

ALL IN FOR CHANGE



TAKING THE TEMPERATURE 2022

a national conversation on progress made on
ending homelessness together in Scotland

January 2023

Taking the Temperature

a national conversation on progress made on
ending homelessness together in Scotland

The Change Team are influencing the change needed to end homelessness in Scotland by learning from the wider knowledge and experiences of people and services across the country. In the autumn of 2022, the Change Team visited 5 areas in Scotland, each representing one of the housing options hubs, enabling us to share and gather this information with a wide range of people. This report highlights our findings about what progress being made.

What are the 4 New Directions to End Homelessness?

They are a plain-language summary of the Scottish Government/COSLA Ending Homelessness Together action plan and guide the work of the Change Team. They are also the framework we used to host the national conversation.



People First

Taking a more strengths based, person-led approach to supporting the social, mental and physical wellbeing of individuals, giving them more choice and control.



At Home

Increasing housing options and understanding that settled housing, as quickly as possible, is our right and the best base to build and live our lives.



No Wrong Door

Imagining a future where people are helped earlier and never left on their own to navigate the system.



Good Vibes

Designing our interactions in a way that dispel myths and share power.

What were we asking?

- Have there been any developments, or examples, where progress towards the 4 New Directions is already happening?
- Can you tell us what you think gets in the way of more work happening on the ground?
- What will help to reduce the gap between what we say we will do, and what we actually do to achieve these?

Who took part?

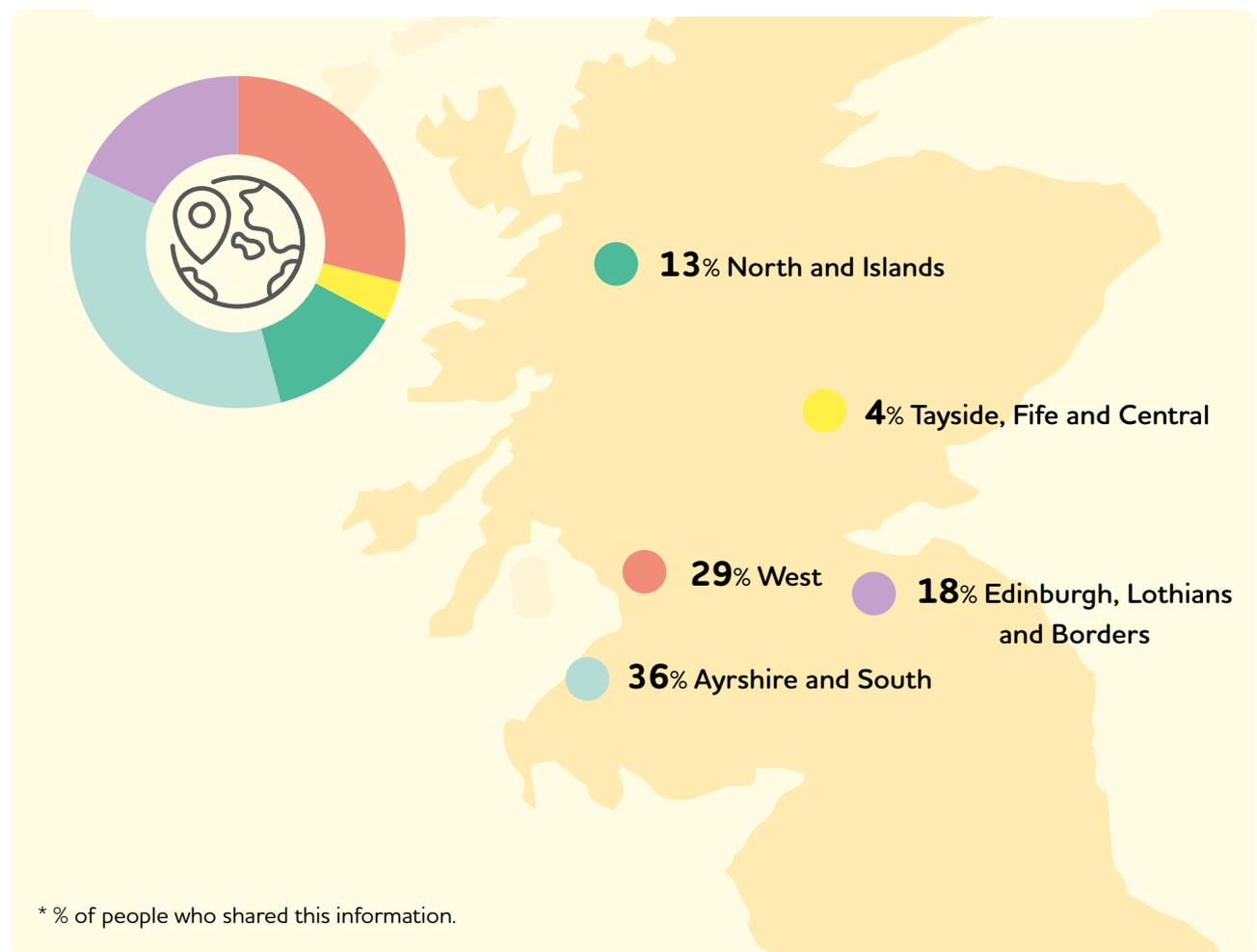
We spoke to **110 people** from across the sector. The following graphs show their varied experiences.

