

# HOUSING FIRST SCOTLAND

## Conference Report 2018

Rapid Rehousing  
and Housing First:  
*what happens next?*



# Rapid Rehousing and Housing First: *what happens next?*

*Separate out the perceived barriers from the real ones, focusing our time and energy on tackling the real ones, not getting caught up in what might happen.*

## Welcome from the Chair



Housing First has arrived! The backdrop of this year's conference was a new national commitment to scale up Housing First – and over 200 people came to mark the occasion.

The conference was chaired by **Marion Gibbs, Homelessness Team Leader at Scottish Government**. She described the major changes since last year's conference, and the need to continue to collaborate and learn from each other over the next phase.

Few of us can remember a time more enabling or conditions more favourable for change: political commitment, solid evidence, new resources and people doing what they're best at, in all our different roles.

## Welcome from Housing First Scotland

**Maggie Brunjes, Director of the Homeless Network (GHN)** noted one of the clearest signs of change is when the conversation shifts from defining what something is, to working out how we do it.

There remains many complex challenges that stand in the way of getting people housed quickly. In some areas the demand for housing is beyond the available supply, while in others there are challenges accessing it. And the homeless system often has unintended consequences that causes more damage.

**But there is not a single piece of evidence telling us not to move forward with Rapid Rehousing and Housing First.**

A new framework for local authorities to move beyond the current challenges has been developed and will now be tested, fine-tuned and integrated into overall housing strategies. It intends to assist local authority leaders to lever new opportunities and resources to drive forward changed based on local need.

*Some of the most inspiring conversations about Rapid Rehousing and Housing First have been with local authority leaders and their representative organisations.*



## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government and Housing** restated the Scottish Government's commitment to preventing and tackling homelessness, thanking members of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group for their ambitious proposals and recommendations.

The Scottish Government has accepted these recommendations and believes they can support us all to move further and faster towards our shared goal of ending homelessness.

This new phase will see us:

- Redouble efforts to prevent homelessness across Scotland;
- Reshape our homelessness processes and systems to fulfil the principles of Rapid Rehousing and Housing First;
- Transform our temporary accommodation, ensuring it is available in emergencies but that it remains temporary;
- Continue to refine our immediate responses to rough sleeping, empowering frontline staff to respond flexibly; and
- Place the views of people with lived experience of homelessness at the heart of what we do, building on the success of the Aye We Can project.

*It will require everyone [housing, health, social care, criminal justice and education] to come together to work in partnership to end homelessness.*

The Scottish Government is committed to building on our strong foundations and do much more to end people's experiences of homelessness across the country.

But this will take more than government action; it will require everyone to come together to work in partnership.

We have a great opportunity to make significant progress and the Scottish Government will work with everyone committed to achieving positive change.

## Doing Housing First to Scale: an international perspective

**Valerie Boogaard and Martin Kok of Discus-HVO-Querido in Amsterdam** provided an overview of their 10 year journey to have Housing First become government policy.



Like in many European cities, services in Amsterdam struggled to find long-term solutions for people with multiple needs finding that nothing they offered actually ended people's experience of homelessness.

And like most other cities, also found that their standard approach to homelessness was based on the belief that people with multiple needs living independently as part of communities was too risky.

Key learning from Amsterdam:

- Believe that people with multiple needs CAN live independently in communities;
- Focus on proving that Housing First works in practice rather than just in theory;
- Make strong links with everyone who can support the upscaling of Housing First;
- Always celebrate your success and tell your stories.

And in the end, keep it simple: trust, believe and find each other.

## Health and Housing First

**Dr Neil Hamlet from NHS Fife** placed the commitment to upscale Housing First across Scotland within the broader approach of Public Health which aims to improve wellbeing for all. We know that housing affects health both directly and indirectly.

