

ALL IN FOR CHANGE



TAKING THE TEMPERATURE 2023-24

August 2024

CALLS FROM THE FRONTLINE OF THE HOUSING EMERGENCY

In summary, people at the frontline of the housing emergency need us to:

All in for Change would like to thank everyone who contributed to the roadshow this year. To the frontline workers and people with lived experience who attended our interactive workshops, to the local champions who helped us to arrange and publicise the events, and to the services that enabled us to hold focus groups with people using homelessness services. And to Housing Minister Paul McLennan for joining us in Fife and his team at Scottish Government for their continued support.

1 Refocus on **rapid rehousing** and continue to put **Housing First, first**

2 Take a targeted approach to **people most at risk** of homelessness and work with them to **prevent** homelessness

3 **Increase housing stock** by focusing on empty homes, turning over voids and **getting repairs done** as a priority to **make more social housing available** for those who need it

4 Broker **better relationships** between local authorities and the private rented sector to **encourage letting to households** who want to use the private rented sector

5 Put people first by making it easy for people to get the help they need – **more face-to-face services** and a **greater community presence**

6 Increase the **understanding of data sharing rules** (GDPR) so that this doesn't get in the way of building a system with No Wrong Door

7 Continue to **roll out training** and increase support for practice that is **trauma informed**

8 **Decrease caseloads** and huge pressure on staff working in housing and homelessness to create the space and time needed to **develop trusting relationships** and good vibes

WE ARE ALL IN FOR CHANGE

All in for Change is the national platform for people closest to the issue of homelessness in Scotland, either through personal experience or working in direct advice and support roles.

The Change Team operates in the space between great policy and legislation on homelessness and the reality of practice on the ground, sometimes called the implementation gap.

The Team works to close this gap by acting as a feedback loop between people working in and experiencing homelessness now, and decision makers in local and national government and across housing, health and social care. The Change Team has a seat with decision makers at the top table – the Scottish Government and COSLA Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group (HPSG).

We use easy language and an informal approach, and are guided by the Four New Directions that are needed to end homelessness:

PEOPLE FIRST



People lead the support they want, which always builds from their strengths. Services put people's wellbeing first and ensure they have more choice and control.

AT HOME



Everyone is able to exercise their right to adequate housing more rapidly.

NO WRONG DOOR



No one is turned away from services or denied support thanks to more joined up working between different services and sectors.

GOOD VIBES



Helping others to understand homelessness and why people are exposed to it. Focusing on the solutions and relationships that we need to end homelessness.

WHY TAKE THE TEMPERATURE?



Earlier this year, members of All in for Change visited five locations as part of the Taking the Temperature Roadshow, to find out from people on the ground what is happening in homelessness services in those areas against the backdrop of a growing housing emergency. By learning from the wider knowledge and experiences of people and services across the country, the Change Team can use its platform to influence change.

All in for Change knows that people who use and deliver homelessness services are closest to the issue. They know best what they need.

The Change Team wanted to highlight great things happening in pockets around the country, to identify any common barriers to making the Four New Directions a reality and to strengthen their feedback loop between people on the ground and decision makers.

In spring 2024, the Change Team visited Aberdeen, Greenock, Falkirk, Kirkcaldy and Clydebank, covering each of Scotland's five housing options hubs.

The Team hosted inclusive, interactive workshops alongside focus groups and interviews with people experiencing homelessness. This report highlights what the Change Team heard – whether progress was being made, what was helping that and what was getting in the way.

At each Roadshow, we asked people to reflect on the Four New Directions and think about:

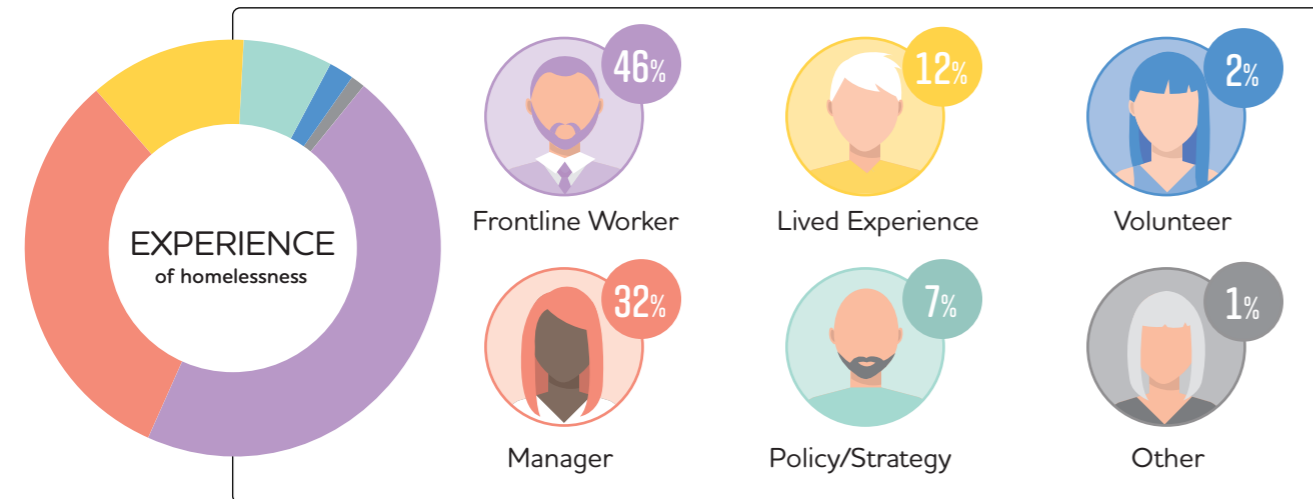
- Examples where progress towards the Four New Directions is already happening
- What gets in the way of more work happening on the ground?
- What will reduce the gap between what we say we will do, and what we actually can do to tackle homelessness?

WHO TOOK PART?

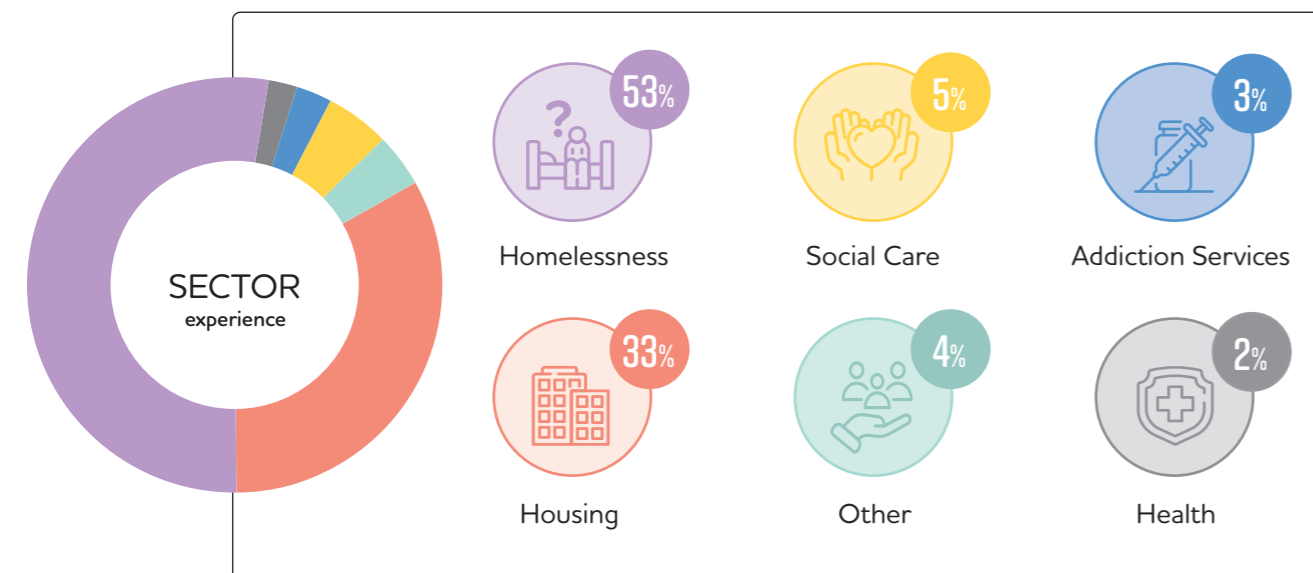
We spoke to **146 people** from across the sector.

The following graphs show their varied experiences.

