



Housing and
Communities

Homelessness and Housing First:
A guide to good practice

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Executive Summary

Over the past two years, LSE Housing and Communities, based in the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at the London School of Economics, have worked on a number of research projects connected to homelessness. The stark increase in levels of homelessness in recent years, both among rough sleepers and among those who are statutorily homeless, can be linked to a number of wider issues that we have been researching:

- Lack of affordable social housing
- Insecurity and poor quality of the private rented sector (PRS)
- Welfare reform and austerity programmes
- Debt and financial hardship

This report explores the homelessness context in the UK, its causes, and government's approach to tackling homelessness.

Our research into homelessness has a particular focus on Housing First, an alternative homelessness intervention strategy, aimed at long-term rough sleepers with complex needs. Housing First provides housing as the first step, and from there offers wrap-around support to deal with some of the underlying issues affecting a person's homelessness. Housing First has been shown to be highly successful as part of a wider rough sleeping and homelessness strategy, but should not be seen as a replacement for other homelessness services and strategies.

We provide evidence of successes and challenges from three government-funded Housing First pilots; Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands. We also collected evidence from individual also share case studies and good practice from homelessness charities who are reducing and preventing homelessness following Housing First principles. These case studies come from organisations in Greater Manchester, Yorkshire, London, and Edinburgh.

The three pilot Housing First projects each were granted government funding to run for three years, and include a number of local authorities within the city region. All three work with housing associations to provide the housing component. The funding was announced in 2018, with pilot projects in operation by April 2019. In the first year of the pilot projects:

- The Liverpool City Region project were working with a caseload of 60 people
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority project was working with 120 clients
- The West Midlands Combined Authority pilot project had helped 156 people into accommodation

Our key findings from the three Housing First pilot projects are:

- There is a strong commitment to delivering Housing First at scale while ensuring fidelity to the Housing First model.
- The pilot Housing First projects are delivering at scale across different local authority areas, which brings many challenges, not least the need to involve large numbers of partner who have to be informed, on board, and engage with with the approach.
- The three pilot projects are being delivered in city regions with devolved powers and a democratically elected regional mayor. Political support and commitment from the local mayors to Housing First is crucial to the pilot's success. Local political commitment forms

part of a wider commitment to ending homelessness and rough sleeping in their city regions.

- Lived experience plays a very important role in Housing First projects. In the pilot areas, there is a focus on values-driven recruitment and the relationship between client and Housing First workers is crucial to success
- Government targets and numbers are only part of the change required. Local authorities need to change the way they work and it is important to showcase these local changes in ways of delivering services.

The wider case studies of homelessness services revealed **three key points of good practice** that helps reduce and prevent homelessness:

- Ensuring landlords, private or social, accept what is involved in housing ex-rough sleepers, based on intensive tenancy support being provided;
- Providing skilled, long-term, non-demanding, non-conditional support to the tenants;
- Helping tenants with any issues that damage their chance of success in maintaining a tenancy e.g. claiming benefits, securing ID, medical help, mental health support, support with family or other relationships, etc.

This report demonstrates the value of Housing First, as part of the comprehensive effort needed to reduce and eventually remove homelessness from our streets. We hope that sharing these case studies and good practice examples will lead to stronger government support, a growth in community-led efforts to tackle homelessness, and an actual reduction in street homelessness.

1. LSE Housing work on homelessness

This report is about homelessness. LSE Housing and Communities, based in the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at the London School of Economics, have been working on a number of research projects connected to homelessness for over two years. The stark increase in levels of homelessness in recent years, both at a rough sleeping level and within the wider interpretation of homelessness, can be linked to a number of other issues that we have been researching:

- Lack of affordable social housing
- Insecurity and poor quality of the private rented sector (PRS)
- Welfare reform
- Debt

Evaluation of Newham's Housing First Pilot

The LSE Housing and Communities team was commissioned by LB Newham to evaluate the pilot project of Housing First in the borough. The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- To understand the prior experiences and pathways of the Housing First target group in sleeping rough in Newham;
- To understand the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of:
- Promoting long term housing sustainment
- Enhancing health and wellbeing of service users
- Improving social integration of service users
- To assess the cost of the intervention and its benefits.

We have been following the journey of the 12 clients engaged in the Housing First pilot in Newham and are currently in the final stages of our analysis and writing up of the project.

The core goal of the Housing First project is to use housing as a stable base from which to support individuals to improve their social, economic and health outcomes and to integrate into mainstream social and economic life. It is however difficult to measure the wider outcomes related to health and substance misuse, particularly in a relatively short period of time.

The Housing First clients in Newham are all entrenched rough sleepers and all have high and / or complex needs. Their own goals and aspirations for the service varied from simply wanting somewhere to live to wider ambitions around becoming abstinent and contacting family. It is important that we assess and evaluate the success of the pilot around individuals achieving and working towards their own goals and aspirations, as well as assessing the fidelity of the pilot to the Housing First model.

An interim report was produced and shared with LB Newham in late 2019 and a final report is due to be published in the summer of 2020.

This work led to our wider investigation of Housing First Pilots around the country, and to our evaluation of good practice within homelessness provision.

2. Homelessness in the UK

Homelessness has risen up the political agenda in recent years as the human and financial costs of increased homelessness since 2010 have become more evident. It is important to understand what we mean by homelessness.

Statutory homelessness refers to the homelessness applications taken and decisions made by local authorities according to their legal duties.

Local authorities in England have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category. There is no duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people. On 3 April 2018, local authorities acquired a duty to work to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants – their advice and assistance duties were also strengthened. (Wilson and Barton, 2020b, p3)

Priority means: Applicants who have a priority need include households with dependent children or a pregnant woman; homeless due to fire, flood or other emergency; who are particularly vulnerable due to ill health, disability, old age; having been in custody or care; or having become homeless due to violence or the threat of violence. (MHCLG, 2020).

Every year thousands of people will present to their local authority as homeless, and those owed a duty by their local authority as set out above are accepted as statutory homeless.

Rough sleeping is defined by government, for the purposes of rough sleeping counts and estimates, as:

- people sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments)
- people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes').

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions>

The rough sleeping definition does not cover people in hostels or shelters, campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes, or organised protest, squatters or travellers.

While there is no formal definition of **hidden homelessness**, the term is used to describe those households in overcrowded, insecure or uninhabitable conditions ranging from sofa surfing and squatting to rough sleeping. People experiencing hidden homelessness are generally not recorded in official statistics and mostly will not be receiving help. The numbers are therefore difficult to quantify as many in this position will not present to their local authority and make a homelessness application.

GLA estimates from 2017 indicate that in London there could be as many as 13 times more people homeless but hidden, than are visibly sleeping rough – in 2017 as many as 12,500 each night, with young people being most affected by this type of homelessness. (London Assembly Housing Committee, 2017)

Local housing authorities in England have a duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need. **Temporary accommodation** may be provided after an application is accepted until more suitable and secure accommodation can be found. Temporary accommodation comes in many forms including bed and breakfasts, hostels, and privately rented accommodation.

The numbers of people in temporary accommodation have increased steadily since 2010, with recent quarterly statistics published by government recording 86,130 households in temporary accommodation at the end of June 2019. This represents a 79% increase since December 2010, where the use of temporary accommodation hit its lowest point since 2004. Included within this total of 86,130 households are 127,370 children, with many more families now being placed in B&B accommodation.