And we know from the newly published *Health and Homelessness in Scotland* report the extent to which people with any experience of homelessness are more likely than those living in areas of multiple deprivation to:

- Need A&E treatment;
- Be admitted for inpatient treatment;
- Need outpatient treatment;
- Need treatment and support for mental ill health and addictions.

The report also shows the higher level of health activity in the run-up to a homelessness assessment and the period immediately afterwards, highlighting the often negative impact of congregate accommodation models.

*Housing is the third leg of health and social care.*

How do we change this?

- Continue to promote the understanding that access to high-quality, affordable housing is key to promoting health;
- Design our policies and services on the principle that everyone is 'housing ready';
- Fully embed the role of housing within Health and Social Care Partnership structures.
- Housing has been rising as a priority in recent years and to take the next step we need to make housing a public health priority in Scotland.

# SOFA SESSION: TIME TO ACT

Sofa guests:

**Susan Aktemel**  
Director, Homes for Good

**Ann Carruthers**  
Homeless Services Manager, Renfrewshire Council

**Anna Evans**  
Housing Consultant, Director, Indigo House

**John Mills**  
Head of Housing, Fife Council

**Facilitator: Marion Gibbs**  
Scottish Government

The new local and national transition towards Rapid Rehousing will see local authorities moving people into settled homes more quickly, ensuring less time is spent in temporary accommodation and Housing First becomes the default model for people who need it most.

Sofa guests brought their expertise and ideas from across Scotland to identify the actions we need to take to achieve this transition.

## 1. Fully consider all housing options available locally

- Build strong relationships with Housing Associations to provide more secure, affordable tenancies;
- Think creatively about using the Private Rented Sector, seek out the good practice, find out what stops engagement with the homeless sector, find creative solutions;
- Look at other options such as how to facilitate flat sharing for those who want it;
- Build more affordable homes.

## 2. Consider our local homelessness policies

- More and better use of Common Housing Registers to make it easier for people to submit a housing application;
- Consider whether social housing allocation policies and procedures can be further simplified to promote Rapid Rehousing.

## 3. Refocus on homelessness prevention

- Continually challenge ourselves to not 'funnel' people into the homelessness system;
- Embed work to prevent homelessness and the provision of wraparound support within Health and Social Care Partnership structures;
- Place links with local communities at the heart of our approach to sustaining tenancies, supporting people to live as part of their community.

*The Private Rented Sector is a vital part of Rapid Rehousing solutions and we need to think carefully about how we unlock this supply to offer greater choice and flexibility.*



**Place links with local communities at the heart of our approach to sustaining tenancies, supporting people to live as part of their community.**

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### Launch of the Social Bite Housing First Programme

*Josh Littlejohn MBE, founder of Social Bite.*

*Social Bite's Sleep in the Park 2017 saw 9,000 people spend one night sleeping outside in the cold because they believe that homelessness has no place in Scotland.*

£4 million was raised and, following research by Heriot-Watt University, it was clear that the best use of the money was to upscale Housing First across Scotland.

Joining forces with the Merchants House Glasgow, the Corra Foundation and GHN, Josh launched a Housing First programme which will support the creation and sustainment of up to 800 new tenancies across Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee and Stirling.

This will firmly place Housing First at the centre of our homelessness solutions, investing money raised by the public in the best possible interventions to end homelessness.



## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### Launch of the Housing First Training Academy

*Patrick McKay, Operations Manager at Turning Point Scotland launched the new Housing First Training Academy to support the upscaling of Housing First across Scotland.*

The purpose of the Academy is to embed the 'gold standard' of support required by the Housing First model, ensuring fidelity to the core principles and making them real.

*Take everything else away and what remains is that person's relationship with their support network.*

The Academy will deliver training to frontline staff and service managers and commissioners covering key learning from 8 years of delivery, including:

- Developing referral and assessment processes that don't deter people from engaging;
- Developing service level agreements with agencies such as the Police;
- Embedding Housing First into the statutory homelessness system when people may have chosen not to make a homelessness application;
- Building peer support models;
- Developing a citizenship-based approach for people with multiple needs to tackle social isolation;
- Recognising the impact of trauma on staff, protecting them from burnout.

### Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group

*Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive of Crisis, noted that while homelessness remains stubbornly high in parts of Scotland, there are proven solutions that are there for us to take forward without accepting homelessness as an unavoidable part of life.*

Scotland's recent history in making bold choices in housing and homelessness policy, and the commitment of the Scottish Government and members of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group, give great hope that the recommendations made today will not be forgotten tomorrow. They are a map for a new direction that places safe, secure, affordable housing at the centre of our homelessness responses, never forgetting that a home is exactly what people want.

To make that happen, the Action Group focused on:

- Rapid Rehousing, with Housing First for those who need it;
- Rethinking temporary accommodation, especially where people find it unsuitable;
- Provide support to those who need it, delivered from a core understanding of trauma-informed care and asset-based approaches;
- Empowering frontline staff to respond quickly and effectively at point of need through personal budgets;
- Implementing these recommendations, with a particular focus on Rapid Rehousing, will see us all return next year well on the way to ending homelessness in Scotland.

*Deserving and undeserving in relation to housing has no place in civil society.*

# SOFA SESSION: TIME TO THINK

Sofa guests:

**John Cameron**

Director, Forth Housing Association

**Duncan Easton**

GHN Volunteer

**Professor Sarah Johnsen**

Institute for Social Policy and Housing, Heriot-Watt University

**Samara Jones**

Programme Coordinator, Housing First Europe

**Kate Polson**

Chief Executive, Rock Trust

**Facilitator: Grant Campbell**

Glasgow City Mission

The new local and national transition towards Rapid Rehousing and Housing First sees a significant change in direction, posing a number of questions for us to answer locally and nationally.

Sofa guests brought their perspectives, insights and doubts to the discussion to help us find consensus and clarity as we undertake the transition.

To move forward we need to:

- Separate out the perceived barriers from the real ones, focusing our time and energy on tackling the real ones, not getting caught up in what might happen;
- Be brave and focus on whole systems change – perfecting one small part won't be enough if the rest of the system doesn't work;
- Follow the evidence – it has brought us this far and remember just how astonishing the success rates are;
- Create a culture for learning, sharing and asking questions. We don't have all the answers and will only find them if we continue to communicate;
- Collaborate with everyone working to Housing First principles, keep an open door and proactively find new partners;
- Take advantage of the moment: government commitment, funding, energy, enthusiasm;
- Scotland is well placed – Just do it!



*Having grown up in the care system, I've only ever stayed in 2 places for more than a couple of years and never really had anywhere I could call my own. So my proudest moment, after the birth of my children, was not when I got the keys to a house but when I finally put my nameplate on my home.*

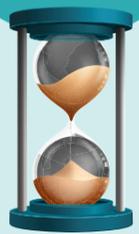
**Duncan Easton**

# TAKEAWAY MESSAGES:

The Housing First Scotland conference brought together over 200 people, who work across many different sectors, and in many different roles. People with first-hand experience of homelessness participated in round table discussions.

**For Scotland to get the transition to Rapid Rehousing and Housing First right - this is what we need to do.**

## Health & Social Care needs to...



- Be 'Housing First aware' at every level - from frontline, to planning;
- Be part of developing a whole systems approach, considering referral criteria and procedures to ensure people with multiple needs don't fall between cracks in service provision;
- Be a key partner in joint commissioning, committing resources to homelessness prevention and better serving people with multiple needs;
- Further consider the central role of the Housing Contribution Statement within HSCP strategies;
- Be prepared to take risks.