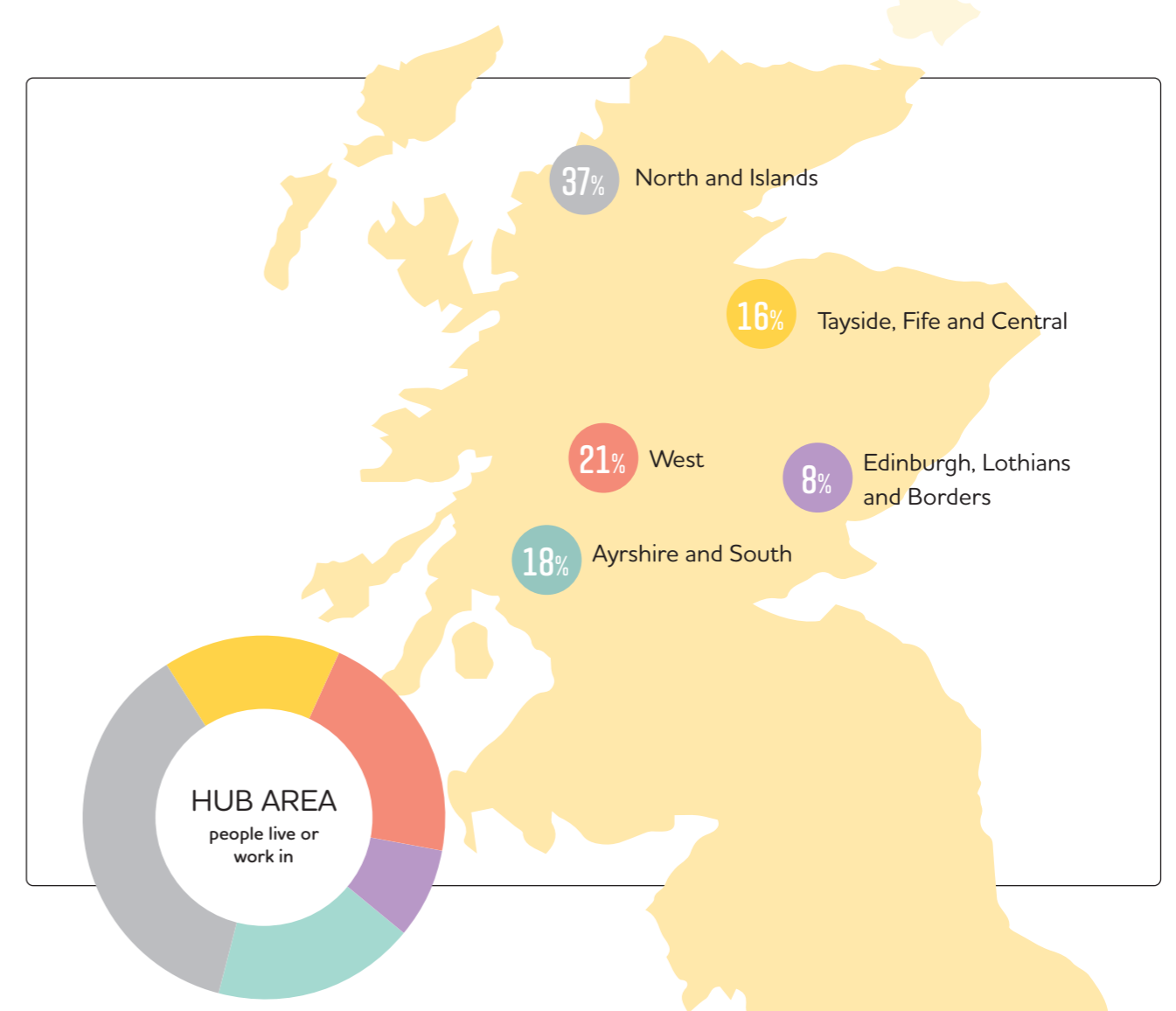
Where does people's experience of homelessness come from?



Which sector did their experience come from?



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



AT A GLANCE

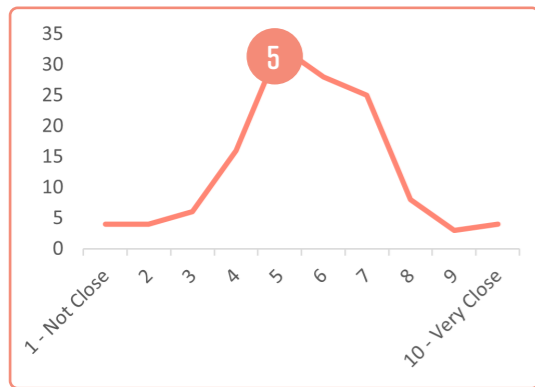
The line graphs show how close people think we are to achieving each new direction and highlight the most common response.

