



BRANCHING OUT

Growing, Improving and Connecting
Housing First in Scotland

THANK YOU

To our amazing speakers for your time and insights –
and to everyone who connected across the two days.

We were proud to welcome The Wheatley Group as our event partners



And with thanks to our event sponsors The Salvation Army



and Cruden Group



HELLO

This year's Housing First Scotland conference took place over two days from 23 – 24 March 2021 with just short of 400 people registered to participate.

The conference took place at the start of a pivotal year in the transition of Housing First toward becoming the default and rapid response for people whose homelessness is made much harder by experiences such as trauma and addictions. Branching Out was an opportunity to take stock and learn from what has gone before while debating and shaping the national challenge ahead.

Due to ongoing restrictions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the event was held online with speakers joining from their homes and offices across Scotland. Back by popular demand, the event was chaired by Marion Gibbs, Team Leader at the Homelessness Unit with Scottish Government.

There were opportunities to hear directly from Ministers, policy makers, people with first-hand experience – as well as sector leaders from health, housing and homelessness organisations across a day-and-a-half of activities and interactive sessions across three themes:

FIRM FOUNDATIONS:

how to elevate Housing First as an integrated policy priority with shared strategic and financial commitment across housing, health and social care. This session included the launch of Branching Out: the National Framework for Housing First in Scotland.

OLIVE BRANCHES:

successful local partnerships are central to the success of the Pathfinder. We learned how local Housing First partnerships have been formed, how they function, why they work and what aspects have been more challenging.

LOW & HIGH HANGING FRUIT:

and in theme three we explored the practical lessons learned, the early successes, and some of the growing pains.



10 CONFERENCE TAKEAWAYS

National Framework

1

Branching Out is the new, National Framework to underpin how Housing First will be scaled up across Scotland over the next 10 years. It is jointly published by Scottish Government, COSLA, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Wheatley Group and Homeless Network Scotland. It will be refreshed every 3-months to keep it current.

2

As the Pathfinder enters its third and final year, most Scottish councils are either starting up or scaling up Housing First and this needs to withstand budget and political cycles and knowledgeable and effective supporters moving on. The National Framework is designed to underpin Housing First as a long-term change programme in Scotland, and to help everyone, in all our different roles, to be part of that.

Housing First sits at the heart of redressing the unfairness of homelessness, especially for people facing other disadvantages and going through hard times. The Framework launch coincided with the publication of the Housing to 2040 strategy; we need to align both to transform housing in Scotland that puts people first.

3

Integrated Approach

4

Integrated partnerships are one of the five building blocks of the National Framework. Scaling up Housing First needs a joint strategic, commissioning and delivery model across Scottish Government, local councils, housing providers, support providers, public health, health and social care and community justice. This will be key going forward.

Strong partnerships build resilience when the chips are down as was demonstrated during lockdown. Trusting relationships enabled risk-taking to achieve quick and impactful outcomes and relationships deepened. Partners will not always agree on everything, but we can learn to disagree and still stay together.

5

6

Scottish Government ministers have committed to ensuring strong links between housing, homelessness, addictions and mental health policy to avoid working in silos, and to making best use of available funding to make it as easy as possible for people to get the help they need when they need it. This is urgently needed.

Scaling Up

7

Housing First is about centring home and community, while ensuring support and listening is on hand for people to help build and live their lives. Housing First may not be right for everyone, but everybody who wants it should be able to access it – which means we are just at the start of a national change programme.

8

Housing First is here to stay – which is not always the case even when other interventions have been piloted successfully. Scaling up is happening and Housing First so far has managed to avoid a lot of pitfalls of previous initiatives and projects.

9

Applying the skills of health economists and cost benefit analysis to Rapid Rehousing and Housing First in Scotland will help turn the benefits of Housing First into numbers, revealing where benefits and savings are possible, and where budgets can be used.

10

It is vital to avoid the magnetic pull of the 'old way of doing things'. COVID accelerated the new and different ways of thinking about homelessness that were already emerging, with key individuals driving change. We must hold tight to that renewed focus on what really matters: people, their safety and their wellbeing.