Temporary accommodation can be poor quality, overcrowded and unsuitable for families with children. Those living there lack security, recourse to complain and often face a long wait for more permanent accommodation.

Local authorities in London have had particular difficulties in securing decent temporary accommodation in the numbers required. A report by London Councils in 2016 talked of “*a perfect storm of market conditions and policy changes*” making it increasingly challenging for London boroughs to provide the accommodation needed for homeless individuals and families (Wilson and Barton, 2020c).

Temporary accommodation is expensive and research conducted by Crisis and the BBC Panorama programme, and reported by Inside Housing in February 2020, showed local authorities paying £939 million to private accommodation providers in 2018/19 for temporary accommodation. This was an increase of almost 50% on the £490 million spent in 2013/14. (Wilson and Barton, 2020c)

LSE Housing and Communities have been working on two projects related to homelessness and rough sleeping in the London Borough of Newham since 2018. Newham has significant homelessness problems and also spends more than any other local authority on temporary housing costs. Research from the GLA in 2019 looked at London councils and temporary accommodation and found that:

Newham spends the most on temporary accommodation, £61.1 million in 2017-18, but the largest increase in spending was in Hackney where spending more than doubled from £25.6 million in 2013-14 to £54.8 million in 2017-18. Westminster came third, spending £48 million on temporary accommodation in 2017-18. (London Assembly Housing Committee, 2019)

There have been efforts made by local authorities and others to improve the quality of the temporary housing offer. An excellent example of this is Barry Jackson Tower in Birmingham:

Barry Jackson Tower, Birmingham

Barry Jackson Tower was a disused 20 storey tower block in Birmingham that was earmarked for demolition. It has now been transformed into much needed temporary accommodation for up to 160 families who would otherwise be living in emergency hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation.

The tower has been fully refurbished by a partnership between Birmingham City Council and Wates Living Space and now provides 17 floors of accommodation with two recreational floors and one management office floor, where there are 25 council staff working – including a financial adviser to help residents who are in debt. The cost of the renovation was £11million, £69,000 per unit.

There are shared kitchens and bathrooms between every two units and each family has their own fridge, making the accommodation much better suited to families than bed and breakfast accommodation where people were unable to cook and prepare their own food. According to an Inside Housing article on Barry Jackson Tower in August 2019, in the previous year there had been

700 families staying in Bed and Breakfast accommodation across the city at any stage. In the summer of 2019 – following the opening of Barry Jackson Tower, the number was below 400.

The first residents moved in to the accommodation in June 2019, and there is no time limit for how long people can stay at Barry Jackson Tower but single men are not allowed to live in the units.

The tower has been refurbished to a high standard with the installation of modern life-safety equipment – essential due to the height of the building, the density of occupation within it, and also post-Grenfell Tower changes to fire safety regulations – including sprinklers, fire lifts, wet and dry risers, automatic opening ventilators, smoke extraction systems and automatic door actuators, as well as a standby generator and new water tanks.

The refurbishment of the tower and efforts to reduce the number of families in poor quality bed and breakfast accommodation are part of a wider strategy looking at homelessness in Birmingham in a whole systems approach, following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018.

Source: <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/insight/birminghams-temporary-accommodation-tower-62500> and <https://www.wates.co.uk/articles/case-study/barry-jackson-tower/>

Capital Letters is another good example of innovative work happening to improve the accommodation offer for those facing homelessness.

Capital Letters, London

Capital Letters was set up in March 2019 and is a collaboration between London boroughs working together to improve housing options for homeless households. The aim is to increase the supply of homes from the private rented sector available to homeless households who councils have a duty to rehouse. Capital Letters works as a not-for-profit organisation that will procure accommodation on behalf of the boroughs. This will reduce competition between councils and produce better outcomes for London's homeless households.

By establishing a single organisation to represent multiple boroughs across London, a greater range of private sector properties can be sourced and a one stop service can be provided to landlords and managing agents, including fast payment and protection of rental income as well as insurance to safeguard property.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has allocated £37.8 million to support Capital Letters over a three-year period.

The establishment of Capital Letters is being coordinated by the London Housing Directors' Group and London Councils.

Source: <https://capitalletters.org.uk/>

There is hope that the Homelessness Reduction Act and the renewed focus on preventing homelessness, will ultimately help to reduce the numbers of people having to be placed in temporary accommodation – although the duty to house them continues, and early evidence suggested that local authorities were housing more people with associated increased funding needs.

3. Causes of homelessness

There are many causes of homelessness, and for each individual the cause of their homelessness will be unique to themselves. There are nevertheless both structural and social causes of homelessness such as poverty, unemployment, and the lack of affordable housing, alongside individual life events such as relationship breakdown, mental or physical health problems, loss of employment, and drug and alcohol misuse.

There also seem to be key trigger points for homelessness such as leaving prison, the care system or the armed forces with no stable home to go to. For women, homelessness often comes about as the result of escaping from a violent relationship.

Lack of affordable housing

There is both a problem with the supply and affordability of housing in England. The issue of housing supply is more serious in some parts of the country than others. The government has acknowledged that homelessness constitutes the *'most visible manifestation of the long term failure of successive governments'* as the levels of house building have been insufficient to meet increasing demand:

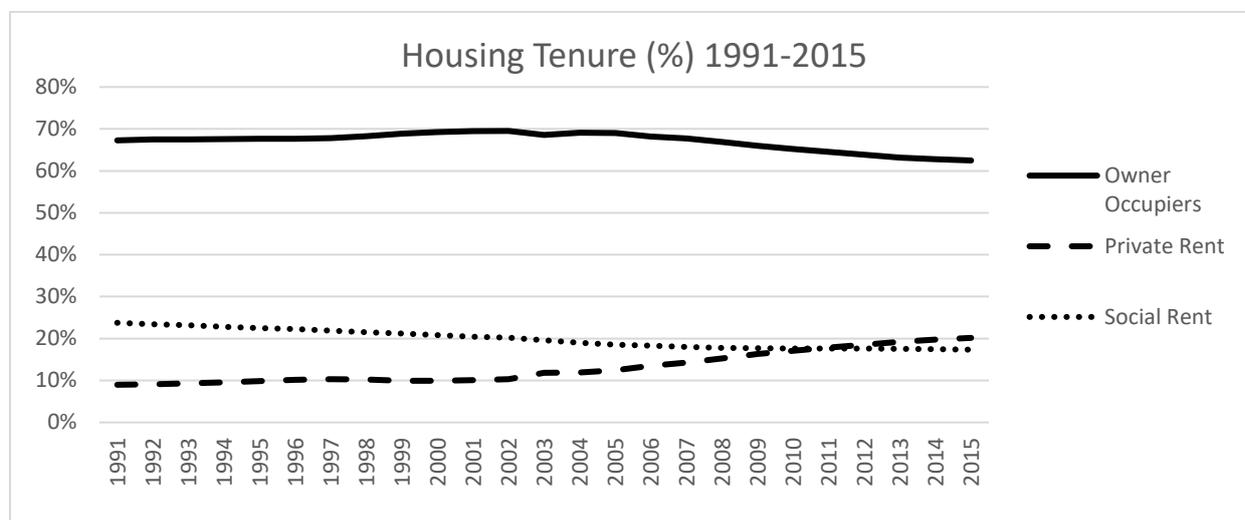
For decades, the pace of house building has been sluggish at best. As a result, the number of new homes has not kept pace with our growing population. (Wilson and Barton, 2020b)

It is also a question of what we build, who for and at what cost. Most new housing is very expensive.