Pie charts show responses when people are asked if they feel we are getting closer, staying the same, or moving further away from each new direction.

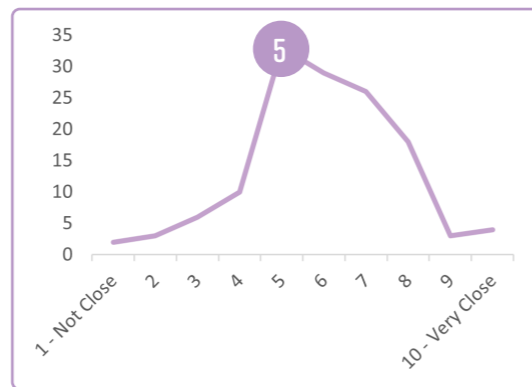
Compared to our previous roadshow in 2022, people felt that we were moving further away from each New Direction.

How close are we to making each new direction a reality?

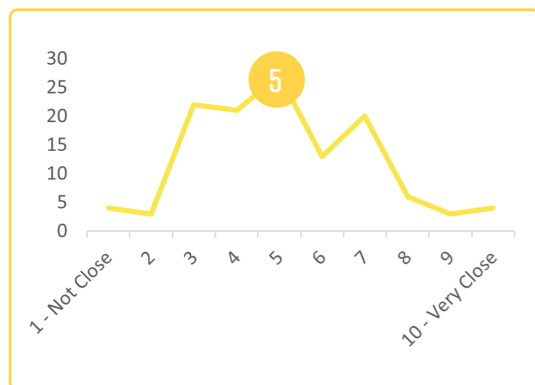
PEOPLE FIRST



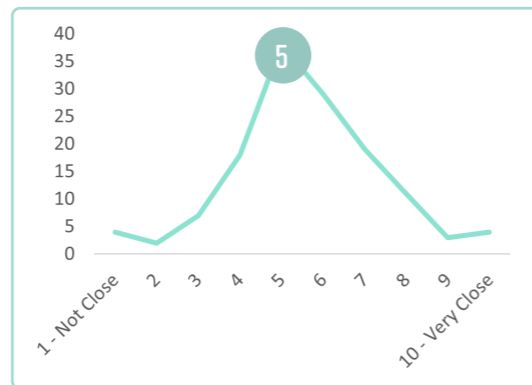
GOOD VIBES



AT HOME

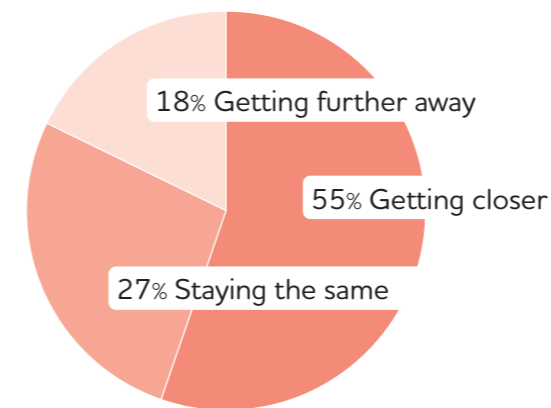


NO WRONG DOOR

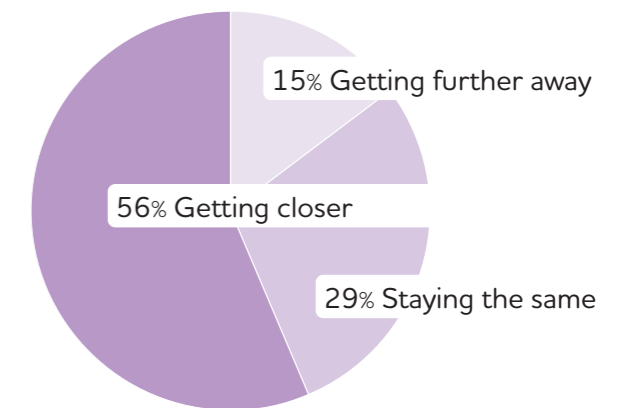


Over the past year, did they think we were: getting closer, staying the same or getting further away from achieving these?