## Housing Providers need to...



- Allocate more tenancies to homeless households, particularly those with multiple needs;
- Fully consider needs of homeless households in development plans and consider simpler, faster allocation processes for this group;
- Build and maintain strong working relationships with support providers to promote tenancy sustainment;
- Consider how they can support the provision of furniture for homeless households moving into new tenancies, and ensure that furniture packages are not integrated into rent costs.

## Third Sector (charities) need to...



- Be ambassadors for Housing First, building a trauma informed approach from the ground up;
- Contribute to the gathering of evidence to promote learning and improvement;
- Be flexible in service development, focusing on a consistent approach to what works and avoiding incompatible service models. Understand specific needs and experiences, including people leaving care and prison, young people, LGBT, migrants and people with experience of domestic abuse;
- Lead the way in supporting staff within a trauma informed framework;
- Lead the way in developing peer support models to complement Housing First.

## Scottish Government needs to...



- Stay brave, just do it!
- Provide national leadership, maintaining commitment to Housing First and making strong links with other Government departments;
- Ensure Rapid Rehousing approach firmly embedded within plans to build more affordable housing;
- Think ahead to funding beyond the first five years;
- Support the sharing of learning across all 32 local authorities;
- Design policies and plans on the principle that everyone is 'housing ready', with the right support.

## Local Authorities need to...



- Scale up Housing First and Rapid Rehousing through 5 Housing Options Hubs;
- Consider flexible commissioning approaches to work to Housing First principles;
- Put in place longer term funding strategies to provide open-ended support;
- Create local Housing First champions;
- Think creatively about using the Private Rented Sector, seek out good practice and solutions to barriers;
- Better use of Common Housing Registers, making it easier for people to apply for housing.

## Evaluation

Over 200 people attended the conference with 104 completing evaluation forms. You told us that the conference:

- provided greater insight into Rapid Rehousing and Housing First;
- Generated ideas for local action;
- Brought people and organisations together to promote joint working.

You asked us to:

- Keep providing opportunities for people to come together and learn, providing even more time for discussion and debate;
- Provide regular updates on progress being made across Scotland and more chances to learn from other countries.

*Good effort from everyone today @HFScotland @GHNtweets and everyone else involved. Speakers didn't dodge the difficult questions and the conversation was the better for it.*

*"We make a living with what we get and we make a life by what we give" At #HFScot18 with so many people committed to securing a safe and permanent home for people. Principles into practice*

*Really insightful day at the #HFScot18 conference - thank you to all the speakers and to @HFScotland for bringing us all together to #endhomelessness*

*Massive congrats to @HFScotland and @GHNtweets on a brilliant conference today*



## Reports and Publications

**The presentations from the Conference and this report are available at:**  
<http://www.ghn.org.uk/shien/housing-first/housing-first-2018>

**Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group. 70 recommendations across 4 reports:**  
<https://beta.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group>

**Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. The new 3-part planning framework for local authorities and partners:**  
<http://www.ghn.org.uk/rapid-rehousing-transition-plan>

**Health & Homelessness in Scotland.**

**Study linking homelessness and health datasets for the first time at a national level:**

<https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/RefTables/HealthHomelessnessDataLinkage>

## Keep in Touch

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**Website**

[www.ghn.org.uk](http://www.ghn.org.uk)



- The Homeless Network (GHN) is a unique knowledge-into-action organisation, collaborating across Scotland to end homelessness.
- Turning Point Scotland provides person centred support to adults with a range of complex needs. We learn from services and seek to influence social policy. Turning Point Scotland piloted the UK's first Housing First programme and continues to provide Housing First projects in Scotland.
- SHIEN is the Scottish Homelessness Involvement and Empowerment Network, funded by Scottish Government and delivered by GHN. SHIEN collaborates with a wide range of partners to promote ways in which people who experience poor housing and homelessness can fully participate in the decisions that affect them.
- I-SPHERE. The Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University is among the UK's top social and urban policy research centres; ranked first in Scotland and second in the UK on the comprehensive Research Power indicator in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. This indicator reflects size, scope and quality of research.