

HOUSING FIRST SCOTLAND

Connect

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The next Housing First
Connect event will take
place online:

Tuesday 22 June 2021
10am – 12.30pm



HOUSING
FIRST
SCOTLAND

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Pathfinders and leaders once again came together online for February's Connect event, which was chaired by Sir Andrew Cubie. This was an opportunity for around 50 colleagues and partners to connect and reflect on the successes, challenges and lessons learned from delivering – and scaling up – Housing First in a constantly changing environment.

December 2020 saw the Pathfinder pass the 400-tenancy milestone, something worth celebrating as it was delivered in uniquely challenging circumstances.

[Read more >>](#)



The Story of the Pathfinder in 2020

Claire Frew from Homeless Network Scotland talked us through the progress made by the Pathfinder Programme in 2020, a year that proved to be the ultimate stress test for Housing First in Scotland.

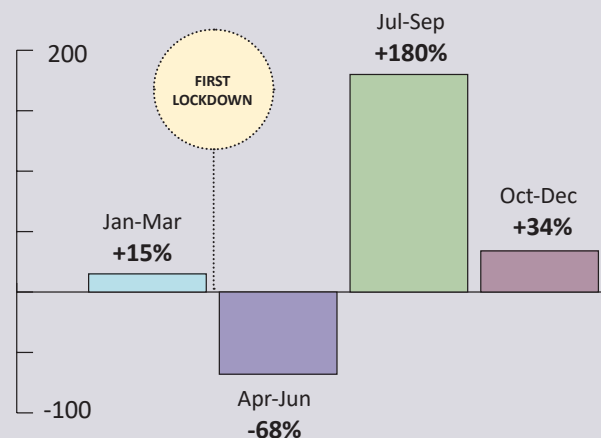
The encouraging headlines were that by the end of the calendar year, 404 people had been supported into a home of their own with the programme achieving an 88% sustainment rate with zero evictions.

The impact of lockdown was reflected in the quarter-to-quarter numbers of new tenancies created in 2020. As shown below, the period April to June was the only quarter to see a reduction on the previous quarter.

Sustaining tenancies and maintaining services over the past year has been possible in part due to robust processes that were already in place, enabling a quick return to pace when restrictions were eased last year. Reviewing 2020 in performance terms, the Pathfinder began with the best quarterly performance for tenancies starting. The first lockdown impacted on all our performance indicators (new tenancies, length of time, tenancy sustainment) and yet we ended 2020 by beating the previous best quarterly performance.

Lockdown Impact on new Housing First Tenancies

Quarter 2020	Number of new Housing First tenancies	% Change
Jan- Mar	63	+15%
Apr-Jun	20	-68%
Jul-Sep	56	+180%
Oct-Dec	75	+34%



On the Ground

Aberdeen/shire

Mike Burns

At the close of January, the sustainment rate in Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire was at an excellent 93% with no evictions, testament to the work of all involved in our consortium.



The Peer Support/Lived Experience programme has been very productive in supporting people and ensuring they remain secure and settled.

Ensuring people can engage has been crucial, with provision of phones, IT and technology. This is a priority, along with appropriate wellbeing packages delivered to address the challenges of maintaining health and wellbeing – for staff as well as tenants.

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils should be recognised for managing to maintain momentum in turning over housing stock, despite the COVID restrictions. This prevented a significant slowdown in allocations in the summer months. We have also focused on flipping temporary tenancies to permanent, if the tenant is happy, then we make this happen.

An insight to our successful program would be one program participant who is being supported, had previously been living in a tent in a park for two years and with three episodes of serious health issues. By the end of March 21 that person will have been in their Housing First home for two years, spending regular time with family and reflecting with support staff on their recovery & improved quality of life.

Edinburgh

Jackie MacKinnon

The average number of tenancies being created each month has nearly doubled since the previous update and the 11 started in November marked the best month so far. As a result of this progress partners looked forward to the 100th tenancy in Edinburgh.

Progress has been made on the housing supply. Whilst still working with Edindex, a programme of housing nominations is being trialled with providers. Housing providers are beginning to proactively offer voids and, more generally, are seeing Housing First as a sensible and safe option.

Echoing some of the reflections in Dundee, Jackie noted that staff and clients have been incredibly resilient despite the winter lockdown. Steps continue to be taken to ensure the wellbeing of everyone involved, with digital and phone check-ins encouraged and home visits made when necessary, with appropriate risk assessments and full PPE.

The third 'transition' year has meant putting a hold on bringing new people onto the programme for now, allowing partners to focus on housing those currently supported – as well as supporting people already in a tenancy.