What sector did our participants work in?*



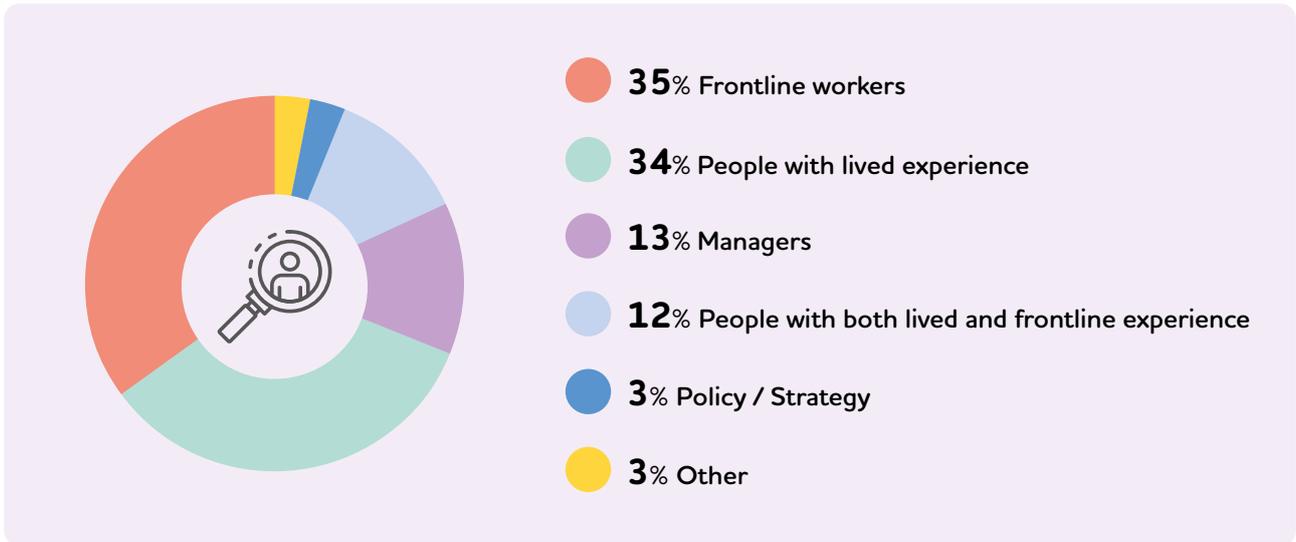
* % of people who shared this information.