The supply of social housing has been eroded over time due to continuing Right-to-Buy sales, demolition of large council estates, big funding cuts for new social housing, and the conversion of new tenancies into "affordable" sub-market rents, gradually replacing the lower social rents. There is also a significant increase in shared ownership where the tenant becomes part-owner of the property.

The unexpectedly fast expansion in private renting since the early 1990's, accelerating since 2000, has led to there being more private rented than social rented homes.

One of the most contradictory and problematic developments in private renting lies in the accelerated growth in buy-to-let tenancies on council estates. Former Right-to-Buy property is often converted to private renting. Many councils that no longer have enough accommodation for homeless families that they are obliged to help, now house them in private lettings in former Right-to-Buy properties on large social housing estates. Around 40% of all Right-to-Buy properties are now re-let privately (Inside Housing, 7th December 2017). This poses major challenges for housing management, it drives up Housing Benefit bills, and it causes maintenance problems on flatted estates. (Power et al, 2018)



Insecurity in the PRS

The termination of assured short-hold tenancies (the standard tenancy) in the private rented sector is now widely accepted as being one of the key causes of homelessness. In 2010/11, the end of an assured short-hold tenancy was given as a reason in 15% of cases of homelessness acceptances. This rose to a peak of 31% in 2016/17. In 2017/18, the figure was 27% and this figure may now be declining. Reasons for this decline have been attributed to both the preventative work of local authorities through the Homelessness Reduction Act and also to the idea that the PRS has already become out of reach for the majority of those on a lower income (in London).

...while the loss of assured short-hold tenancies (ASTs) remains the most significant trigger for statutory homelessness applications in England, the extraordinarily sharp upward trend in this cause of homelessness has been reversed in the most recent period. One statutory sector key informant explained that “They’re all gone”, by which she meant that so many low-income private tenants in London had already lost their hold on the PRS as a result of the combination of rising rents and the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) freeze that there were simply fewer people in a position to be made homeless via this route.
(Fitzpatrick et al, 2019)

Welfare reform and austerity

The increase in both statutory homelessness and rough sleeping over the last decade must be seen within the wider context of wide-ranging changes to the welfare system and cuts to public services. In September 2017, the National Audit Office produced a report on homelessness which highlighted the role that welfare and benefit reforms, particularly Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance, had in the rising levels of homelessness.

Changes to the Local Housing Allowance are likely to have contributed to the lack of affordability of tenancies for those on benefits and are an element of the increase in homelessness. Since 2011, the Department for Work & Pensions has introduced a series of welfare reforms, including capping and freezing the Local Housing Allowance. These reforms have been designed to reduce overall welfare spending and to provide incentives for benefit recipients to take up employment. They have reduced the amount of household income that it is possible to derive from benefits where the Local Housing Allowance applies. At the same time, rents in the private rented sector in much of the country — London in particular — have increased faster than wage growth. All of these factors appear to have contributed to private rented properties becoming less affordable, which in turn is likely to be contributing to homelessness caused by the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy.
(National Audit Office, 2017)

Concerns about the delivery of Universal Credit continue, particularly regarding the impact on people who end up in rent arrears. The need to make some amendments and concessions has now been accepted by government and some policy changes have been in place since 2018. Nevertheless, in the Homelessness Monitor 2019 (England) it was reported that:

Recent Government concessions on the design and implementation of Universal Credit are welcome, but these must be extended to further mitigate risks of rising rent arrears that can lead to homelessness. New measures are needed to tackle payment delays and deductions and to fast-track rental assistance directly to landlords where appropriate

There are widespread anxieties about the likely homelessness impacts of future welfare reforms already programmed to take effect over the next two years. Nearly two thirds of local authorities anticipate a “significant” increase in homelessness as a result of the full roll-out of Universal Credit, with a further 25 per cent expected some level of increase.
(Suzanne Fitzpatrick; Hal Pawson; Glen Bramley; Beth Watts; Jenny Wood; Mark Stephens & Janice Blenkinsopp, The homelessness monitor: England 2019, May 2019, page xiv)

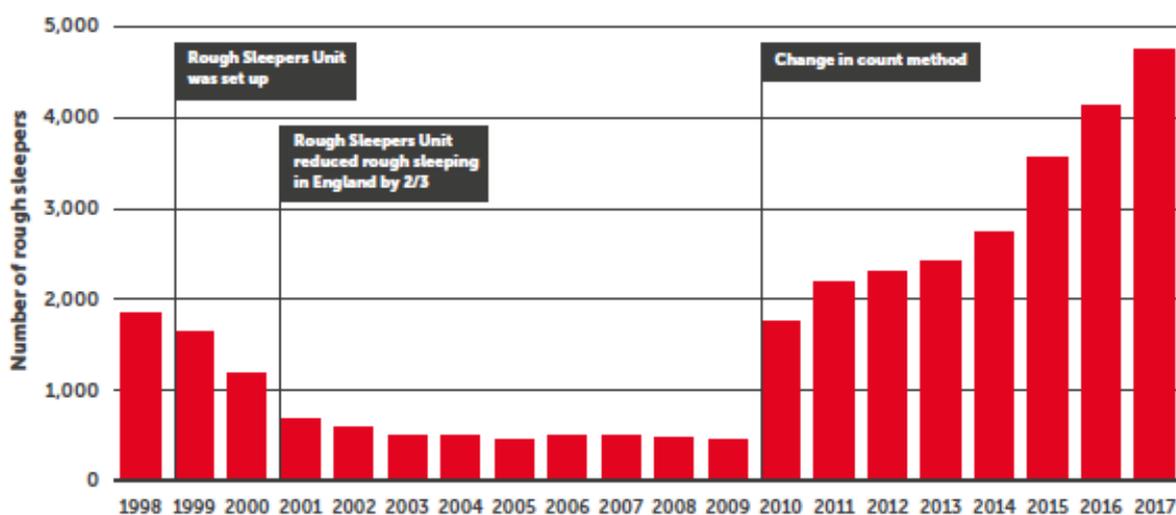
4. Government approach to homelessness

Background

Homelessness had been rising through the 1990s and the Labour Government that came to power in 1997 made rough sleeping one of the key priorities of its newly created Social Exclusion Unit.

The sight of a rough sleeper bedding down for the night in a shop doorway or on a park bench is one of the most potent symbols of social exclusion in Britain today. It is a source of shame for all of us that there are still about 2,000 people out on the streets around England every night, and 10,000 sleep rough over the course of a year... There are good reasons for aiming to end rough sleeping. It is bad for those who do it, as they are intensely vulnerable to crime, drugs and alcohol, and at high risk of serious illness, and premature death. And rough sleeping is bad for the rest of society. (Foreword by the Prime Minister, Social Exclusion Unit Report on Rough Sleeping, 1998)

Figure 2.3: Rough sleeping in England



Source: MHCLG and RSU

Source: *Crisis (2018). Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain.*

Since 2010 levels of rough sleeping, homeless acceptances and the numbers of households living in temporary accommodation have all been increasing.