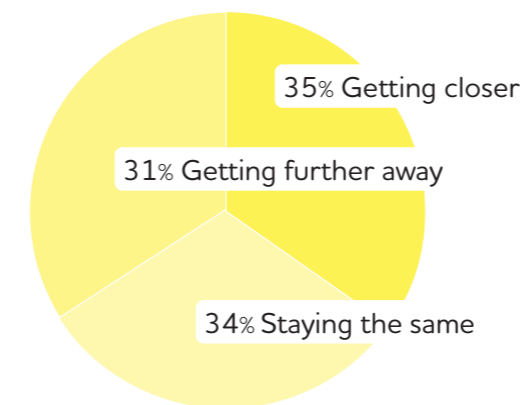
PEOPLE FIRST



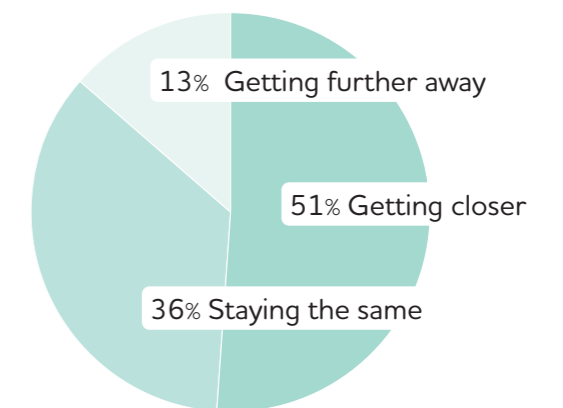
GOOD VIBES



AT HOME



NO WRONG DOOR



THE HEADLINES

People told us time and time again that the biggest barriers to making the Four New Directions a reality are *housing and funding*. **This stops us making any distance on all of the new directions.**

The declaration of a national housing emergency has put this issue top of the agenda and reflects what people told us about their own areas. There is not enough quality social housing for people who are experiencing homelessness.

Most people also said that the sector is not being properly funded. Demand for services is increasing and people feel funding is not following that demand – this goes for local authorities and third sector organisations. Given the cost-of-living crisis, Covid-19 recovery and the pressure on housing, it is not surprising to people that the demand for help with housing and homelessness is increasing.



PEOPLE FIRST

What is helping?

We see frontline workers who want to put People First and hear lots of examples of how this is happening across the country.

The focus on becoming trauma-informed has made an impact and lots of frontline workers tell us that trauma-informed practice and great training helps.

What also stands out in these conversations is the importance of having the right people in the right roles. Frontline workers and people using services talk about great people, dedicated staff who want to go the extra mile. Taking time to listen to people using services, and to understand and advocate for what they really want and need, helps people to make more informed choices about where they might want to live, or what support they might need.

“It’s not about having someone do things for you, but having someone who can teach you how to do it.”

Young person staying in supported temporary accommodation

“It feels like you can always knock on their door and someone will talk to you. It’s important as you can feel worthless.”

Person staying in supported temporary accommodation

“The staff respect us, there’s no telling you what to do but they are there and helpful and you can ask at any time. No one tells me what to do, they guide me.”

Young person staying in supported homeless accommodation for young people

Housing First helps put People First too. A key principle of Housing First is choice and control for people accessing support. Having a national focus on Housing First has improved awareness among frontline workers of how important it is for people to have as much choice and control as possible over their housing and support.

“Staff working with clients in a person centred approach helps clients to feel empowered and improves their own wellbeing when making choices.”

Frontline worker, local authority

“In Falkirk, there is a team based in the Jobcentre that supports people facing a housing risk and other issues beyond employment. They have flexibility to work with people in a person-centred way and are making the Jobcentre a more welcoming place for people to go and get support.”

Engaging the people who use services to help influence how they are delivered was identified as helping to move closer to People First. Co-production and participation can improve how services are delivered and how people experience those services.

“Having Housing First available in Fife increases choice for people”

Frontline worker



What gets in the way?

People told us that the growing use of support being delivered through digital devices is getting in the way of putting People First.

When lockdown began, nearly all housing and homelessness services were delivered remotely with help from digital technology and fewer face-to-face interactions, to protect one another’s health.

Four years on, people experiencing homelessness tell us of their frustration when they try to access a face-to-face service now. Local people facing difficult situations are trying to access help, arriving at offices and often finding that the service they need does not operate there now.

Lots of support staff, including in local authorities, are now entirely home based and this impacts how easily people can access what they need.

It also impacts on frontline workers’ ability to assess people’s needs and circumstances effectively, as people often choose not to disclose parts of their life over the phone.