What Housing Options Hub did our participants live or work in?*



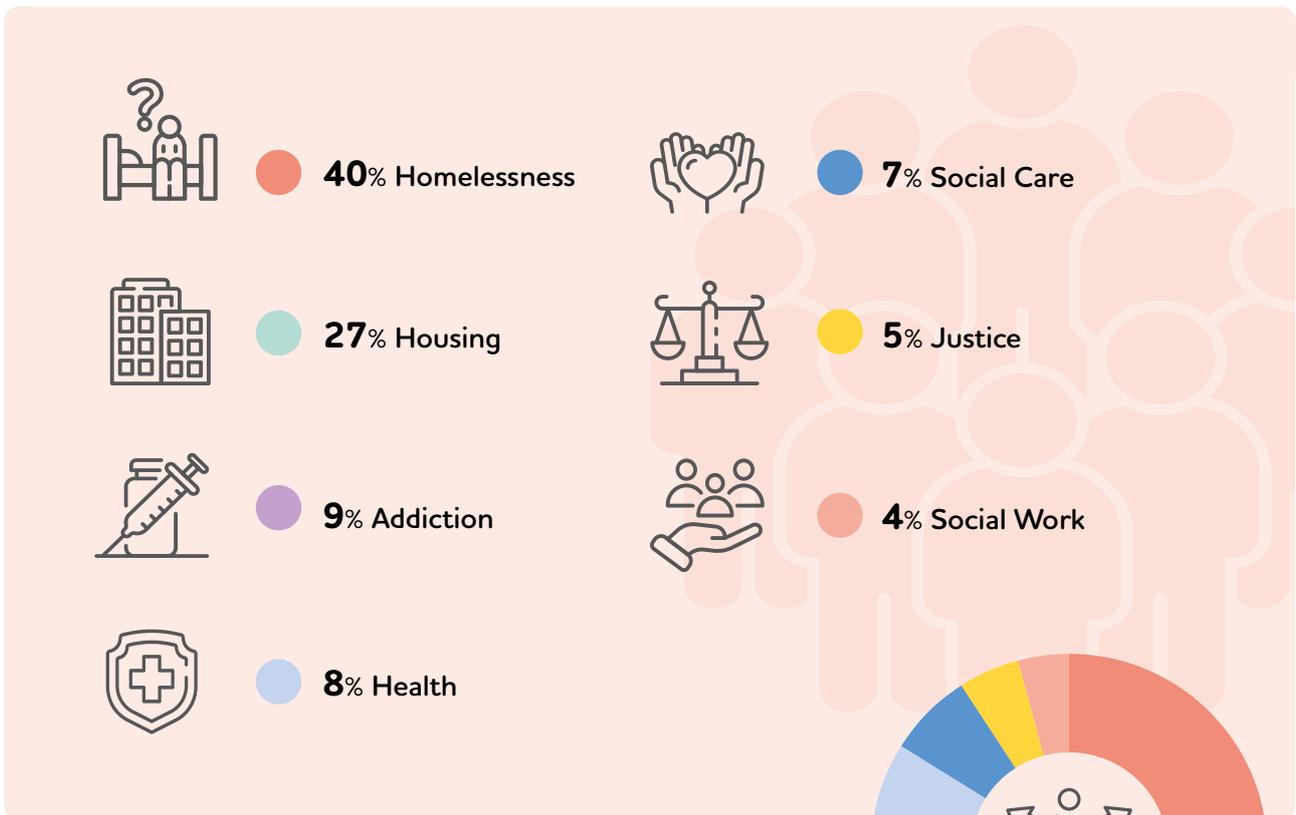
* % of people who shared this information.

Where did their experience about homelessness in Scotland come from?*



* % of people who shared this information.

Which sector did their experience come from?



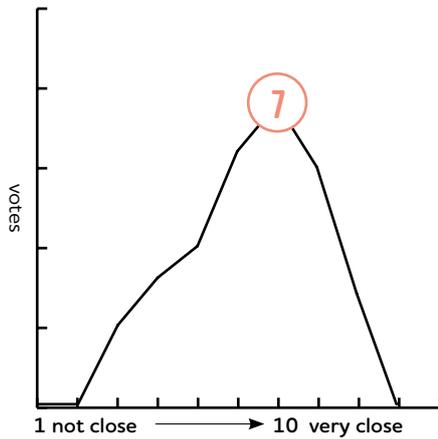
* % of people who shared this information.

What we found out:

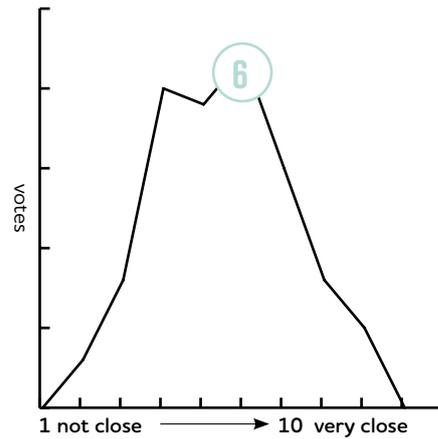
How close to reality did our participants think we were to achieving these 4 New Directions?