The homelessness duties owed to people differ greatly across the nations of the United Kingdom, as a result direct comparisons between nations are also difficult. Housing policy is a devolved matter, and the nations have used this opportunity to legislate in different ways. In summary:

- In Scotland, local authorities have a duty towards all unintentionally homeless households irrespective of whether they are in priority need.
- In Wales, local authorities have a duty to help secure accommodation for all applicants assessed as homeless for a period of 56 days. After this period there is a continuing duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need.
- On 3 April 2018 in England, authorities acquired a duty to prevent and relieve homelessness for a period of 56 days for all applicants. (Wilson and Barton, 2018)

Statutory homelessness

There has been an increase in statutory homelessness in England since 2010. Previous statistical releases from MHCLG tracked the number of households deemed to be owed a duty to secure accommodation (i.e. unintentionally homeless and in priority need). These show that in 2010/11 there was a 10% increase in homelessness acceptances by local authorities from the previous year. This was the first time the number had increased since 2003/04. Homelessness acceptances have generally continued to rise. In 2014/15 acceptances were 36% higher than in 2009/10. Acceptances increased again in 2015/16 and 2016/17 but fell slightly by 4% in 2017/18 compared to the previous year.

MHCLG's latest release describes local authorities' activity between April and June 2019. The release is classed as 'experimental statistics' because of several data quality issues. Some local authorities did not provide any data and others reported confusion about some of the reporting requirements.

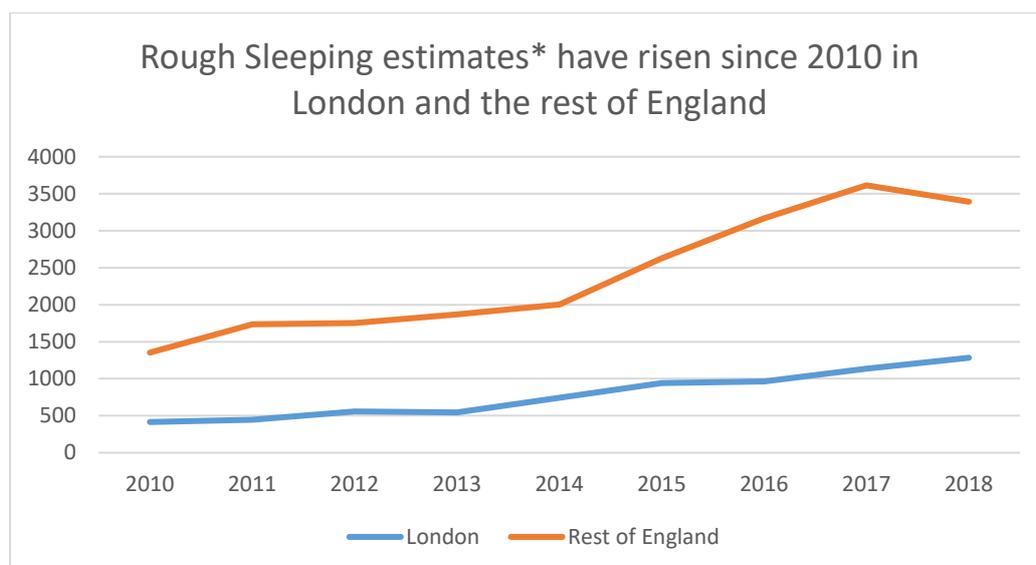
When a household applies to their local authority for assistance an initial decision is made to determine whether they are owed a prevention or a relief duty.

- 94% of initial decisions recorded between April and June 2019 found that the council had to fulfil homeless duties as per:
 - 35,950 prevention duties
 - 32,220 relief duties
 - 8,360 households were owed a main homelessness duty

Rough Sleeping estimates

The number of people sleeping rough on the streets of England has been rising over the last decade. Latest government statistics (using the snapshot model) show that:

- 4,266 people were estimated to be sleeping rough on a single night in autumn 2019.
- This is down by 411 people or 9 % from 2018 and down 10 % from the peak in 2017 when 4,751 were recorded sleeping rough on a single night.
- However, this number is up by 2,498 people or 141 % since 2010 when the snapshot estimation was 1,768 people on a single night.



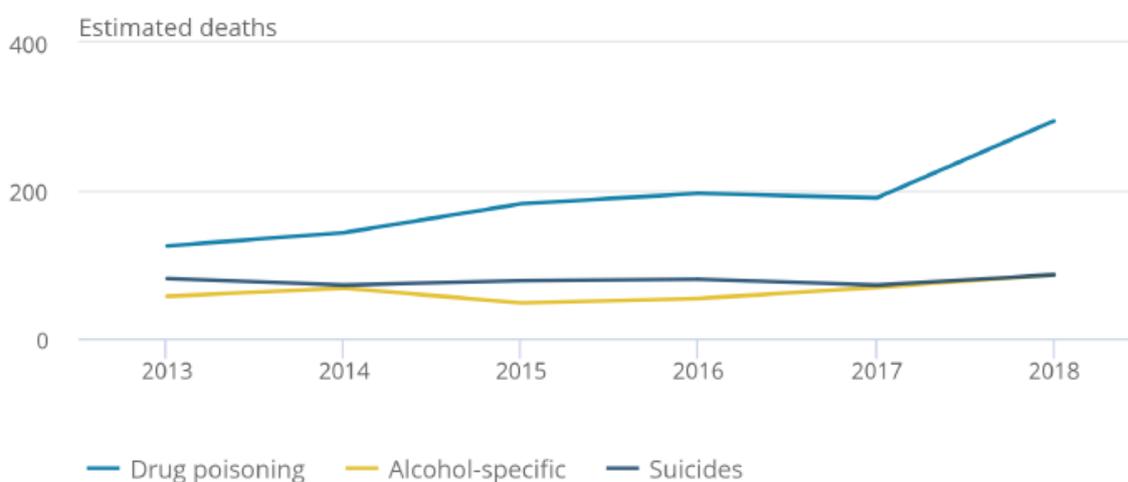
*Street counts, evidence-based estimates and estimates informed by a spotlight street count of rough sleeping, England, autumn 2010 to autumn 2018. Source: Rough Sleeping Statistics England Autumn 2018, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

In addition to increasing numbers of homeless people, there has also been a steady increase in the number of deaths of homeless people. In 2018, there were an estimated 726 deaths of homeless people in England and Wales, an increase of almost a quarter (22%) on the number of deaths in 2017 (597). ONS have described this increase as statistically significant and represents the largest year to year increase in estimated deaths since the time series began in 2013. (ONS, 2019). The ONS data also showed that 40% of deaths among homeless people in 2018 were related to drug poisoning.

Deaths of homeless people (estimated) by selected causes of death, 2013 to 2018

Figure 4: Drug-related deaths of homeless people increased by 55 % in one year

Deaths of homeless people (estimated) by selected causes of death, 2013 to 2018



Source: ONS, Deaths of Homeless People in England and Wales, 2018

The Homelessness Reduction Act

The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) came into force in April 2018 in England and has been described by many as the biggest change in homelessness legislation in 40 years. The Act gave local authorities new duties to both prevent and to relieve homelessness.

In our case study resource we feature the London Borough of Southwark which was a trailblazer authority for the Homelessness Reduction Act. Much learning has been shared through this pilot, with other local authorities from across the country visiting Southwark and drawing on their experiences (LSE Housing and Communities, 2020a).