Glasgow

Liz Littler



Support is monitored on an ongoing basis via the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rota, in partnership with Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership. This is assessed and adjusted weekly as people experience ups and downs. Those assessed as 'red' are prioritised for face-to-face support to ensure their health and wellbeing can be maintained. People receiving support are providing feedback on their experience via a questionnaire, with results to be published soon.

Related to this is the ongoing challenge of providing support against the backdrop of lockdown restrictions. People miss simple things like going for a coffee and a chat, and outdoor meetings can be difficult when the weather is poor and cafés are closed. In response, staff have become creative in how they work, providing more doorstep support and window-to-garden contact where they can.

Several people have chosen to move to supported accommodation in a planned, supportive way and this does not represent giving up in any sense. This follows the approach of 'Housing First, first' so that people can decide what works best for them.

Teams are coming together virtually for social and work discussions. A monthly reflective practice session has been introduced, with input from a psychiatrist from the Homeless Health team and each member of the staff team has been offered the vaccine.

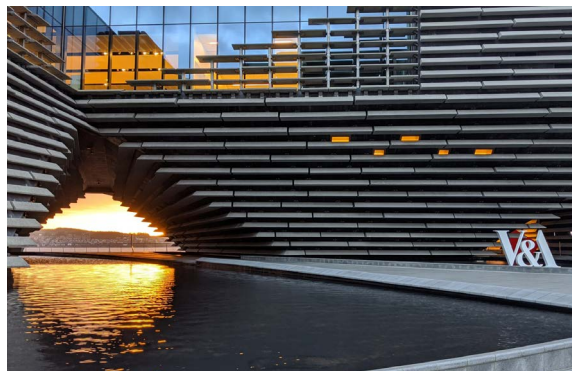
Dundee

Bryan Smith

Housing First Dundee has created 71 tenancies for 72 individuals and 88 people being supported. We are currently waiting for the allocation of tenancies for 11 participants and five potential participants are under assessment. We had 100 participants on programme, unfortunately there have been seven deaths, one abandonment and one currently serving a prison sentence. Three participants have moved from the programme to other non-support accommodation.

Dundee has, like others, seen no evictions and we do not expect this to change as the moratorium on evictions ends.

Maintaining high and appropriate levels of support has meant the team listening closely to people about how they want their support to work. Greater use of outdoor spaces, increased telephone support (with phones provided where necessary) and Chromebooks made available with data packages so that people can maintain online contact have all helped – with Housing First as well as other services.



Creativity has been much in evidence, such as hosting virtual viewings or flipping temporary tenancies to permanent when people are happy to do so, although we are starting to see this change.

On the staff side, maintaining a 'sense of team' has meant adapting to ways of working that ensure minimal transmission of Covid-19.

Dundee continued

Making space to hear about the team's experiences has led to constructive moves such as developing Covid-19 secure drop-ins, using outdoor spaces for meetings, and hosting sessions virtually – for social purposes as well as work-related.

The move out of lockdown will see a new set of challenges and we look forward to the staff meeting participants more regularly face to face and in homes, cafes etc. We hope that the team will begin to meet again soon. There's also the big mainstreaming challenge. Whilst there are difficulties ahead, the success of the programme means that there is a strategic and political will to make Housing First work in Dundee beyond the Pathfinder.