DAY1 /THEME 1

Firm Foundations

Day one on Tuesday 23 March opened with Conference Chair, Marion Gibbs, Team Leader in the Homelessness unit at Scottish Government welcoming both delegates and speakers. She affirmed the high-level commitment from the Scottish Government to make sure that the right resources are in place at the right level to enable Housing First to scale up in line with the Scottish Government's Housing to 2040 Strategy that was published in the same week as the conference took place.

Marion noted the progress made since 2010 in Scotland when the Glasgow pilot commenced as well as looking ahead to the challenges and opportunities to mainstream Housing First in Scotland over the coming decade.

Keynote address: Kevin Stewart MSP

Kevin Stewart MSP, then Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning and now Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care. Key points included:

- The need to ensure that people who were accommodated during the pandemic are protected and do not drift back into homelessness as restrictions ease. The magic ingredient in Scotland is the people delivering Housing First on the frontline and those tenants trusting their future to this process.
- This approach makes sure that people who face extra challenges get the help they need and explained that publication of the national framework is a vital step in the Scottish Government's Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan. Housing

"Housing First may not be right for everyone, but everybody who needs it should be able to access it."

Questions from the floor followed Mr. Stewart's keynote speech:

- **Kate Polson, CEO of Rock Trust, who published an influential report on Housing First for Young People in 2020, asking the Minister about the main challenges ahead.**

The Minister noted differences between activity in Scotland and other parts of the country including those outwith the remit of the Scottish Government. For example, helping people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) as a result of UK Government policy.

Mr. Stewart strongly supported building a broad coalition in Scotland to oppose the UK legislation.

- **Debbie Stewart, Bield Housing asked what contribution Housing First can make to reducing drug and alcohol deaths in Scotland?**

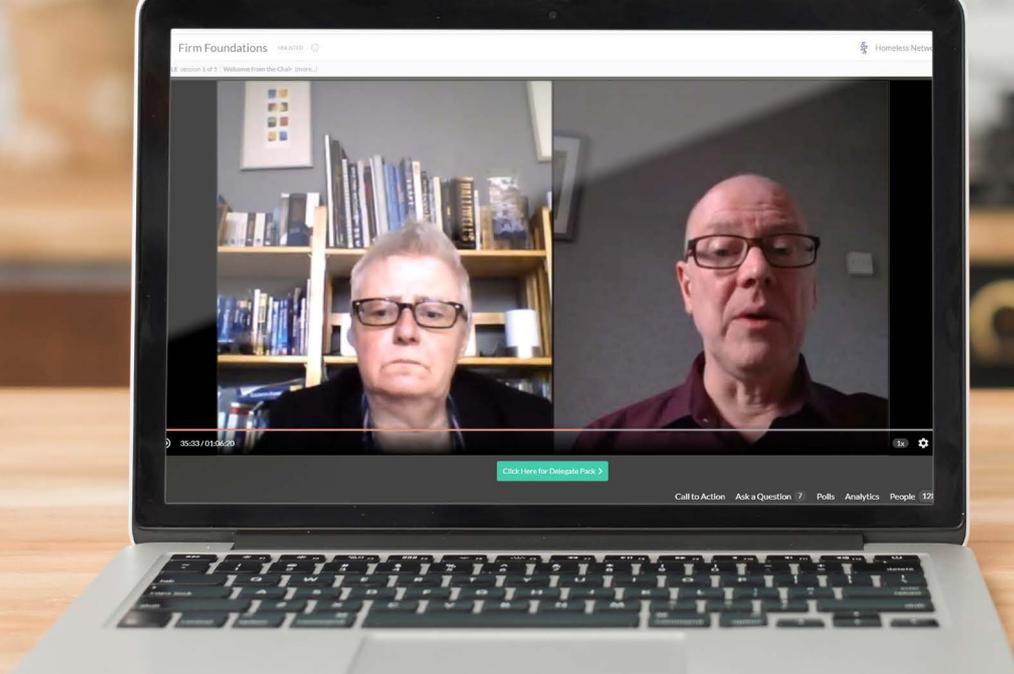
Housing First has already contributed, but we can do more. With Angela Constance MSP (Minister for Drug Policy) speaking at the conference later people can be assured of complete cooperation between different parts of the Scottish Government.

- **David Pentland, Change Lead with All In For Change, was concerned how can we ensure that people with the most severe multiple needs do not fall through the cracks?**

The Minister stressed that it is vital to look at what folk want in terms of support, whether that is a more intensive response or a different type of intervention. Marion Gibbs noted that research currently underway titled Shared Spaces is scoping alternatives when mainstream housing is not the preferred choice, including supported and shared accommodation.