In the latest statistical release on statutory homelessness from MHCLG, it is noted that the HRA has had an impact on the number of households presenting as homeless due to the prevention and relief work that local authorities are now carrying out:

The number of households owed a main homelessness duty continues to be lower than pre-HRA levels as households are now prevented or relieved from homelessness prior to the main duty under the new duties introduced in April 2018. (Wilson and Barton, 2020b))

These new duties are explained as follows:

- **Prevention duties** include any activities aimed at preventing a household threatened with homelessness within 56 days from becoming homeless. This would involve activities to enable an applicant to remain in their current home or find alternative accommodation in order to prevent them from becoming homeless. The duty lasts for 56 days but may be extended if the local authority is continuing with efforts to prevent homelessness.
- **Relief duties** are owed to households that are already homeless and require help to secure settled accommodation. This would involve activities to find accommodation to relieve their homelessness. The duty lasts 56 days and can only be extended by a local authority if the households would not be owed the main homelessness duty.
- The **Main Homelessness duty** describes the duty a local authority has towards an applicant who is unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and has priority need. This definition has not been changed by the 2017 HRA. This duty is now only owed if a household has not had their homelessness prevented or relieved successfully.

In 2019, a year on from the introduction of the Act, some local authorities were already struggling to comply with the act as government funding was proving insufficient. The Local Government Association has reported that as a result of the act, homelessness presentations have increased considerably (more than 75%). Meanwhile, the number of people placed in temporary and emergency accommodation has increased, as has the length of stays in temporary and emergency accommodation. (The Guardian, 10 April 2019)

In March 2020, Crisis launched their report, *A Foot in the Door*, on the first two years of the HRA. Their research emphasised the value of the shift towards homelessness prevention in the wider effort to address homelessness longer term.

In nearly all cases, homelessness can be prevented. The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) is one of the most important changes to homelessness legislation in England in the past 40 years making homelessness prevention a central part of the statutory framework. It was designed to put prevention at the heart of homelessness assistance in England and remove barriers for people accessing statutory homelessness services.

Ultimately the most effective way to end homelessness is to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place. With the right resources and support the HRA can and should be at the heart of ending homelessness for good. (Boobis et al, 2020, p6)

The report makes some important recommendations on how the Homelessness Reduction Act can be improved and what changes could be made to enable local housing authorities and other public bodies to maximise the potential of the Act, as illustrated in the box below.

CRISIS, 2020: A Foot in the Door - Report Recommendations

Additional investment is needed to address structural barriers that currently restrict local authorities from fulfilling the duties placed on them by the Homelessness Reduction Act and must include:

- Investment in LHA rates so that they cover at least the cheapest third of rents (realigning back to the 30th percentile) – The under investment into Local Housing Allowance rates is a barrier to preventing homelessness and means people cannot be supported out of homelessness and into the private rented sector where suitable.
- Investment in social housing and a national target of an additional 90,000 social homes each year for the next 15 years – In England, there is no national target for building homes at social rent

levels. Government policy since 2012 has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of homes for social rent, making it harder for local authorities to house homeless households.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) should be **changed and strengthened** in the following ways:

- Introduce a statutory code of practice to raise the standards of local authority homelessness services across the country – The Secretary of State has the power to produce a statutory code of practice which should provide a clear and enforceable set of standards for local authorities.
- A duty to prevent homelessness should be placed on all relevant public bodies including the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Home Office and the Department for Education – The introduction of the Duty to Refer reflects a recognition that successful homelessness prevention can never just be the responsibility of the local housing authority. The legislation should go further and place stronger requirements on public authorities to work with local housing authorities to prevent homelessness.
- Strengthening the code of guidance to ensure the HRA works to its full potential. This should include more guidance for local housing authorities on
 - amendments to allocations policies that emphasises the need for policies and nomination agreements that support prevention rather than hindering;
 - advice and information for specific groups and expectations around this in light of the strengthened advisory duty;
 - determining “affordability”;
 - “regular contact” and progression within the 56 days;
 - early interventions for those at risk of homelessness, but not within 56 days.

Further investment and longer term funding is required to provide greater financial stability to support local authorities to prevent and end homelessness:

- Introduce national provision of private rented access schemes across England including a national rent deposit guarantee scheme to improve access to stable, decent private tenancies for homeless people, reducing the burdens on individual schemes, and help local authorities procure properties more easily as part of their prevention and relief duties.
- The Government must continue to invest in homelessness services to ensure a sharper focus and investment in prevention measures, and evidenced based, housing-led solutions to meet its target of ending rough sleeping by 2024 and end all forms of homelessness. This should include a national outcomes and performance framework to provide consistency and accountability across policies and service delivery of the HRA at a national and local level.

Source: Boobis et al, 2020, p12-13

In addition to the Homeless Reduction Act, the government has also taken clear steps to address the issue of rough sleeping. In March 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced the Rough Sleepers Initiative, allocating funding later that year of £30 million to 83 local authorities. In August 2018 the government committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and to ending it by 2027 in its Rough Sleeping Strategy.

We have committed to halve rough sleeping in this Parliament and to end it for good by 2027...Central and local government must work together to ensure everyone in our society has the dignity and security they need...Our Strategy is based around three core pillars: Prevention, Intervention and Recovery.

Ministerial Foreword, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018

The Rough Sleeping Initiative – described as a cornerstone of the government’s ambitious Rough Sleeping Strategy –allocated £76 million to 246 councils across the country in 2018/2019. The aim of the Initiative is to support rough sleepers off the streets and into secure accommodation in order to access further help. In January 2020 the government announced further allocations to councils across England of a £112 million to continue to provide local support for those living on the streets.

Furthermore, at the end of February 2020, the government announced an extra £236 million to help get people off the streets and appointed Louise Casey as an independent adviser to lead an urgent review into the causes of rough sleeping.

The new funding was to go towards offering Housing First style ‘move on’ accommodation for up to 6,000 rough sleepers and those at immediate risk of rough sleeping, to give them stability and certainty over the long-term. We discuss Housing First more below.

5. Housing First

Housing First is an alternative homelessness intervention strategy, aimed at people with complex needs, particularly rough sleepers. Housing First offers a different approach to traditional homelessness interventions. Homeless housing initiatives usually require people to become 'housing ready' before moving into their own accommodation. Supporters of the Housing First approach suggest that the early provision of long-term housing provides a stable home from which it is easier to deal with other underlying issues, such as substance abuse. Central to the Housing First approach is the commitment to support individuals for as long as they require.

Housing First stands in contrast to the more traditional linear or stair-casing models of transition from rough sleeping to independent living in the course of which individuals must show that they are housing ready before accessing a tenancy. This approach is successful for some, but it is not always suitable or appropriate for people with complex needs and it often results in people becoming stuck in a revolving door of services which fail to meet their needs.

Housing First as we recognise it can be traced back to the Pathways Housing First organisation founded in NYC 1992 by Dr Sam Tsemberis:

The philosophy behind Pathways Housing First was that long-term issues such as drug dependency and mental health problems would be easier to tackle once someone is in permanent, secure accommodation. By using scattered housing (i.e. not hostels or shared accommodation blocks) clients would be distanced from destabilising influences and encouraged to integrate with wider society. Furthermore, this would be cost effective as it did not require use of supported accommodation and would reduce interaction with publicly funded organisations such as police and emergency health services.

(Bellis and Wilson, 2018).

In 2008 the Finnish Government decided to incorporate Housing First into its national strategy. Since then the number of long term homeless people in the country has fallen by 35% and rough sleeping in Helsinki is close to having been eradicated (The Guardian, 3 June 2019). The Finnish experiment has demonstrated the value of Housing First as part of a more integrated strategy to address homelessness, including more prevention and early intervention work alongside a healthy supply of affordable housing

Increased interest in Housing First in England is taking place within the context of a growth in rough sleeping – with numbers of those sleeping rough having increased year on year since 2010. The Government has a target of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminating it by 2027. Therefore there is an acknowledgement that newer and more innovative approaches to helping people with complex needs off the streets will need to be adopted.

The Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish and UK Governments have all committed to exploring the model. In England, The Autumn Budget 2017 committed £28 million to support three Government-sponsored Housing First pilots in the West Midlands, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester. Funding allocations for the pilots were announced on 9 May 2018 (Bellis and Wilson, 2018). The Housing Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said at the time:

The evidence shows Housing First has an incredible rate of success in providing rough sleepers with the support they need to get off the streets and to rebuild their lives.... We are investing over £1.2 billion to break the homelessness cycle, but we know there's more to do to help people off the streets for good. This is why the government is leading the way in implementing Housing First in England.... I believe these pilots will have a positive impact in their areas and I look forward to hearing about their successes over the coming months.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-secretary-james-brokenshire-awards-funding-to-reduce-rough-sleeping>

There have been pilot projects for Housing First in England (and other parts of the UK – most notably Scotland) since around 2010. Many of these projects have been evaluated and there is a growing evidence base on Housing First to support its value. According to Pleace and Quilgars, 2018, in their evaluation of the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First project (discussed below), UK evidence currently indicates that:

- Housing First is able to engage effectively with people with experience of sustained and recurrent homelessness, who have high and complex needs.
- Housing First engages effectively with people with sustained and repeated use of homelessness services, whose homelessness has not been ended.
- Exits from homelessness can be sustained (at one year) for between 7 and 9 out of every 10 people Housing First services engage with.
- Housing First services are almost always well regarded by people who use them
- While results in enabling exits from homelessness are strong, results in relation to drug and alcohol use and mental health can be more variable.

This progress must be seen in the context of the key principles generally adopted in Housing First programmes in England:

- People have a right to a home
- Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed
- Housing and support are separated
- Individuals have choice and control
- The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations
- An active engagement approach is used
- A harm reduction approach is used.

While the British evidence base is still developing, the findings so far mirror those of the much more established research conducted on Housing First schemes elsewhere. For homeless people with high and complex needs, Housing First has been found to be the most consistently effective service model, in terms of actually ending homelessness, in Europe and North America, as well as in the UK. Finland, for example has used this model for several years on a large scale and claims to have effectively solved rough sleeping. In this country we are a long way from that position but we are building up experience with generally positive outcomes. There is also potential for Housing First to deliver improvements in health, reduced addiction, greater well-being and more social integration. These positive results do not apply in all cases and can take longer to achieve than the improved housing outcomes (Pleace and Quilgars, 2017).

Crucially Housing First should not be seen as a replacement for other homelessness services and strategies, but as a specialist intervention for those with severe and complex needs, for whom other interventions have been ineffective or are not suitable. Housing First is part of a wider rough sleeping / homelessness strategy.

It is claimed that Housing First is a better model to help those with severe and complex needs, but it is not seen as a replacement for all homelessness services and strategies. Its

value is primarily as a supplement to existing strategies.
(Bellis and Wilson, 2018, p8)

Evidence from Liverpool, Manchester and the West Midlands Housing First Pilot Projects

The government funded pilots in Liverpool, Manchester and the West Midlands are now up and running. The three large scale pilots are all being delivered in different ways and are all subject to external evaluation by a national consortium.

At the end of 2019, MHCLG announced that 200 people were now housed as a result of the work of the Housing First pilot projects in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and the West Midlands, where they have received vital support to recover from complex mental health issues, substance misuse, and the physical effects of living on the streets:

Housing First is making a real difference to rough sleepers this Christmas. This programme is based on the simple principle of helping people into safe and secure homes first, and then providing intensive support, including for addiction, physical and mental health.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, 24 December 2019

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/200-people-to-spend-christmas-off-the-streets-and-in-their-own-homes-thanks-to-innovative-government-programme-housing-first>

Evidence from Crisis on Housing First in Liverpool City Region

In the Liverpool City Region there was a feasibility study carried out by Crisis around Housing First in 2017. This study made clear that Housing First can play a role in a new system to address homelessness which is housing-led and people-centred.

In this report we present a vision in which Housing First is a sub-set of Housing Led approaches – it sits within a housing-led system in which the default approach is to support homeless people as quickly as possible into independent tenancies, bypassing the need for compulsory and / or longer stays in communal supported housing.

(Blood et al, 2017)

Housing First works well alongside other housing led services as some people will be housed and need no support, some will require low level support through floating support services and others with high and complex needs may need a more intensive Housing First approach. As discussed above it is crucial that Housing First is not seen as a replacement for all other homelessness interventions, and it is important that it is integrated into a wider housing led system. The feasibility study in Liverpool emphasised this point:

Since Housing First is a relatively expensive and intensive intervention it is important that it is only targeted on those who need it. The cost effectiveness of Housing First hinges on it not being used by those who could be supported by lower intensity services. Without sufficient lower intensity services and good access to independent tenancies, there is a risk that Housing First is swamped by referrals of people who do not really need this level of support, just because the service is the only gateway to independent tenancies and floating support for homeless people.

(Blood et al, 2017)

The report highlighted the need for wide-scale systemic change and changes to the culture of delivery of homelessness services.

Developing Housing First at scale will require not only smart systems thinking, determined partnership working and the implementation of new models of service delivery but a very

real change in the culture of services.

(Blood et al, 2017)

Existing research has shown that Housing First pilots in the UK can be vulnerable to insecure funding streams when they are run as experiments, rather than as an integral part of a coordinated homelessness strategy. To secure funding, HF must be making a clear contribution to tackling long-term and recurrent homelessness, facilitating savings in existing hostel and temporary supported housing provision which can be redeployed to support increased preventative activity and to support Housing First itself.

(Blood et al, 2017)

This crucial point underlines the need for Housing First to fill into a wider framework of housing and social services and supports to overcome and prevent homelessness.

In late 2019 we visited two of the three government funded pilot Housing First projects in Liverpool City Region and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. These visits revealed the scope for and complexity of delivering Housing First at scale. It also made clear the differences between the three areas.

We have highlighted some of our key learning from these visits below, illustrated in the tables summarising the main features of the three pilots and how they are being delivered, in the case of the West Midlands, we relied on phone interviews and written materials.

MHCLG funded Housing First Pilots in Greater Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands

Liverpool City Region

Funding	£7.7 million
Timescale	3 years – funding announced 2018 but pilots started April 2019
Who runs the Housing First pilot?	Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority to directly managing the pilot and employ a dedicated in house team.
What partners are involved?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 6 Local Authorities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Liverpool, 2. Sefton, 3. Wirral, 4. Knowsley, 5. Halton, 6. St Helens 2. Housing Associations and other housing providers across Liverpool City Region
Background:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crisis Feasibility Study (2017) provided a clear evidence base and case for action in the Liverpool City Region. 2. Liverpool City Region Mayor – Steve Rotherham - committed to addressing homelessness and focus on housing
Accommodation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accommodation through Housing Associations and the private rented sector where necessary. 2. Housing First Lettings Lead (within LCRC) initially to facilitate and then the LCR wide Local Lettings Agency or similar
Target client numbers:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 330 2. Phase 1 has a caseload of 60 people
Staffing:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff recruited directly by the LCR Combined Authority 2. In Phase One – from April 2019 – there were 3 support teams of 4 support workers and 1 team leader in each – collectively managing a caseload of 20 people per team. 3. Support provided through weekends with an on-call system available out of hours. 4. Housing First Operational Manager to oversee the 3 support teams. 5. Began recruitment for 2 further teams for the next phase towards end of 2019. 6. Recruitment process has been values driven and led by those with lived experience.
Referral process for service users:	Mainstay Gateway to Housing & Support is a comprehensive assessment for access to all services linked via an IT system. It was created to provide improved access to short-term Housing Related Support services for single persons (and couples in some circumstances) within the region of Liverpool City Council.