This can result in people not getting the support they need, or mean they are offered unsuitable housing.

High caseloads putting frontline workers under pressure was also mentioned as a barrier to People First as there is less time to spend with individuals to offer holistic support.

“Caseload of 350 – how can you be People First when in crisis mode?”

Frontline worker, local authority

Some people with lived experience of homelessness said not being able to keep pets was a big barrier for them and had limited their choices when trying to access temporary accommodation. Having to give up their pets would negatively affect their wellbeing.

“I think homelessness services need to understand that animals are family. Not allowing for pets limited my choices in places and I was moved around, sometimes really far from my support network.”

AT HOME

What is helping?

People across Scotland told us that At Home felt further from reality than before. **The biggest talking point across each area was the need for more high quality social housing now.**

Most people told us they cannot wait for new build programmes, and said more needs done to release the pressure on the homelessness system much more quickly. And to do that well, local areas need houses where people can live and access what they need.

In Fife, the local authority has opened a 'buy back' scheme, where local people can get in touch with the council to identify properties that could be brought back into the social housing stock.

But people are finding ways to increase settled housing options in their local areas. Many shared success stories where temporary furnished flats are 'flipped' and turned into mainstream settled housing. In cases where a household has been in temporary accommodation for a long time and has begun to build a life in that area, flipping that property to a permanent tenancy works well for the household, the local authority and the housing provider.

Despite the pressures on homelessness systems across the country, people were able to highlight things that were helping to make At Home a reality. Across each location, people told us that Housing First projects in their area were helping, and shared good practice within Housing First teams.

In Clydebank, we heard from Housing First workers who work within the overnight welcome centre provided by Glasgow City Mission.

Staff identify people who might benefit from Housing First support and swiftly move them to more suitable temporary accommodation while they wait for permanent housing.

In North Ayrshire, everyone who makes a homelessness application is 'screened' to find out if they might be eligible for Housing First support.

We heard growing support for Housing First as the model to aim for, but there are gaps in support which mean it's not reaching everyone who could benefit. Some people spoke about the downside of Housing First being how it is rationed. People can slip through the net if there is not another appropriate housing support service available.

We heard that **in Aberdeenshire** strong partnership working has resulted in being able to find suitable accommodation faster. This means waiting times are cut and time spent in temporary accommodation is reduced. Frontline workers were encouraged by local authorities' efforts to reduce waiting times to access homelessness services.

Supporting people to maintain and sustain their tenancy has become really important across the board. There is a recognition that the system is creaking under the pressure but there is a desire to prevent anyone entering homelessness if it's avoidable.

Some people we spoke to also highlighted the importance of supported accommodation as a stepping stone before moving into your own tenancy as it can help build confidence and life skills. This applies particularly to young people.

Finally, changes in policy and legislation have helped. The introduction of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, implementation of the SHORE standards (Sustainable Housing On Release for Everyone) and the upcoming homelessness prevention duties for public bodies were all highlighted as positive developments that are helping, or will help, to ensure everyone has access to a settled, affordable home.

What gets in the way?

Housing Stock

Not having enough social housing in places where people want to live is leading to longer waiting times in temporary accommodation. Ultimately this means there is less choice and control for people coming out of the homelessness system.

In rural areas, people talked about being accommodated or offered settled housing far from their social and support networks. This makes it difficult to build and live your life the way you want to.

The condition of existing housing stock, especially older property, is a challenge across the country. People told us that more funding is required to bring older homes up to standard, given the continued increases in the price of materials and labour.

Changes in the Private Rented Sector

Difficulties in accessing the private rented sector as a solution to homelessness came up more often in urban areas, where people talked about the private rental market shrinking in size but growing in cost. Private renting is not seen as a viable option for most who are in the homelessness system. In rural areas, holiday homes, second homes, and increasing rental costs were said to create barriers to accessing the private rented sector.

Some people strongly believe that the private rented sector is not a secure housing option at all for people on low incomes. People working for local authorities told us that most households would prefer to be housed in social housing, managed by the local authority or a registered social landlord.



NO WRONG DOOR

What is helping?

We identified that there are pockets of good practice at a local or community level.

The strongest response to our questions on what helps make No Wrong Door a reality was communication.

In every place we visited, people talked about better, more efficient work being done to support people when services talk to each other and work together. Collaboration between local authorities and third sector organisations, not only covering housing departments but also health, criminal justice, substance misuse and other specialist services, are key to this.