- **Bryan Smith, Pathfinder Consortium Lead in Dundee, asked how the Minister sees the programme growing, and should we move to a focus on people rather than numbers?**

The Minister supported the focus on tenants and their wellbeing and confirmed that we have done everything 'spot on right' since the start of the Pathfinder. In terms of growth beyond the Pathfinder, people and organisations across the country are identifying Housing First as a key tool in ending homelessness in their area.



Branching Out:

the launch of the National Framework for Housing First in Scotland

Hosted by Maggie Brünjes

Chief Executive

Homeless Network Scotland

The National Framework is for everyone starting up or scaling up Housing First in Scotland. Maggie thanked the many people and organisations that have helped guide, commission and deliver Housing First as well as those who contributed to the Framework – to the support workers across the country working hard every day to make the programme successful, and people in tenancies getting on board with us. Maggie’s key points included:

- The Framework is published in partnership with the Scottish Government, COSLA, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) and Wheatley Group and enables us to think about the conditions needed for success and how we put those in place.
- Housing First sits at the heart of redressing the unfairness of homelessness, especially for people facing other disadvantages and going through hard times. The Framework launch coincided with the publication of the Housing to 2040 strategy; we need to align both to transform housing in Scotland that puts people first.

- Housing First challenges the status quo and that puts it under a very special kind of scrutiny, one of the many things the pilots and Pathfinders should be commended for is the transparency and openness they have adopted, ‘showing their working’ as the programme has progressed including regular data and performance updates.

The Framework sets out learning from what has gone before to provide a short cut for people getting started, and a ‘route-map’ for areas scaling up. Housing First invites different sectors and partners to operate across traditional boundaries to achieve the best outcomes for people. Each partner brings something unique and important to this, but also has a set of expectations of what they need in place to enable them to deliver.

- In section seven, the live monitor will be a ‘real-time’ update on progress toward the five building blocks needed to scale up Housing First in Scotland, telling us how we are doing. These are: good communication, shared goals and learning, strong and supported partnerships, the right investment, and high-level intent.

Firm Foundations:

Hosted by Paul McNamee

Editor of the Big Issue

Six influential panel members from different disciplines talk about the firm foundations needed for Housing First to flourish in Scotland and what else must be done as we move through and beyond the final year of the Pathfinder:

Stacey Dingwall

Policy Manager, SFHA

Dr Neil Hamlet

Public Health Consultant, NHS Fife

Karyn McCluskey

Chief Executive, Community Justice Scotland

John Mills

Head of Housing,
Fife Council and co-chair, ALACHO

Catriona MacKean

Deputy Director for Better Homes,
Scottish Government

Key areas explored:

- At a national level, establishing common ground and recognising shared outcomes across different disciplines is central to the long-term success of Housing First in Scotland. The importance of leadership at national level to enable partnerships to flourish at local level
- To break down silos, individuals working at the boundaries of their professional discipline have a role to make connections, drive change and share knowledge across borders.
- Panellists accepted that we are still grappling with that question of funding long term, also included in the Framework. With government funds understandably finite, looking wider to attract additional financial muscle to support scaling up makes sense.
- Housing re-establishing its place in the local government structure as a major driver of wellbeing in local communities should be part of the road map going forward.

Applying the skills of health economists will help turn the benefits of Housing First into numbers, revealing where savings are possible, and how much.

- Costs should not sit solely with housing. The point was made that costs will sit with housing by default unless other branches of government and civil society step up and release those savings. The view that society either pays now or pays later came through loud and clear from the discussion, along with the fact we are paying anyway.
- The Scandinavian countries have never removed it from the agenda and that should be the case here too, Housing First should be on every political party's manifesto in this, and future, elections. The Local Government & Communities Committee in 2017 generated cross-party support for Housing First.
- The Ending Homeless Together Action Plan, along with Housing to 2040 represents a strong framework for housing policy and a long-term direction of travel; turning that into action is the challenge now.

“Housing First is ‘the’ single best intervention in homelessness I have come across – it works”

Paul McNamee,
Editor of The Big Issue

“The argument is made, I know what kind of country I would rather have, one where we are investing in people's health and wellbeing and providing a place to call home.”