Where 10 is very close and 1 is not close at all.

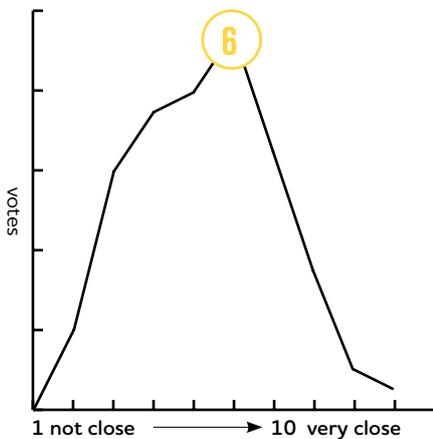
PEOPLE FIRST



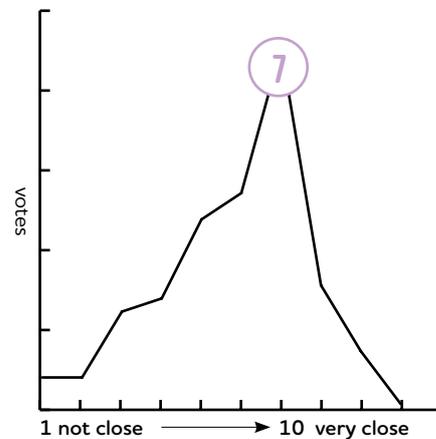
NO WRONG DOOR



AT HOME



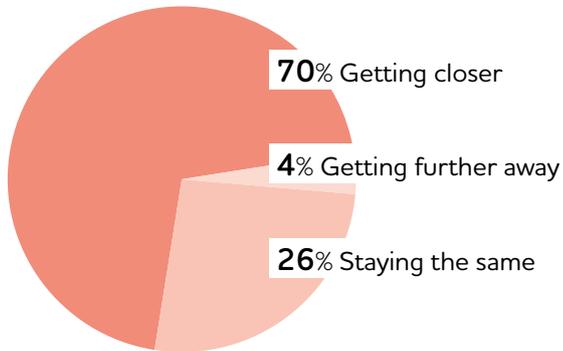
GOOD VIBES



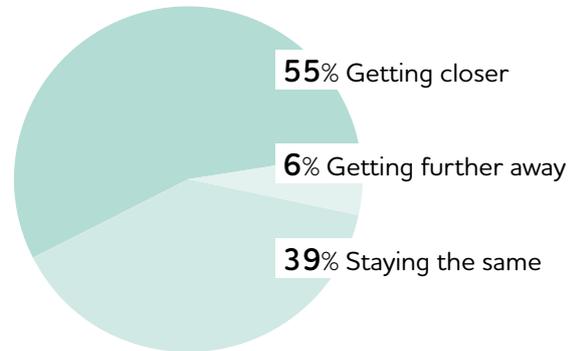
* % of people who shared this information.

Over the past year, did they think we were: getting closer, staying the same or getting further away from achieving these?

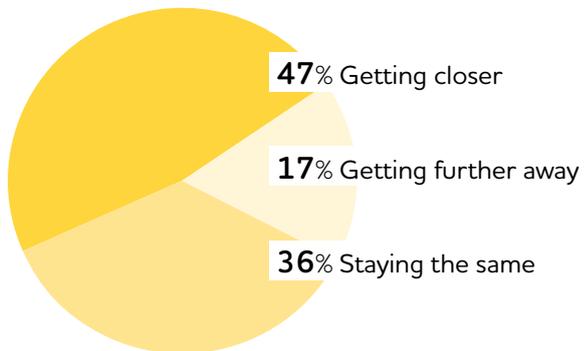
PEOPLE FIRST



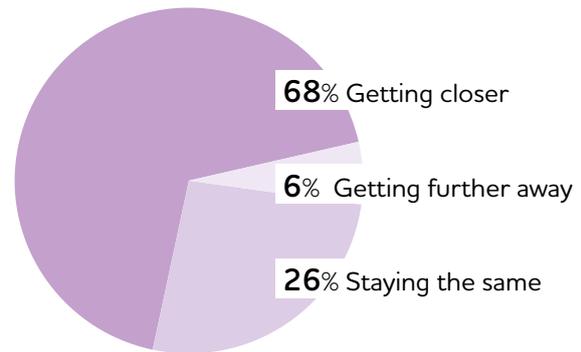
NO WRONG DOOR



AT HOME



GOOD VIBES



* % of people who shared this information.