Better use of technology can help make this happen and is proving successful in rural and urban areas.

Making services as easy to access as possible helps, for example by connecting housing and homelessness workers with community hubs where people can find lots of different services in one place. Models such as Community Link Workers were also highlighted as they play a key part in supporting people and linking them in with different services.

In Kirkcaldy, local authority and third sector partners shared their plans to create a system with a No Wrong Door approach and to link in with a national learning programme, which hopes to enable other places to take the same approach.

In Aberdeen the creation of the Ending Homelessness Aberdeen group as part of the Royal Foundation's Homewards partnership was given as an example of good practice of collaboration and communication.

North Ayrshire's Housing First model has an addiction worker, Community Psychiatric Nurse, Housing Support, Criminal Justice as well as a homeless assessment officer.

In Falkirk, the council has a partnership with health visitors who refer people to housing and homelessness support when they pick up on housing issues. The council also provided training on the new homelessness prevention duties to staff at the Jobcentre to support them to pick up on small comments and risk indicators and shift the focus to preventing housing issues from escalating to crisis point.

What gets in the way?

Many people believe GDPR rules and a lack of certainty about sharing information within GDPR guidelines is a barrier. The need for services to communicate and work together is key and more confidence on what GDPR guidelines allow would be useful for frontline workers.

Inflexible systems and processes also get in the way. No Wrong Door approaches put the person at the centre and make services easy to find and use. But frontline workers do not always have the authority to change systems and processes that people don't find useful. This means that effective partnership working is often dependent on individuals rather than systems.

For people experiencing homelessness, health and mental health systems can be hard to access. People told us about long waiting lists and difficulty getting dentist and GP appointments. We heard that when they do get in the door, people can feel judged and like they're 'not seen as a person'.



GOOD VIBES



A change in culture across the homelessness and housing sector is helping to create Good Vibes. There is a much broader understanding of the structural causes of homelessness and its roots in poverty, inequality and experiences of trauma.

Having a better understanding of what causes homelessness has helped shape a more compassionate response to people who are experiencing homelessness, which focuses on strengths rather than “failures”. People told us that better awareness of trauma has led to changes in language used in services, on paperwork and in conversations with people experiencing homelessness.

“Education and awareness have increased. When I compare services 10, 20 years ago the attitude to support has seen a huge move from service-based needs to person-centred approaches.”

Manager, homelessness service

Introducing trauma-informed practice across the country has also helped. This gives frontline workers a framework for their practice that recognises and understands the impact of trauma on people who are experiencing homelessness.

Some people talked about taking a strengths-based approach to supporting people experiencing homelessness. This helps frontline workers form stronger relationships with the people they support.

In Kirkcaldy, people in a supported temporary accommodation unit talked about how they had made close friends there. Having access to shared kitchen spaces helped them develop cooking skills.

“I didn’t know how to open a can of beans when I arrived, but I made everyone roast dinner the other day”

Person staying in supported temporary accommodation

In West Lothian, young people in supported homeless accommodation said activities like craft and gaming nights helped them to settle in and feel comfortable. Spending time with other people and taking part in activities really boosted their mental health.

What gets in the way?

We heard about the huge pressures on frontline workers. Large caseloads, little flexibility, not enough time to build relationships and experiencing burnout are not Good Vibes. We know the system is under pressure and lacking funding and resources. This has an impact on people who need housing, and on people working in frontline roles. It affects their ability to do what they want and need to do – provide great support and services for people experiencing homelessness.

Among people experiencing homelessness, barriers to feeling Good Vibes include previous negative experiences of services, not feeling listened to or heard, and having to focus on faults or difficult experiences rather than on their personal strengths and goals.

Some people told of the stigma and judgment they felt from others and called for more understanding of what experiencing homelessness means. For example, homelessness doesn’t always mean you are sleeping on the streets.

“People don’t understand homelessness, they think its rough sleeping. People also think that people are lying to get stuff and there is a lot of stigma.”

A young person at risk of homelessness

In Aberdeenshire, public perceptions of homelessness as a barrier and believed that due to wealth inequality there is less understanding and more stigma towards people experiencing homelessness.

IS RAPID REHOUSING STILL THE SOLUTION?

Simply put, yes!

