

HOUSING FIRST CHECK UP



Annual check-up on Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder
September 2021

Housing First is normal, it's fairer, it works –
and we all benefit.

Foreword

When year two of Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder began in April 2020 it became clear that the nature of the relationship between tenants and support workers would have to adapt, significantly.

There exists more evidence worldwide on the effectiveness of Housing First than for any other homelessness intervention. Despite this, there was no way of knowing the impact a global pandemic would have on a model so invested in one-to-one support.

Very real concerns emerged about how the support model would cope with necessary changes, not least social distancing, the ultimate 'stress test'. But cope it did – an average of 20 new tenancies were created across the Pathfinder each month during 2020/21, up from an average of 16 new tenancies per month in 2019/20.

Subsequent lockdowns and restrictions presented an additional challenge supporting people into their own homes. However, by March this year, 417 people continued to live in their own home in the Housing First Pathfinder programme.

Housing First has more than endured. To offer a 'well done' to those who have made that possible feels, to me, completely inadequate and does not satisfactorily reflect their achievement. I simply wish to thank everyone involved in the huge effort to support and sustain Housing First in Scotland over this past year.

Sir Andrew Cubie,

Chair of Social Bite

Introduction

Welcome to the 2020/21 Housing First Scotland Check Up Report. Scotland is now the only nation in the UK to have adopted Housing First as the default response for people with the sharpest experiences of homelessness. This policy and funding commitment by the Scottish Government, local authorities and partners has been made possible because evidence from pioneering programmes internationally and the Pathfinder in Scotland shows Housing First works and that we all benefit.

Homeless Network Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government to stand alongside local authorities and third sector organisations either starting up or scaling up Housing First in their areas. As Programme Manager for the Housing First Pathfinder since 2018/19 we have witnessed the creation of more than 500 tenancies in that programme for people who were formerly homeless, delivered through five consortia covering six local authority areas. The work undertaken by Pathfinders during the pandemic is presented here as facts and figures, charts, tables and conclusions. Sitting behind each one of these are stories of determination, ingenuity and resilience from support providers, individual members of staff and tenants that have inspired us all.

The pandemic, subsequent lockdowns and tiered restrictions across the country during the period covered in this report presented many challenges in continuing to support people into their own homes and providing the wraparound support so integral to the success of Housing First. This report highlights the impact of those measures on delivery, including delay and, in some cases, the total halting of allocation of housing alongside significant delays to turnover. It also reveals a resilient and sustainable model capable of withstanding the most demanding circumstances. The number of new monthly tenancies increased during the year we are reporting, with the understandable exception of April and May 2020.

With the Pathfinder and local schemes spearheading a national scaling up of Housing First, looking ahead we want to support a culture that recognises that Housing First planning and delivery is challenging but the outcomes rewarding.

Over the summer we consulted on new quarterly monitoring designed to support the national roll out. From Inverness in the north to Dumfries in the south a collaborative and self-reflective 'Check Up' approach will be introduced recognising that local authorities and partners are naturally reflective, already committed to best-for-person policies and are best placed to understand their own circumstances.

Consistent, supported self-reflection that gets behind those who commission, manage, deliver and use services can enhance that and share learning across different areas as we move forward. Introducing and embedding this will be the next step for Housing First in Scotland and we will publish full details of that process in the autumn as part of the updated National Framework.

Who Benefited from Housing First?