Where real change is happening on the ground

We asked people to tell us about any developments they were seeing locally towards meeting the policy objectives of our 4 New Directions:

PEOPLE FIRST

Taking a more strengths based, person-led approach to supporting the social, mental and physical wellbeing of individuals, giving them more choice and control.

Many spoke about examples of services becoming more strengths based and person-led, with frontline workers actively listening to people and being more sensitive to people's needs. There has been more of a focus on trauma informed approaches within the public and third sector, with examples of local authority staff being offered additional training and reflective practice opportunities, and housing options teams appointing trauma champions.

Some frontline workers are taking a coaching approach to the way they support and empower people, using positive language and creating strengths-based support plans alongside people. Some are providing emotional support and others more practical support such as helping with claiming benefits.

Rowan Alba, a housing association in Edinburgh providing accommodation for people with alcohol dependencies, has adopted an approach focusing on improving people's wellbeing. People have their own flats with no curfews and few rules. The organisation provides healthy food and have good partnerships with healthcare. Instead of turning people who they are not suited to support away, they help by connecting them with more appropriate services.

The Housing First approach provides continuous support, meeting people where they are and finding new ways to contact people if they are not engaging. No more "three strikes and you're out".

South Ayrshire have employed a trauma informed practice officer and aims to become a trauma informed and responsive organisation by promoting the 5 principles of trauma informed practice: safety, choice, collaboration, trust, and empowerment across all our services.

There has been an increased understanding about the importance of discussing housing options with people, listening to what their preferences are and helping them to make an informed choice about where they decide to live. There is better advocacy for young people to steer their housing application process, being made aware of the options most suitable for their situation. People are also being given more choice in how they contact services.

In Aberdeenshire they have continued to take homeless applications over the phone, removing the barriers of having to apply in person, such as travel costs and accessibility issues.

There have been changes to the discharge duty prompting services to work longer with people and make sure they find the right housing option. This is allowing people to have more choice within their chosen community and is improving sustainability of tenancies.

In Glasgow they have trialled a matching scheme that is not points based and puts people experiencing homelessness as a priority, allowing people to choose where they want to live, leading to lower refusal rates. It is resource intensive but thought to save money in the long run.

One participant spoke about the support of staff when bidding for properties, which was important in helping him get a tenancy. He was included in the process, asked about areas he wanted to live in and ended with a flat somewhere close to his friends.

In Edinburgh there are examples where supported accommodation providers are being more flexible with rules and allowing overnight guests and pets.

There has been more focus on taking the time to build trusted relationships between people delivering and using services, with some frontline workers going the extra mile to support people.

In East Renfrewshire they are ensuring that support workers are available within accommodation. Having familiar faces providing support close by is helping tenants build relationships.

In the Highlands neighbourhood teams have smaller caseloads and cover smaller areas, helping frontline workers to build trust amongst the communities they are supporting.

More services are connecting people with one named contact, a key worker who supports an individual through their journey. Housing First principles, where one worker supports a tenant throughout their tenancy and where workers have low caseloads, allows for trusting relationships to grow.

In Aberdeenshire people keep the same contact person through their journey, from application to independent tenancy. This helps create a streamlined process from the housing options team into accommodation.

There have been good examples of where residential services are providing additional support to help people gain new skills. This includes providing cooking and IT classes, as well as more specific services such as additions and victim support. This is helping people increase their confidence, network and build relationships with people in their community.

Housing First in Dundee is provided by three organisations, one focusing on young people, one for single males and one for women experiencing domestic abuse.

The Joshi project is using connection as a way to treat and support mental health, creating networks and focusing on what people enjoy.

There have been good examples of where independent funding trusts have been more relaxed in what funding is used for, understanding that demands on services change, driven by the people accessing services.

Services are trying to use less jargon in paperwork and are moving away from using derogatory language in reports. People are thinking about the language that they use with 'service user' now replaced by 'people we support' and services replaced with programmes. There is a growing understanding of how language affects people and therefore more attention towards asking people how they would like documents to be worded.