Karyn McCluskey Chief Executive,
Community Justice Scotland

Sir Andrew Cubie in conversation with Susanne Millar

Sir Andrew Cubie has been closely associated with Housing First in Scotland, chairing the Housing First Advisory Group. His support for efforts to resolve homelessness spans decades and at this year's conference Sir Andrew interviewed Susanne Millar, Interim Chief Officer for Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (GCHSCP).

Susanne started her career working directly with people in services across Glasgow. In her current post for just nine months before the restrictions brought about by the pandemic changed the landscape, Susanne is clear that the past year has been a challenging one for the city she loves.

Q: How had Covid changed the landscape?

It has been an extraordinary year in terms of health and social care in Glasgow. One of the things we moved to do quickly in the first week was to accommodate people at risk of rough sleeping, working with hotel providers we had 620 people in our care at the peak. We saw roughly 6000 people – the level of risk our team held was remarkable.

Different agencies came together very quickly and adapted. Glasgow looked upon the hotel situation as an opening, a way to engage with people rather than simply a roof.

Housing First tenancies have continued to increase despite five months of zero letting, with more permanent lets this year than in the previous five years despite that interruption. There is much to hold onto from the response to Covid.

Q: How optimistic are you that new partnerships that have been forged will continue?

We had strong pre-existing partnerships both internally and with the third sector before the pandemic and so I believe we were already in a strong position. During the first few weeks

the crisis did not overwhelm us, the level of trust was in place to take some real risks and relationships deepened.

Q: How has starting your working life in a frontline role affected your leadership style?

Some people carry out highly successful management and leadership roles without having frontline experience. For me, my frontline experience is an important part of my approach. Being Glaswegian and having worked for so long directly with people needing services has shaped my determination to do everything in my power to make that happen. People with lived and living experience are the experts and I always stress to staff the importance of that expertise in shaping the work we do.

“It was quite extraordinary the way housing associations stepped up as soon as they were able to do so when letting re-started”

Susanne Millar,
Interim Chief Officer for Glasgow City
Health and Social Care Partnership

Q: Glasgow has led on many aspects of Housing First. Are the foundations strong enough for the branching out that will take place from here across Scotland?

Yes, I think the foundations are strong. My advice is be prepared to make mistakes. We have not always got it right but have learned from those experiences.

Placing people with lived and living experience at the centre is the right approach. People experiencing homelessness want to start with a roof over their head and for too long the system has denied them, built barriers and put in place prerequisites. Housing First redresses that.



Sir Andrew Cubie and Susanne Millar

Q: Glasgow is just one of two areas where homelessness is integrated with health and social care, what has been your experience of that arrangement?

That has been integral to our success. I am responsible for 12,000 staff and a budget of £1.1 billion so we have all the levers to pull those barriers down and change the landscape. It allows us to conceptualise and respond to homelessness, understanding that a range of other issues contribute to it.

Q: Social housing stock in Glasgow is diverse, managed by more than 60 associations, what has been your experience, and do you have any advice for others?

We have strong partnerships with RSLs in the city and a big part of that has been establishing our credibility. Housing Associations have a right to expect a certain level of service and interaction and we have established a shared commitment to respond to homelessness.

It was quite extraordinary the way housing associations stepped up as soon as they were able to do so when letting re-started and that made a huge difference in incredibly challenging circumstances.



DAY1 /THEME 2

Olive Branches

Housing First already draws together some of the most effective and collaborative organisations working in the field. Embarking on any cross-sector partnership is a leap of faith – a journey together that requires compromise, understanding and commitment. This theme looks in more detail at how local Housing First partnerships have been formed. And branching out further – who are the partners Housing First needs to succeed that are not yet connected, and what do they need?

Can't See the Wood for the Trees

Ewan Aitken

Chief Executive, Cyrenians

As Chief Executive of Cyrenians, the lead partner in Edinburgh's Housing First Consortium, Ewan shared his experience in building and maintaining the relationships and partnerships that are crucial to the success of Housing First.