All in for Change believes this is the solution to homelessness in Scotland, alongside measures to reduce poverty and increase the number of social homes. We asked people to share their insights on four key parts of Rapid Rehousing:

Temporary accommodation should be better quality and used less often.

To help make this a reality, there could be more initiatives and incentives for local authorities to flip temporary tenancies to permanent housing options. To increase housing stock and reduce the need for temporary accommodation, local authorities and housing providers could focus more on bringing empty properties up to standard and making sure repairs happen as quickly as possible.

There was agreement across the country that the deliberate move away from using hostel, hotel or B&B type accommodation is the right way forward, despite how difficult this is in some areas. Unsuitable temporary accommodation creates more problems than it solves and limits people's ability to maintain their normal life.

Since the pandemic, the bottleneck in the homelessness system has worsened, with more people stuck in temporary accommodation and not enough social housing for people to move into and out of homelessness. Turnover of temporary accommodation is reported as very sluggish in many areas with repairs taking too long and otherwise decent properties lying empty. In rural areas, people can't find the facilities they are looking for to help settle in an area or even prevent homelessness – with pharmacies, schools and regular public transport all mentioned.

"This house isn't suitable for our needs as it's too small. Me and my brothers have to share a room and the condition of the house is bad, it's falling apart."

A young person in temporary accommodation

Housing supply must increase across Scotland to meet demand.

The declaration of a national housing emergency – and housing emergencies declared at local levels – should be a helpful influencing tool. People told us that while new build projects are happening, they are not happening quickly enough to meet the current demand. In the meantime, empty homes projects help to increase stock and bring properties up to standard. A system of choice-based lettings, where social housing providers advertise available properties, is a good way for people to see available homes and to help people experiencing homelessness understand their options.

What gets in the way?

There is concern in some places that the removal of the duty to assess local connection could lead to higher demand for housing. People talked about oversupply of certain types of housing, such as supported or sheltered housing that is not always at capacity. There is concern in some places that the construction of purpose-built student accommodation impacts on available land for social housing, and that it is not affordable for many students, which leads to more problems and potentially more people in the homelessness system.

Housing First as the first response for people facing homelessness alongside other challenges.

There is a lot of positive energy around Housing First. But people told us that to meet demand, more resources need to be put into Housing First across the country to make sure Housing First projects are funded long-term.

Using Housing First support as a prevention tool for people who have experienced homelessness before is proving helpful in some places. Having multiple specialist services involved in Housing First teams helps get people the support they need quickly. And having the time to understand the needs and wants of people experiencing homelessness is helping support workers.

What gets in the way?

Branching out Housing First support services to meet the level of need in different areas is challenging as many places rely on funding on a yearly basis to resource Housing First and haven't yet included it in longer term budgets. There is no deadline for support to end in Housing First, but the way that funding is made available does not match this. We see some areas compromising on the recommended small caseload for support workers to try and meet the needs of more people. Issues like staff turnover are contributing to this issue, as well as high demands on services.

In rural areas, we heard that accessing different services spread across a large geographic area makes delivering good Housing First difficult.

Focusing on preventing homelessness is key to ending homelessness.

Efforts to focus on prevention rather than crisis are helped by better planning for people leaving prisons, care, hospital or rehabilitation.

This helps to ensure that homelessness can be prevented. When homelessness is caused by a relationship breakdown, more access to mediation, conflict resolution and counselling services could all help to prevent someone experiencing homelessness.

Frontline workers who know about the upcoming duty on a wider range of public bodies to ask and act to prevent homelessness talked about the importance of training and awareness raising for staff to ensure they know what to look out for, what to ask and what to do if someone they support is at risk of homelessness.

What gets in the way?

Public perceptions get in the way of homelessness prevention. Some places do not believe they have people in their area who are at risk of homelessness. It's important that people and communities acknowledge that homelessness exists so that they can take opportunities to prevent it.

People also talked about a lack of community investment getting in the way of a prevention focus, and said it is lower down on the priorities of community plans than it should be.

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In summary, people at the frontline of the housing emergency need us to:

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2 Take a targeted approach to **people most at risk** of homelessness and work with them to **prevent** homelessness

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6 Increase the **understanding of data sharing rules** (GDPR) so that this doesn't get in the way of building a system with No Wrong Door

7 Continue to **roll out training** and increase support for practice that is **trauma informed**

8 **Decrease caseloads** and huge pressure on staff working in housing and homelessness to create the space and time needed to **develop trusting relationships** and good vibes



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