	The 2017 feasibility study had identified a level of need and possible service users through Mainstay.
Eligibility for service users:	Not assessed via one assessment but mixed methods including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A history of homelessness with complex needs • Repeat Offending • Significant history of unstable housing and / or homelessness • Judgement that other service options present a significant risk • Personal choice
Role of lived experience:	Integral <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those with lived experience led recruitment process for Housing First support workers 2. Values based recruitment process 3. Peer research role – lived experience integrated into evaluation work
Background – homelessness context	<p>The Mayor of Liverpool City Region Steve Rotherham has homelessness and housing as key priorities. Speaking to the Liverpool Echo at the launch of the LCR Housing First pilot in 2019, he said:</p> <p><i>“I have long been a champion of Housing First and ran for office on a manifesto promise to look at how we could introduce it in our city region.” Devolution gives us a once-in-a-generation chance to change how we do things and Housing First is a prime example of how we are seizing that opportunity. It isn’t easy but we have worked hard to put solid foundations in place and we are committed to making it a success so that it can be rolled out across the whole country. Everyone entrenched in long-term homelessness is there because many things have gone wrong in their lives. Everyone deserves a second chance and we will write no-one off.</i></p> <p>(Liverpool Echo, 15 July 2019)</p> <p>The Crisis feasibility study in Liverpool provided background context to homelessness in the Liverpool City Region.</p> <p>Levels of homelessness – including rough sleeping have been increasing - there has been a 140 per cent increase in rough sleeping in LCR from 2015 to 2016, with an average of 43 people sleeping rough in the city region each night.</p> <p>These figures are likely to significantly under-represent the scale of the problem Mainstay shows that an average of 93 new rough sleepers are presenting across LCR each month. In the year to October 2019 - a total of 899 instances of rough sleeping were identified, while 317 people were brought inside 595 times.</p>

Source: Authors visits and interviews, 2019

Greater Manchester CA

Funding	£8 million
Timescale	three years – funding announced 2018 but pilots started April 2019
Who runs the Housing First pilot?	<p>Greater Manchester Combined Authority has contracted the Greater Manchester Housing First Partnership, led by Great Places</p> <p>Greater Manchester has been divided into four areas with a lead partner in each:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zone A – Manchester - Riverside • Zone B - Bolton, Bury and Rochdale – Regenda • Zone C - Oldham, Stockport and Tameside - Jigsaw • Zone D - Salford, Trafford and Wigan -Great Places.
What partners are involved?	<p>10 Local Authorities: Manchester, Oldham, Stockport, Wigan, Tameside, Bury,</p> <p>Four leading Housing Associations: Great Places, Riverside, Regenda Homes, Jigsaw Homes Group, Stockport Homes Group, Greater Manchester Mental Health, The Bond Board</p>
Background:	<p>Greater Manchester Mayor – Andy Burnham - committed to addressing homelessness / rough sleeping</p> <p>There were already smaller scale Housing First pilot projects in Greater Manchester including: Inspiring Change Manchester, Threshold</p>
Accommodation:	<p>The Housing First pilot is endorsed / co-sponsored by Greater Manchester Homes Partnership (GMHP) which is a group of all the social housing providers / registered providers across Greater Manchester</p> <p>Partnership working with the Bond Board, Ethical Lettings Agency (40% of accommodation in GM will be sourced through the private rented sector)</p>
Target client numbers:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 420 2. Year 1 total – 120
Staffing:	<p>Housing First support workers recruited and managed by the lead partners in each area.</p> <p>All job descriptions and salary scales agreed by GMHP and then lead partner organisations recruited directly.</p>
Referral process for service users:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each local authority has an allocation quota.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Multi agency panels for each local authority 3. Referrals from outreach teams and others – using Greater Manchester Think which is a multi-agency database that lets services across Greater Manchester share information quickly and securely. The system makes it easy for organisations to coordinate the work they do with people who have multiple and complex needs. 4. Rough sleepers and people with complex who are vulnerably housed, at risk of homelessness.
Eligibility for service users:	Use CHAOS index – has 12 fields (e.g. risk to self / others, current accommodation, drug and alcohol abuse) which are each given a score –an indicative threshold score (38 out of a maximum of 60) is then used to determine eligibility. This system is used to ensure consistency across the different partners and local authority areas but is not the sole means of determining eligibility.
Role of lived experience:	
Background – homelessness context	<p>The Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham made the ending of rough sleeping by 2020 one of his top political priorities</p> <p>Between 2009/10 and 2016/17 in Greater Manchester there was:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An increase in homelessness acceptances of 69% 2. An increase in temporary accommodation use of 236% 3. An increase in rough sleeping of 554% <p>A Bed Every Night is part of an innovative and holistic approach to end rough sleeping. It brings together a range of organisations, working together in a joined-up way, including the GMCA and the Mayor, 10 local authorities, GM Health and Social Care Partnership, Greater Manchester and other Criminal Justice Agencies and the Homelessness Action Network, to make sure the individual needs of people who are homeless are being met. Housing First is one of a number of options available to people experiencing or at risk of sleeping rough.</p> <p>Builds upon the existing Social Impact Bond (SIB) which secures independent living spaces for some of the city-region’s previously most entrenched rough sleepers.</p> <p>In 2017 Manchester was the local authority with the highest number of deaths of homeless people - 21 people in one year.</p>

Source: Authors visits and interviews, 2019

West Midlands Combined Authority

Funding	£9.6 million
Timescale	Three years – funding announced 2018 but pilots started April 2019
Who runs the Housing First pilot?	<p>West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) via Birmingham City Council as the Accountable Body and Administering Authority.</p> <p>WMCA maintains an oversight and scrutiny role over HF programme – via the Homelessness Task Force.</p> <p>Project Manager (Birmingham City Council on behalf of WMCA) is responsible for holding regular monitoring meetings with all partners and managing the overall delivery of the project.</p> <p>Full grant has been allocated to the Constituent Local Authorities who then award HF contracts to providers offering support.</p> <p>Each local authority is responsible for the procurement and operation of the Housing First Pilot in its own area.</p>
What partners are involved?	<p>Seven local authorities: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton</p> <p>Project management roles provided for Birmingham City Council by Birmingham Voluntary Service Council</p> <p>Housing associations partners and others:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accord (Walsall, Solihull and Sandwell) 2. Brighter Futures (Coventry) 3. St Basils Housing Association (Birmingham)
Background:	<p>WMCA Homelessness Task Force created in 2017 – led by WMCA Mayor Andy Street which aims to 'design out homelessness in the West Midlands'. The mayor has driven the commitment to tackling homelessness and has involved leading charities such as St Basils in helping.</p> <p>Some smaller scale Housing First projects already operating: e.g. in Walsall with Accord Housing Association since 2017; and Brighter Futures (Coventry).</p>

Accommodation:	Different arrangements for each partner local authority – in Walsall there is a partnership between Accord and other registered social providers and also private sector landlords.
Target client numbers:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 675 2. By March 2020 – 156 people had been helped off the streets and into secure tenancies
Staffing:	Staff are recruited and managed directly by each of the local authorities and their delivery partners
Referral process for service users:	Each local authority finds suitable clients.
Eligibility for service users:	Each local authority delivery body developed its own eligibility method, within the agreed framework.
Role of lived experience:	<p>Integral</p> <p>Brighter Futures have Peer Mentors within their team. The aim of the service is to not only reduce homelessness but to leave a legacy of increased employability and skills among local people, through training, work experience and personal development. Brighter Futures pay peer mentors so those employed by it can transition easily to other jobs.</p>
Background – homelessness context	The West Midlands City Regions homelessness problem has deteriorated due to large scale demolition of mainly multi-storey, unpopular council blocks. These blocks were in decline and low demand. They were increasingly used to house homeless people, with high turnover, and many related social problems. From around 1998 systematic demolition of up to 2000 units a year took place, depleting the available stock of housing for homeless people.