- Do not just assume that partnerships will work – create and prioritise the time to develop trust, shared values and processes.
- Replicate Housing First principles in the development of your partnerships – putting people at the heart of their support is a key principle of Housing First and something all services are working towards.
- Whatever you are doing, do it jointly – ensure training and learning opportunities are held jointly with partners, be open about challenges and set out to solve them together.
- Genuinely listen to each other, rather than just waiting to reply. Partners will not always agree on everything. Learn to disagree and still stay together.

Housing and Third Sector: Housing First for Youth

Sandy Young

Director of Housing Management,
Almond Housing Association

Almond Housing Association joined forces with Rock Trust in 2017 to launch Scotland's first Housing First service for young people, providing tenancies and support for young people leaving care in Livingston. Key learning from the partnership includes:

- Being open to doing something new and challenging traditional ways of thinking and working.
- Ensure there is an equal stake in the success of Housing First – it would have been easy for the housing provider to simply provide the housing and step back but instead Almond Housing Association wanted to be an active partner.
- Prioritise the bond between the partners and open communication – share intelligence regularly and continue to respect what each partner brings to the table.

“... one of our tenants had been the young person most reported missing in Scotland ... the police doubted whether the tenancy could succeed, but she hasn't gone missing since”

Sandy Young

Almond Housing Association



Council and ADP: Housing First Partnership in Highland

Iver Forsyth, Highland Council
Debbie Stewart, Highland ADP

Housing First in Highland is funded by the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership and delivered alongside Highland Council in the inner Moray Firth. The ADP was inspired to take the unusual step of fully funding Housing First to deliver on the principles of the Rights, Respect & Recovery Strategy which recognises that settled housing plays an important role in the prevention of, and recovery from, problematic alcohol and drug use.

There was an early focus on building strong partnerships, hosting local seminars and discussions to:

- Agree that the priority for Housing First would be people at higher risk of drug or alcohol related death.
- Identify the contributions of all partners and create a multi-disciplinary team.
- Turn Housing First principles into concrete local actions and processes (from paperwork to data sharing agreements).
- Encourage creativity and develop a collective view on values, ambitions, fidelity, and performance indicators.

Ten Housing First tenancies have been created in the first year, with several successes already evident, including:

- A reduction in overdoses
- An increase in GP registration
- A reduction in emergency A&E presentations
- A reduction in offending/custody/prison
- A reduction in homelessness

Housing First – 3 Nations

Claire Frew, Homeless Network Scotland,
Alex Smith, Housing First England at Homeless Link, **Katie Dalton**, Cymorth Cymru, **Sarah Rowe**, Crisis UK

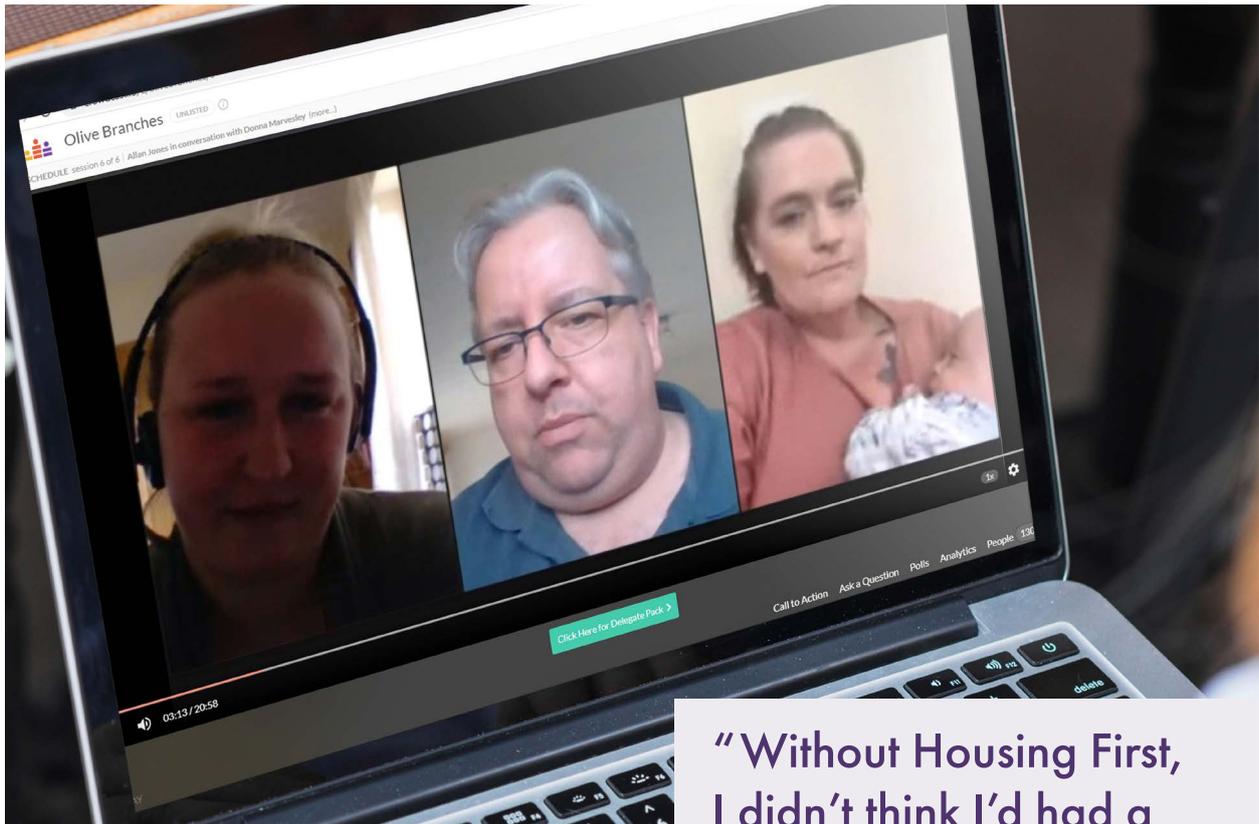
Housing First is at different stages and going at a different pace across Scotland, England and Wales. Some things are different – and some things are common. How can we help and learn from each other?