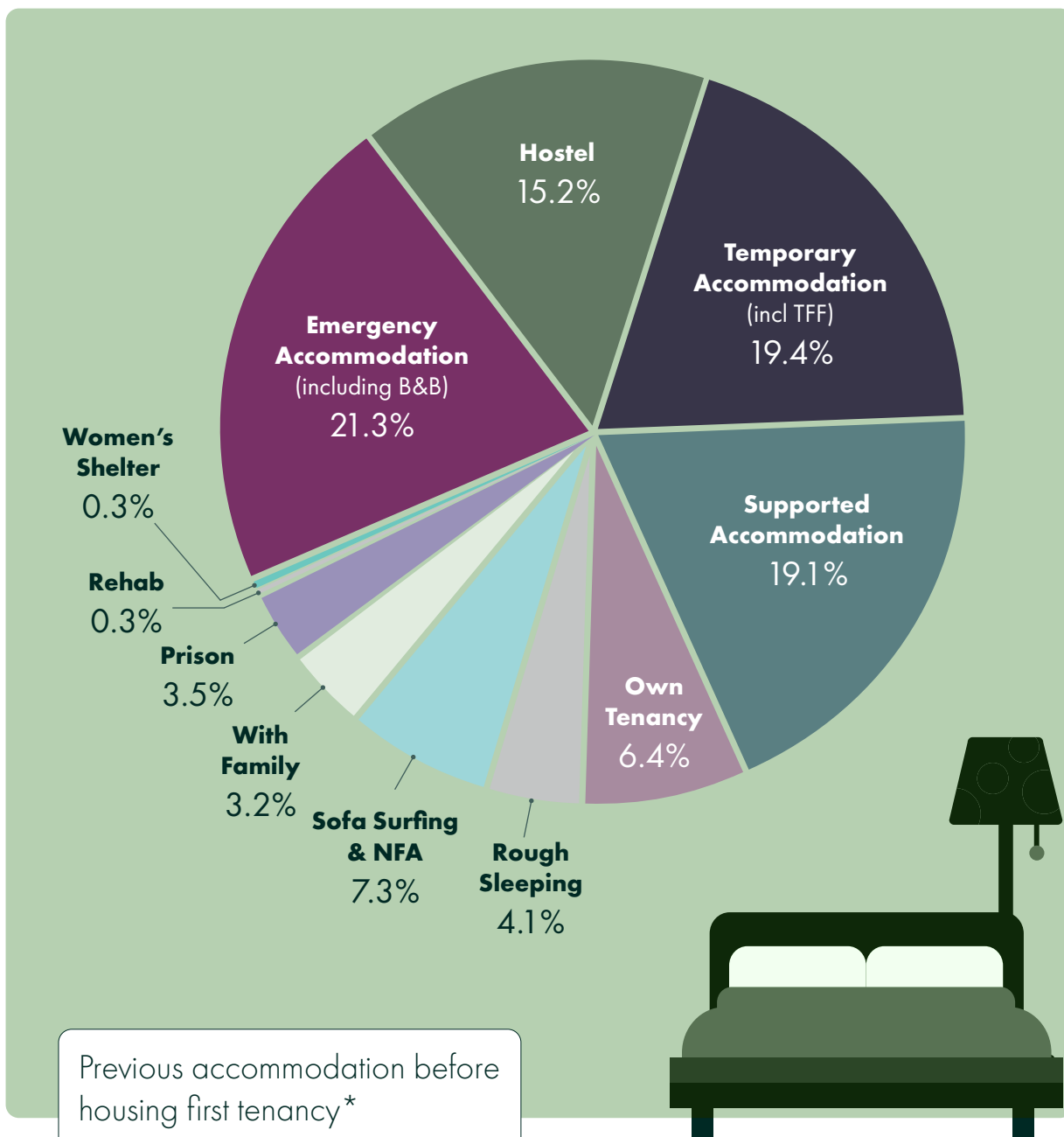
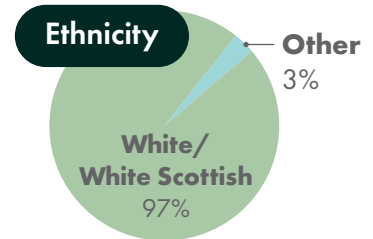
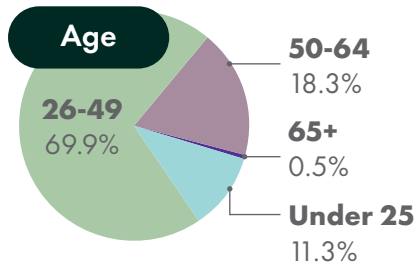
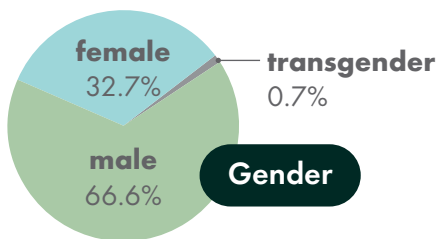
The people most likely to benefit from Housing First in Scotland largely align with the experiences of severe and multiple disadvantage discussed in the Hard Edges Scotland report: overlapping experiences of homelessness, offending, substance dependency.