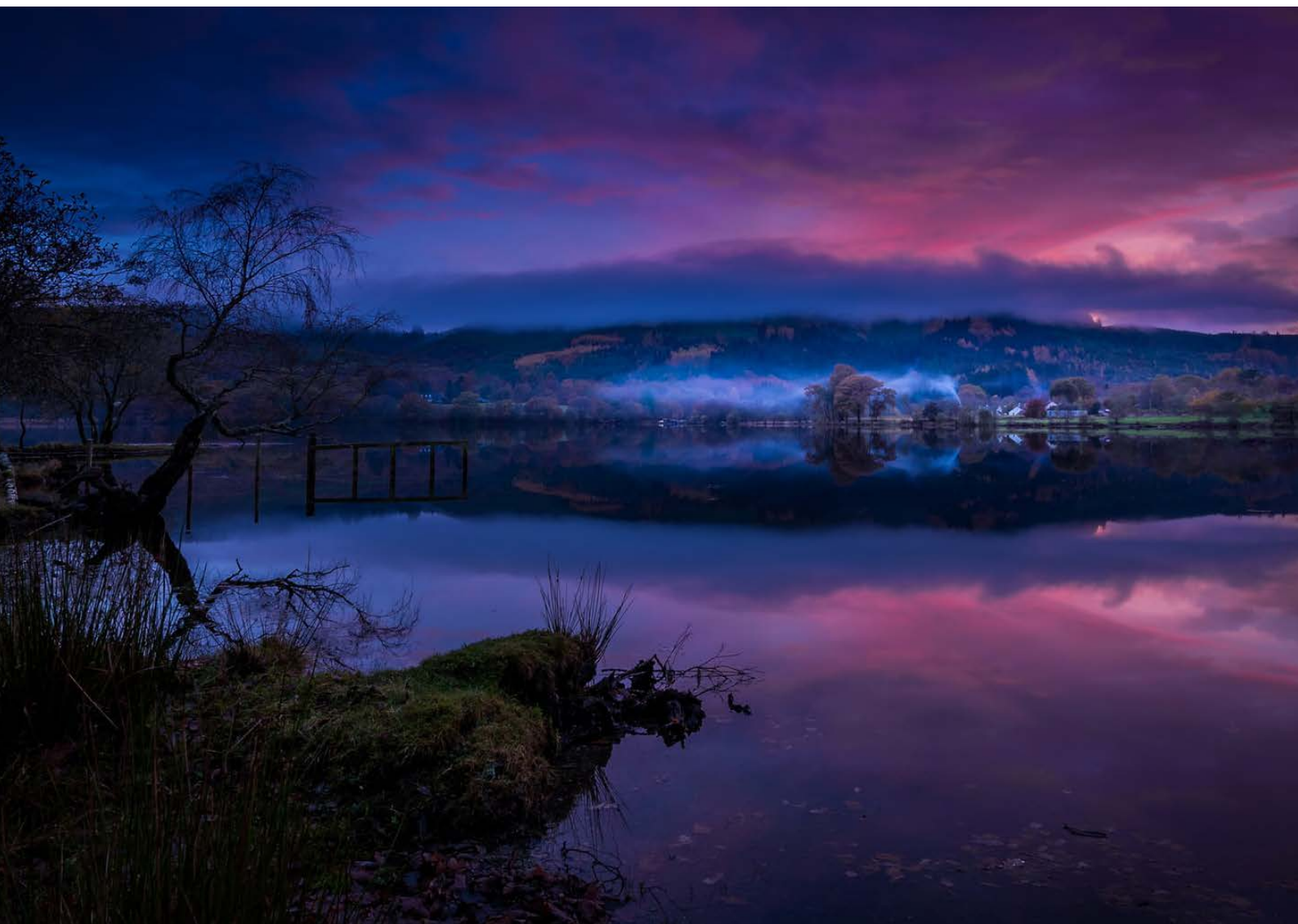
STIRLING

Emma Thomson

Emma provided an update for Housing First Stirling, noting the encouraging development that of the 20 people identified for Housing First, 19 were currently being supported with 11 in tenancies.

As with the other Pathfinder areas, it has been challenging to quickly access suitable tenancies under recent circumstances.

Support has been adapted so that face-to-face support is made available for essential circumstances, with the remainder being delivered via doorstep visits and 'walk and talks'. Housing First Stirling is working positively with partners in community justice to enable support for one person soon due to be released from prison.



Progression and Transition

Martin Gavin, Head of external relations at Homeless Network Scotland, was joined by Carolyn Sawers, Deputy chief executive at Corra Foundation along with Marion Gibbs and Kevin Wilkie from the Scottish Government.

Carolyn noted how inspiring it was to have seen what the Pathfinder has achieved, with a focus now on continuing to support the successful expansion of Housing First despite the pandemic.

Marion summarised the Government's commitment to providing 50% of funding in Pathfinder areas over the transition year. The strength of the partnerships at the heart of the Pathfinder were noted.

Outcome Monitoring

Professor Sarah Johnsen of the Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot-Watt University addressed the session to update on the progress being made with the evaluation of the Pathfinder, as well as noting the challenges.

Of the three strands of the evaluation – Process, Cost Benefit, and Individual Outcomes – the most urgent in the coming months is the individual outcomes monitoring. This is the critical strand that will show the impact of Housing First over time on those being housed and supported. The outcomes strand feeds directly into the cost benefit strand and is fundamental to the whole Programme. [View the instructional video here.](#)

Next Steps

Sir Andrew Cubie closed by highlighting the shared commitment to the ambitions and principles of Housing First. The successes of the Pathfinder so far underline the strong merit of scaling up Housing First in the coming years in line with Scottish Government Policy.

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