NO WRONG DOOR

Imagining a future where people are helped earlier and never left on their own to navigate the system.

There is a growing understanding about the need to move towards preventative, rather than crisis, responses. Taking steps towards the introduction of the new homelessness prevention duties and making this a shared public responsibility.

Crisis have developed good partnerships with Jobcentres, helping them to identify when someone seeking employment support is struggling with rent or at risk of homelessness.

In Kilmarnock the wellbeing unit within the police is focusing on early intervention and tackling root causes of homelessness, introducing peer workers to help advocate for individuals caught up in the criminal justice system.

There are also examples where housing options are being explored earlier for people being discharged from institutions, preventing them needing to present as homeless on their release.

Partnership working between housing services in South and East Ayrshire, Ayr Housing Aid Centre, SeAscape and prison staff and others allow for better planning around people leaving prison.

In Aberdeenshire multi-agency meetings with social work and homelessness are allowing for strong pathways for people being discharged from prison or hospital.

South Ayrshire have a new social letting service which considers accessibility of the Private Rented Sector for people on lower incomes and at risk of homelessness.

There are examples of good multi-agency working and good networking across the country. More integrated services and better communication is preventing duplication of work and has helped with pressures in resourcing. It is also ensuring that individuals are referred on to appropriate services.

The Navigator service is helping people transition out of prison, adopting an open door approach, linking people with housing services and signposting them to other relevant support.

There are Community Link Workers based in GP practices, providing people with a consistent point of contact and preventing them from having to repeat their story. There are also good examples of where drop in services and central hubs are allowing people to access the services they need, such as on the day medical and dental support.

NHS services in East Ayrshire has an open doors policy, allowing people to return to the service even once they have been signed off.

In East Ayrshire they are speeding up the time it takes to see a counsellor, allowing people quicker access to mental health support.

Good partnership working is being seen between third sector organisations and East Ayrshire Council Housing Options, enabling coordinated working to support young people. Here, the housing team is linked in with the Universal Credit support team.

There are examples of good crossover between different sectors with the third sector becoming more involved in strategic meetings with local authorities and the NHS. People are happy to help and share information, learning from each other and adapting services accordingly.

Cyrenians are running a hospital in-reach programme with the NHS in Edinburgh. They are helping hospital staff to navigate the housing and homelessness system and provide holistic support for patients experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This also helps with follow-up appointments and recovery. It requires good communication and information sharing from partners.

There are many examples of where people with lived experience of homelessness are influencing service design and strategic decision making. Services are listening more to people with lived experience. Having people with lived experience delivering services helps those currently experiencing homelessness open up, making them feel listened to and understood. Peer led programmes promote the use of informal language and create positive environments.

There is also better coordination and partnership working between frontline workers who are working with the same clients, sharing knowledge and resources, and advocating on their behalf.

There is less fear around GDPR, making organisations less reluctant to share any information in fear of making a mistake. There has been more openness, allowing for better communications between services, with the example of Social Work and the police.



AT HOME

Increasing housing options and understanding that settled housing, as quickly as possible, is our right and the best base to build and live our lives.

There are examples across the country where temporary accommodation has improved. People are feeling listened to and the accommodation they are being offered is being matched to their needs.

In South Ayrshire housing first is helping people find a home close to supports, community connections and in an area of their choosing. Offering more choice can sometimes mean people spend longer in temporary accommodation however finding the right home is important to give the best chance of success. The wraparound support delivered within housing first is person led and continues until they feel they are ready to reduce their supports.

However, people will still need to use temporary accommodation in some circumstances and so East Ayrshire have refurbished one of their hostels to allow people to have their own room and adopting a person-led, strengths-based approach to the support provided on site. There are increasing examples of where temporary accommodation is being flipped into permanent accommodation, when this is the preferred option for an individual. This has been particularly important for families with children to ensure continuity.

In Glasgow they are flipping more temporary flats into permanent accommodation and identifying more void houses, getting people in quicker.

In West Dunbartonshire the local authority will not flip a flat until they have ensured there is more stock available for temporary accommodation.

Decorating allowances issued to encourage tenancy sustainment makes people take ownership of their new property, helping them to feel at home.

Wheatley's Home Comforts programme provides people with furniture to help them feel at home.