With the local assessment and referral processes prioritising people experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage, we have compared the demographics of Housing First tenants with the Hard Edges population:



<p>Hard Edges Scotland tells us that those who will benefit most from Housing First are more likely to be male</p>	<p>Male 66.58% Female 32.67% Transgender 0.74%</p>
<p>Hard Edges Scotland tells us that those who will benefit most from Housing First are more likely to be in the lower to middle age ranges, with few under 25 or over 65</p>	<p>Under 25 – 11.25% 26-49 – 69.93% 50-64 – 18.34% 65+ – 0.49%</p>
<p>Hard Edges Scotland tells us that the overwhelming majority of people who will benefit most from Housing First will be White Scottish</p>	<p>White/White Scottish: 97+% Small numbers White Other British, White European, Mixed Race, Egyptian and Gypsy Traveller</p>

Housing First Pathfinder So Far



* percentages based on total number of responses



Programme Goal 1

Increasing the number of people moving into their own safe, secure homes.



Summary

Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder aims to support people into their own safe, secure homes in local communities across Aberdeen/shire, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling. Each area in the programme experiences different housing market environments – from the high pressure on housing stock in Edinburgh, to rural challenges in Aberdeenshire, to housing stock transfer in Glasgow. Also, Housing First allocations are being made in line with a range of different local policies including choice-based letting, common housing registers, and traditional allocations policies.

The pandemic, and subsequent lockdowns and tiered restrictions across the country, presented an additional challenge in terms of continuing to support people into their own homes when lettings were either slower than usual or paused completely.



Key Points:

- By the end of March 2021, **483** tenancies had been created as part of Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder an **increase of 23%** compared to 2019/20
- **Aberdeen/shire (+195%)** and **Edinburgh (+39%)** saw the largest increase in tenancy numbers during 2020/21.
- An average of **20** new tenancies were created each month during 2020/21, up from an average of 16 new tenancies per month in 2019/20
- Pathfinders **maintained a 70% reduction** in the time taken to house 50 people during 2020/21, with 209 days taken to house the first 50 tenants compared to 62 days to house tenants 401-450.



By March 2021 **483**
new tenancies had started
as part of the Pathfinder

An increase of 23%
compared to 2019/2020

Number of new Housing First Tenancies	2018-19 (August to March)	2019-20	2020-21	TOTAL	% change
Aberdeen/shire	4	21	62	87	+195%
Dundee	7	37	36	80	-2%
Edinburgh	13	41	57	111	+39%
Glasgow	28	87	77	192	-11%
Stirling	3	6	4	13	-33%
TOTAL	55	192	236	483	+23%
(average per month)	7	16	20		



Covid 19 presented an additional challenge in terms of continuing to support people into their own homes when lettings were either slower than usual or paused completely

Maintaining the pace of new tenancies starting

Despite varying levels of restrictions across the whole of the year, Pathfinders managed to match the performance delivered in 2019/20 in the time taken to house 50 tenants, with a new tenancy still starting every 1.24 days.

