenancy work.

The guidance will be launched at the Housing First Scotland conference in May.





Your Community of Practice

Michelle Major & Peter Anderson, *the Homeless Network*
Yvette Burgess, *Housing Support Enabling Unit*

Pathfinder members came together to scope out the development of a Community of Practice to support those delivering the programme. Key priorities for the Community of Practice included:

- Ensuring fidelity to the Housing First principles
- Sharing best practice and cultivating positive relationships
- Changing culture and influencing change
- Involving people with lived experience
- Creating a Housing First Scotland movement.

Participants were also interested in how the Community of Practice can make best use of technology to bring people together, and making sure that wider health and social care partners are a part of the community.

“When I was first told about Housing First I thought it would be the same again ... but it wasn't. It's the first time I've ever had real help.”

(Housing First tenant)

Where are we now?

The Knowns

- As of February 28th there were 46 people in their own homes receiving the support they need as a result of the Programme. 100% of tenancies had been sustained with zero tenancies ending as a result of eviction or abandonment
- Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans are in the final stages of being confirmed with a commitment to Housing First for those who need it
- We have a clear direction of travel, a Pathfinder Programme with purpose and momentum, and an achievable timeline to get the maximum number of people possible into tenancies by March 2021;
- We know our targets are achievable because some of the highest monthly targets have already been met: Glasgow has already moved 13 people in one month; Stirling has moved two in a month; Aberdeen and Dundee are reporting that five and four are monthly figures soon to be realised; Edinburgh has already reached its support capacity ahead of schedule.

The Unknowns

- How quickly can we shift the culture so that practice catches up with language around Housing First? We still hear talk of 'tenancy readiness' and people that are 'too chaotic' or 'not chaotic enough' when we need to have a bold, positive approach that says yes to a person unless there's a really strong reason to say no – and not the other way around.
- Who will Housing First not work for? We know that it works for around 80% of people when done properly in accordance with the principles. We do not know who the other 20% will be and we cannot prejudge based on our own views and experiences. For people with multiple needs beyond housing, Housing First must be the first response.
- How will Housing First take hold beyond this Programme? It is the shared responsibility of all of us to be wide open with our challenges and learning, to share with each other and to share with partners across Scotland.



Next Steps

- Housing First Scotland Conference in Edinburgh on 22 May, where we will be joined by Dr Sam Tsemberis who is widely regarded as the founder of Housing First in new York City. This will be an event that underscores the importance of Housing First to ambitions in Scotland to eradicate homelessness. Not to be missed
- Updates to come on the of evaluation that will be crucial to evidencing the success of this Programme, and to drive progress post-Programme.
- Pathfinder Consortiums to be commissioned on revised schedules to maximise the pledges and funding available moving towards March 2021, and an updated training offering to support all areas as they ramp up.

“Openness and shoe leather are crucial in finding the best solutions and overcoming challenges.”