- The three nations are driven by the same end goal and have a common focus on fidelity to the Housing First principles and philosophy.
- Building connections and a movement has been important in sharing successes, sharing challenges and finding creative solutions. There are aspects that each nation can learn from each other.
- Having good data is important and Scotland has paved the way with an approach to the regular publication of Housing First information. The accreditation approach in Wales is of interest to other countries.
- Political commitment is important and there is much to learn from having three different political parties in government in the three nations about how to build and maintain support.



Housing First – 3 Nations

Allan Jones and Donna Marvesley



Allan Jones in conversation with Donna Marvesley

Allan Jones, the Housing Manager at Aberdeenshire Council, was joined in conversation by Donna, a Housing First tenant, and Chloe, her Housing First support worker.

Housing First has been operational in Aberdeenshire for four years now, and Donna was one of the first tenants identified due to her experience of homelessness, addictions and criminal justice. Chloe became her support worker when she was in prison.

From Donna's perspective, securing housing in a new area, away from negative networks, has been an important part of the success of her tenancy, as well as having Chloe there every step of the way with non-judgemental support.

"Without Housing First, I didn't think I'd had a future. I'd just have kept in with the same people in the same cycle."

Donna

But having been at home for over 2 years now, a lot has changed in Donna's life and for her family, the remarkable personal goals she has set and achieved and her plans for the future. Delegates swamped the comments feature with their thanks to Donna for sharing her story, and the huge inspiration she is for them and others.

And while Donna credits Chloe with so much of the success, Chloe's response is,

"You yourself did this Donna. You're phenomenal, look where you are!"

Chloe



DAY 2 /THEME 3

Low and High Hanging Fruit

Almost every local authority area in Scotland is either starting-up or scaling-up Housing First. Big action and early successes have helped build positive momentum. But that does not mean there have not been any challenges or that everything worked as planned. Conference participants in this theme shared the practical lessons learned, some of the growing pains experienced – and set out what we still need to reach for to grow.

Ministerial Address

Angela Constance MSP

Minister for Drugs Policy



Angela Constance MSP, Minister for Drugs Policy stated her commitment to Housing First as a core part of the national mission to save and improve the lives of people who use drugs. The link between homelessness and drugs deaths and harms is stark, with half of deaths amongst people experiencing homelessness being drug related.

The Scottish Government has already invested significantly in Housing First across the country, with £2.75 million coming from the alcohol and drug portfolio, and the delivery of Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder has shown that with strong leadership, clear purpose, the involvement of lived experience and new resources, evidence-based approaches can be implemented at pace.