Tenancies	Number of days
1-50	209 days - 1 new tenancy every 4.18 days
51-100	113 days (-46%) - 1 new tenancy every 2.26 days
101-150	89 days (-21%) - 1 new tenancy every 1.78 days
151-200	88 days (-1%) - 1 new tenancy every 1.76 days
201-250	62 days (-30%) - 1 new tenancy every 1.24 days
251-300	119 days (+90%) - 1 new tenancy every 2.38 days
301-350	64 days (-46%) - 1 new tenancy every 1.28 days
351-400	48 days (-25%) - 1 new tenancy every 0.96 days
401-450	62 days (+29%) - 1 new tenancy every 1.24 days



Programme Goal 2

Reducing the time taken for people to move into their own safe, secure homes



Summary

Housing First aims to move people into their own safe, secure homes as quickly as possible.

As Housing First continues to develop locally, support providers work in partnership with local authority housing departments (where applicable), a range of local housing associations, and private landlords to maximise the range of options available and minimise waiting time for a home.

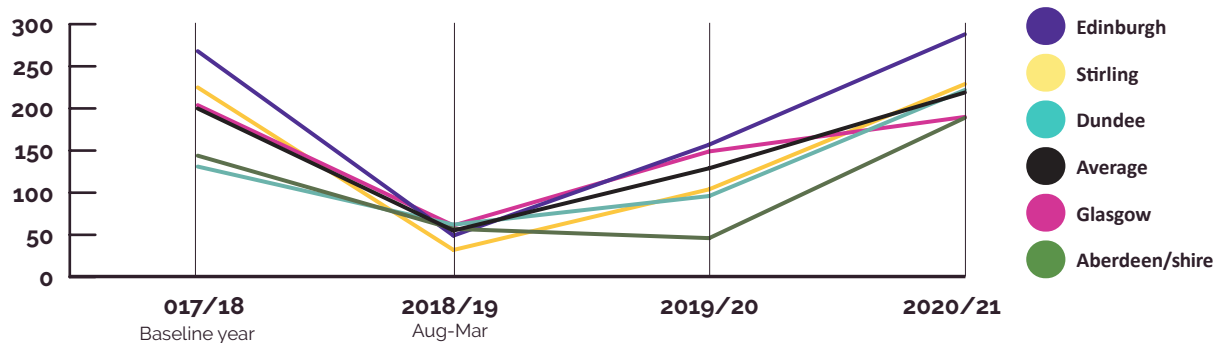
This programme goal was most negatively impacted by the pandemic and lockdowns across Scotland which saw a slowdown, and complete halt in some areas, in the letting of tenancies, and significant delays to repairs, maintenance and void turnover times to allow compliance with government guidelines.



Key Points

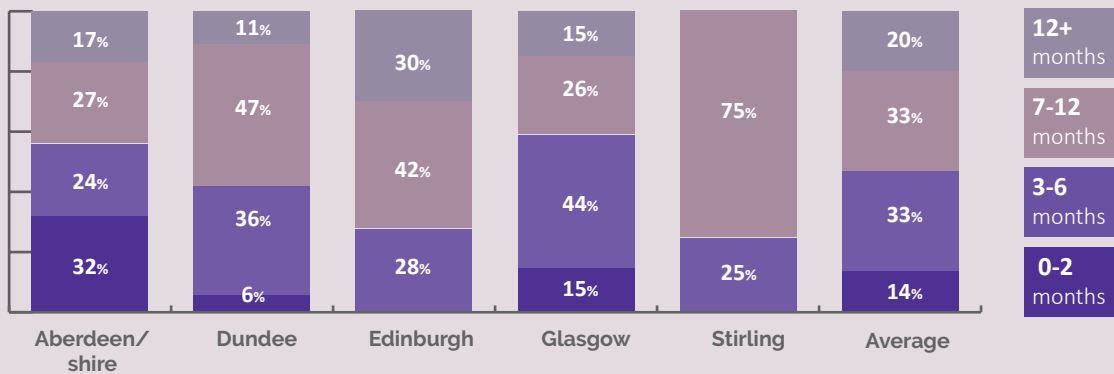
- The average length of time for people moving into their Housing First tenancies across the Pathfinder Programme was **219 days**, or seven months. This is an increase of 70% on the average time in 2019/20. **Aberdeen/shire (189 days)** and **Glasgow (190 days)** both saw people moving into their homes more quickly than the Pathfinder average.
- While the average length of time before moving in was 219 days, **47%** of Housing First tenants moved into their home in under six months, with almost one-third of them moving in within two months.
- **Glasgow saw 59%** of people move into their homes **within six months**, with **Aberdeen/shire supporting 32%** of people into their homes **within two months**.
- Aside from working within the limits of the coronavirus restrictions, reasons for higher average waiting times for housing include local housing market pressures, timescales for processing of Scottish Welfare Fund, and prioritising people's choice of location and housing type.