South Ayrshire continue to store belongings for people during their homeless journey which can be a lifeline for some and supports sustainment when moving into their new home.

Services are willing to work more within communities and see the benefits of meeting people where they are. Community funds allow for better community integration, linking homeless services to other community groups.

Youth homelessness and care leavers charity, CHYP (Council for Homeless Young People) who is part of Queens Cross Housing Association, arrange activities and try to support interest of young people through social inclusion, helping individuals feel valued within their community and tackling social isolation.

Supported accommodation in Edinburgh has set up a community spirit board, celebrating what people within a community are able to achieve together, and highlighting positive experiences and contributions from both staff and residents.

GOOD VIBES

Designing our interactions in a way that dispel myths and share power.

After Covid, there has been positive change in environments and more dignified provision for people. People working in the public sector are seeing a change in culture and staff attitudes. Colleagues are understanding the impacts of trauma, asking the right questions with genuine interest and bringing a positive attitude to work. Staff are encouraged to show personality and their true selves. There are examples of where mentoring by positive, more experienced workers has been successful when onboarding new starts.

The Wheatley Group are encouraging their frontline workers to wear less formal clothing, trying to breakdown the power balance between staff and people accessing services.

Being able to create or find environments where people feel comfortable to open up, either in a group setting, over coffee or during a walk, has been important in building trust. Recovery communities are an example of where ambient environments and positive relationships are helping to build trust amongst the people engaging with them. There are examples of where people are feeling better listened to, being taken at face value and not judged from their previous experiences.

East Ayrshire Council are promoting safe environments, reducing police attendance at hostels.



Recommendations

While participants could give us lots of examples of positive changes towards the new directions, participants also highlighted areas where there is room for improvement. Below is a list of recommendations towards what still needs to be done to help make real change on the ground.

PEOPLE FIRST

Providing choice and control

More can be done to understand the spectrum of people's needs and making sure there are the right options are in place to accommodate these. This includes more choice based letting and better options for people staying in temporary accommodation, allowing people to choose what feels best for them.

Building relationships

Giving people more time to build relationships and trust with one key support worker who can manage their expectations and allow them to acknowledge their strengths and capabilities. Matching people who identify in a similar way helps them to build confidence and create new social connections, better environments and opportunities are needed to support this.

Flexible and tailored support

In some cases, there is a need for more tailored services. For example, for people with learning disabilities or for people who are alcohol dependant. In other situations, mainstream services need to be more inclusive and welcoming to people's different needs. More open-door services are needed, providing flexibility out of core working hours. Frontline workers should be encouraged and supported to adapt the language they are using and move at a pace suitable for each individual they support.

Strengths based approaches

More assertive outreach approaches are needed for people who are not engaging, listening to people and giving them options based on their values and aspirations. Most people can address their needs in a home of their own, but for a small percentage, a more intensive approach is needed in a supported environment. Trauma informed training is essential for all frontline workers, encouraging them to approach people with empathy not sympathy and help people to achieve their goals. Providing people with a clear pathway to build their lives, listening and acting on what people are saying and acknowledging feedback will promote independence and allow people to take ownership of their own support plans.

Having a single point of access, one key person to help individuals find the right services for them, throughout their support journey. This should be available 24/7 and should include time for relationships to be built.

Person-led processes

Taking a more relaxed, human approach to appointments and assessments, making more effort to use alternative language and phrasing. Being mindful of the impact that jargon and unknown terminology has on people and making sure they are involved in writing and feeding back on any notes taken. There needs to be better ease of transferring information between different organisations so that repeat questions are avoided.

NO WRONG DOOR

Prioritise prevention

There is continued need for early intervention and services dealing with root causes of homelessness, recognising and acting on non housing related triggers which might suggest someone is at risk of homelessness.

Joined up working

There needs to be easier referral pathways between services and across local authorities, to create a more streamlined experience. Better links are needed between housing and the health and criminal justice sector in particular. Cross sector coordinated liaison groups would help services meet and work together to provide the right support at the right time for everyone. Joined up working on the ground needs to be supported by joined up policy decisions.

A shared database across health, homelessness and social work and between Local Authorities would help create a more streamlined experience. Frontline staff need to have an up-to-date understanding of what support and services are available in their area so they can signpost people without any delays. This could be an online portal that people could access in their own time. Unlocking consent around GDPR would help with information sharing between organisations and create a more joined up approach.