This includes the new £5 million recovery and rehabilitation fund that supports people financially through residential rehab by covering housing costs to avoid the situation of someone having to make the impossible choice between their home and accessing residential rehab.

While there remains much to be done, including the delivery of integrated mental health and alcohol & drugs services, the experience of the pandemic so far has shown us the level of integration that it is possible to deliver, the future focus is on reducing stigma, reducing barriers and restoring hope.

Housing First and Equalities:

What have we learned, and what can we do better

Jackie Erdman

Non-Executive Director,
Homeless Network Scotland

From the delivery of Housing First so far, and our experience of the pandemic, we have learned that:

- Housing, health and equalities are completely interlinked.
- Housing First works in promoting everyone's right to a safe, secure, affordable home.
- Housing First works in promoting everyone's right to privacy, dignity and respect.

And we can get better at:

- Integrating across sectors to truly support people experiencing multiple disadvantage.
- Asking the right questions about equalities to avoid stereotypes and improve our responses.
- Gathering, analysing and publishing the right equalities data to make better, more informed decisions, and identify if there are people we are missing.
- Considering specialist pathways and service for specific equality groups.
- Learning from frameworks for successful scaling up to support the next phase of Housing First in Scotland.

**Innovation
Scaling
Spreading
Diffusion
Integration**

(Against the Odds: Successfully Scaling Innovation in the NHS, the Health Foundation)

Learning from Research and Practice

Helen Murdoch & Malcolm Page
The Salvation Army

Helen and Malcolm outlined some key findings from recent research on staff and client experiences of Housing First in Scotland carried out by the Salvation Army Centre for Addictions Services and Research at the University of Stirling called *'It maybe doesn't seem like much, but to me it's my kingdom'* The key findings of the research include:

- The importance of offering choice to people experiencing complexity in their lives
- The significance of guarding against loneliness and isolation
- The value in measuring what is important – you'll know Housing First is working when people tell you that they are happy.
- The importance of people feeling accepted and not being judged. One Housing First tenant said *"Homeless is not who I am."*
- The need for more and stronger integration and coordination



Report available at:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09687637.2021.1926429>

Low and High Hanging Fruit

A lively and fascinating panel session to close the conference, with panel guests who have been Housing First leaders in Scotland:

Patrick McKay

Operations Director,
Turning Point Scotland (host)

Janeine Barrett

Senior Manager, North Ayrshire Council

Ann Carruthers

Homeless Service Manager,
Renfrewshire Council

Olga Clayton

Group Director of Housing and Care,
Wheatley Group

Josh Littlejohn

Founder and Group Chief Executive,
Social Bite

Professor Sarah Johnsen

I-SPHERE at Heriot-Watt University

What do you wish you had known at the beginning of your Housing First journey?

- Collaboration is crucial for systems change – the development of Housing First has directly involved everyone from the First Minister to members of the public.
- Housing First works, but it can still feel uncertain at the beginning and a bit of a risk.
- Having the right conversations with the right people helps you overcome the structural barriers. Take the time to share your learning and successes and other partners will buy in.
- Worry less about people expressing reservations about Housing First.
- Have honest discussions about risk appetite and take the time to understand what concerns different partners might have.



Low and High Hanging Fruit

What have the most significant achievements in Scotland been so far?

- Turning Point Scotland and housing providers in Glasgow willing to take a risk to deliver the first Housing First pilot in Scotland in 2010.
- The level of political commitment and consensus, both locally and nationally.
- Seeing the change in people's lives is always the driver to deliver more Housing First - and this extends to people's families.
- Housing First is here to stay – which is not always the case even when other interventions have been piloted successfully. Scaling up Housing First so far has managed to avoid a lot of pitfalls.
- Housing First has changed our understanding of what we need to do and what it is possible to deliver.

What should we put in place now that we will thank ourselves for later?

- Continue to prioritise our evidence base in terms of outcomes and lessons learned.
- Think carefully about how we commission Housing First in the future.
- Develop an effective national financial modelling framework that shows the benefit of investment in Housing First.
- Create a shared funding environment across homelessness, health and social care, addictions, justice.
- Move beyond thinking about Housing First as a programme and just make it what we do.

16a Adelphi Centre, 12 Commercial Road, Glasgow G5 0PQ
0141 420 7272 | www.housingfirst.scot | housingfirst@homelessnetwork.scot | @HFScotland

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