Average length of time for tenancies to start (days)



Average length of time for tenancies to start (days)	Baseline year* 2017/18	2018/19 (Aug-March)	2019/20	2020/21
Aberdeen/shire	144	56.5	46	189
Dundee	131	62	96	222
Edinburgh	268	49	157	288
Glasgow	204	61	149	190
Stirling	225	32	104	229
Pathfinder Average	200 days	55 days	129 days	219 days

Percentage of people moving within time-scales (months)



The average time to move in is 219 days/7 months, but half of tenants have not waited that long



*when we used time spent in TA



Programme Goal 3

Supporting people to sustain their own tenancies and reducing repeat homelessness



Summary

The substantial international evidence behind Housing First shows that maintaining fidelity to the principles can contribute to a tenancy sustainment rate of 80-90%. Through the Pathfinder we are interested in learning what happens to tenancy sustainment when more people are being supported over a longer period, building our understanding of how many tenancies end and for why, paying particular attention to examples of repeat homelessness.












Key Points

- **417** people continued to live in their own home at the end of March 2021, equating to a tenancy sustainment rate of **86%**. This is a **6% reduction** on the tenancy sustainment rate recorded at the end of March 2020
- **Aberdeen/shire (92%), Dundee (89%) and Edinburgh (89%)** continue to perform particularly well with higher-than-average rates of tenancy sustainment.
- **197** people (47%) have been in their own home for more than one year, three times higher than the number passing this milestone in 2019/20. Of these, 60 people have passed the two-year tenancy sustainment milestone, with a further 66 people in their homes for more than 18 months.
- **51** tenancies ended during 2020/21, almost three times as many as in 2019/20.
- Sadly, the **death of the tenant** continues to be the leading cause of ended tenancies. Eighteen tenants died during 2020/21, more than twice as many as in 2019/20.
- **17** people returned to homelessness during the year, with six deciding to make a planned move into supported accommodation. This represents 3.5% of all tenancies started, which, while twice as high as in 2019/20, still compares favourably to the national repeat homelessness rate of 6% (within one year) reported in statutory homelessness statistics.
- **8** tenancies were abandoned during 2020/21, almost three times the number in 2019/20.

There
have been
no evictions
since the
Pathfinder
began

Long-Term Tenancy Sustainment

This table illustrates the length of time for which people have sustained their tenancies so far, alongside the main reasons for tenancies ending. It shows that far more tenancies are being sustained than have ended, and that over time the successful tenancies are lasting for longer.

Tenancy Sustainment timeframe	Number of people	Main reason for tenancy ending	TOTAL number of instances <small>(over life of programme)</small>
2-3 years	 60	Abandonment	 11
19-24 months	 66	Long Term Prison Sentence	 10
13-18 months	 71	Death of Tenant	 26
7-12 months	 107	Return to Homelessness <small>(temp or supported)</small>	 19
0-6 months	 113		



Thank you for reading this report. For more information please visit www.housingfirst.scot alternatively email Housing First Scotland at housingfirst@homelessnetwork.scot or telephone 0141 420 7272.