Working with people with lived experience

Including people with lived experience in service delivery and decision making is still very important. Their involvement should be an integrated part of service design and delivery and not just an add on.

People should be supported to take part with better understanding of how involvement could be triggering. More needs to be done to encourage the recruitment of staff with lived experience and in setting up peer support and mentoring programmes, allowing people to connect through shared experiences.

Helping tenancy sustainment

It is essential that we start investing more energy in helping people to sustain their tenancies. We should prioritise supporting people to feel at home in a new tenancy by giving them a choice in how it is furnished and helping them integrate into the community. Expectations need to be managed to avoid disappointment and options need to be driven towards improving people's health and life fulfilment. Communal housing is needed in certain circumstances as an option to prevent loneliness and isolation.

Less competitive tendering

It is important that we move towards more ethical commissioning models that encourage partnership working rather than competition between services. More transparency in tendering processes and longer funding contracts will help with staff retention and allow staff to build relationships with the people they are supporting?

AT HOME

Reducing and improving temporary accommodation

Increased provision of emotional support for people staying in temporary accommodation and more resourcing for local authorities to provide a high standard of support and care is needed. There also needs to be better processes in place for those transitioning from temporary to permanent accommodation, and more scope to give people the option to flip a temporary flat into a permanent home.

Better, fairer housing

More needs to be done to enforce the Unsuited Accommodation Order, ensuring standards are high in temporary accommodation and that people feel safe. There needs to be more innovative approaches to increasing supply of good quality social housing, creating real choice in where people live, by buying back empty homes and shops, acknowledge the private rented sector as a solution, and reforming planning procedures to work better for people, not developers.

Support people in their community

By breaking down stigma associated with homelessness, the community can act as an important safety net for people building a new life. Many opportunities can be provided within a community to help people regain confidence. More work is needed in helping people integrate into communities. Homelessness services should be seen as steppingstones towards people connecting with mainstream services. People need to be given homes close to local amenities including community hubs and schools and within diverse communities, so that they feel valued and aspire to live fulfilled lives.



GOOD VIBES

Providing adequate information

Mapping services and the pathways people can choose to take, will help individuals to navigate the system, reduce fear and find the right support for them. Providing clearer information on people's rights, what they are entitled to and current legislations, will also help them to make informed decisions.

Better communication and engagement across services would help to build stronger partnerships, preventing competition and avoiding duplication in the types of support provided.

Support for frontline workers

There is an understanding that to provide good services we need to support and empower frontline staff. This included paying good wages, providing training, offering support, and making people feel part of a team. More investment is needed in staff wellbeing, keeping caseloads low to prevent burnout. More events are needed, and time put aside, where frontline workers can connect and learn from each other. More time should also be given for teams to check in with each other, decompress and address any triggered trauma. Reviewing recruitment processes is essential in making sure the right people are appointed in these roles.

Training

There is need for ongoing training and shadowing opportunities for frontline staff especially when it comes to communicating with people using services, the language used and better sensitivity around the impact of trauma and mental health issues.

Encouraging positive attitudes

Showcasing examples of good practice and giving people permission to challenge outdated approaches and opinions of service delivery will help frontline workers focus on the positive aspects of the support they are providing.

More focus on equalities

Better advocacy is needed for people from less represented groups, recognising that everyone has the right to a decent home. Providing tailored services and a range of options will help prevent people disengaging due to a particular need or identity.

Creating welcoming environments

By creating more trauma informed spaces and introducing open door policies when people are in temporary accommodation will remove the stigma often associated with them. Creating a homely environment gives people a sense of belonging and desire to take care of themselves and their surroundings. Using informal settings for assessments, within the community, helps people feel at ease when engaging with services.





THE CHANGE TEAM | KEEP IN TOUCH

16a Adelphi Centre, 12 Commercial Road, Glasgow G5 0PQ

0141 420 7272 | changeteam@homelessnetwork.scot

www.homelessnetwork.scot

Homeless Network Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland (SC003453) and company limited by guarantee (SC112361)
Registered Office: Adelphi Centre, 12 Commercial Road, Glasgow G5 0PQ. CEO: Margaret-Ann Brünjes