Findings from our key actor interviews

Through our investigations of Housing First pilots across the country, particularly the city region pilots, we picked some dominant themes.

1. There is a strong commitment to delivering Housing First at scale while ensuring fidelity to the Housing First model. This ensures that enough support staff with useful experience are directly involved.

[It is] difficult to be true to the principles of Housing First if you have too many people to support for the number of support workers

Regular fidelity assessments in the national evaluation – ranking projects as low, medium or high...In practice there is no such thing as low fidelity – if it's not faithful to the model then it's not Housing First but a rapid rehousing pathway or a housing-led intervention.

2. There are big challenges involved in delivering at scale across different local authority areas and involving large numbers of partner who need to be informed and on board with the approach. That is why West Midlands Combined Authority devolved to each of the seven local authorities for the actual delivery of their part of the pilot.

The number of partners, the number of Local Authorities that we have to work with – is at a big scale...The biggest challenge we think is the scale of it, and ensuring fidelity across five different partners and across GM.

3. Housing First needs to be incorporated into a wider homelessness system that is person-centred and housing-led. Wide-scale change is required in the way homelessness is dealt with. This involves learning process which brings everyone along. There are major issues that also need to be addressed such as housing supply and affordability.

In Liverpool City Region we have a wider aspiration setting out what this should be – wholesale system change to a housing-led Housing First style approach.

The infrastructure / system needs to change as well in order to deliver Housing First – so we are trying to do system change as we are delivering...The wider context of the environment we are working in its education / system change that we are undertaking at the moment. It's about the system change as much as capacity building, it's been a big piece of work, that we didn't appreciate how much there would be to do.

There's an issue with employing people – we are trying to do system change here so people are coming in with a set of pre-learned values on how homelessness services have been delivered and we are asking them to learn a new set of values and to work in a very particular way that is very person centred, with no goals apart from those set by the person. That is very different to anything else. Previously there have been very structured, transactional approaches and that in itself is difficult...Finding the people whose values do align has proved difficult even amongst a cohort of people who worked in homelessness.

4. The three pilot Housing First projects are being delivered in city regions with devolved powers and a democratically elected regional mayor. Political support and commitment from the local mayors to Housing First is crucial to the pilot's success. Local political commitment forms part of a wider commitment to ending homelessness and rough sleeping in their areas

[We] expect that this pilot will show us that the housing system and welfare system are massive components of homelessness. MHCLG don't talk about that anymore – they want it to be a standalone issue...We have a Metro Mayor who is able to discuss these issues...This

isn't about just hitting targets, unless you're willing to look into what are the causes and tackle them

5. Lived experience plays a very important role in Housing First projects. In the pilot areas, there is a focus on values-driven recruitment and the relationship between client and Housing First workers as crucial to success

What is central to us is lived experience, so we have a co-production panel for Greater Manchester of people with lived experience, some of Housing First and some not, but experience of general homelessness. The lead of that group sits on our partnership board and they are involved in decision making all the way through so it's not tokenistic or a bolt on. Currently working with them to develop the quality and assurance framework, to develop recruitment process, everything is coproduced which is really important.

We wanted to do values based recruitment – we wanted people with lived experience to be part of the process. All of our recruitment was based on principles, the first stage was led entirely by people with lived experience, they devised a set of questions, one or two staff members in the room but they facilitated the event rather than leading the process, then we narrowed down the field from that.

6. Measuring impact: Government targets and numbers are only part of the change required. Local authorities need to change the way they work. It is important to showcase these local changes in ways of delivering services.

...you need to look at the whole system. [Housing First] Intervention doesn't need piloting, there's lots of evidence across the world. What we need is an evidence base for how you transition from the current UK model to a Housing First and housing led model.

What will happen with local authorities is their systems change, for example, the types of services they commission and how they monitor and evaluate them. Then hopefully it becomes embedded into the system – that is the ideal. Local authorities are targets but also health, criminal justice. If we come up with a model that works – this is what it costs you, this is what it gets you, this is the model you need to have in place and replicate. Then we go out and sell that to people.

6. Case Studies - Reducing and preventing homelessness using Housing First principles

In this section of the report, we share case studies and good practice from organisations and services that we have uncovered, who are embedding Housing First principles into their wider service offer.

Inspiring Change, Manchester – helping entrenched rough sleepers find a housing route out of homelessness

Inspiring Change Manchester offers an innovative approach to supporting those with multiple needs. It has a strong focus on management and on providing intensive additional “wrap-around” support. The eight-year programme is funded through the Big Lottery’s Fulfilling Lives Project totalling £112m, has been designed and developed with service users to meet the diverse requirements of people living in Manchester with multiple complex needs (including a history of problem drug and alcohol use, mental and emotional health issues, accommodation problems and offending). The project aims to break down barriers that can prevent these people from leading fulfilling lives by delivering the right range of services at the right time, in tandem with housing in private rental accommodation. Shelter plays a significant role in managing this project and also contributes to the funding.

Inspiring Change Manchester developed a Housing First pilot to complement its other work supporting people in Manchester with high and complex needs for whom existing services had not been effective. The Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First service is integrated into the wider programme of support being provided that includes arts-based activities, education, training and employment services and support with mental health problems, also provided by Inspiring Change Manchester.

Pleace and Quilgars (2018) produced an evaluation of the Inspiring Change Manchester Housing First programme and highlighted the following:

1. Fidelity to the Housing First principles is high
2. At the time of the evaluation, 16 people had engaged with the Housing First pilot and 15 had been housed.
3. There were initial logistical problems with the referral process to the Housing First pilot, but these were resolved.
4. Housing First service users praised the support in finding housing and the role of Housing First staff in tackling housing problems. There were wider issues to do with neighbourhoods etc. that proved more difficult to address.
5. On average the Housing First service users waited 17 weeks to be housed. However, as the pilot became more established progress was made in building support among social landlords including an agreement from a collective of landlords across Greater Manchester to provide 15 one bedroom flats to Inspiring Change Manchester.
6. Initial results showed very high rates of tenancy sustainment among the service users and people had good access to funding and physical resources.
7. The intensive, flexible support provided by the Housing First pilot was universally praised. Support was described as reliable, flexible, non-judgemental and effective.
8. Emphasis was placed on the importance of peer mentoring. While this was still being developed at the time of evaluation, initial reports showed it to be working well.

Pleace and Quilgars showed in their evaluation of the small scale Housing First pilot that there was clear potential for Housing First to play a role in reducing homelessness among people with high and complex needs across Greater Manchester. The initial results reflect the wider UK and global evidence base, which is now well established in many countries, and shows the effectiveness of the model.

The evidence underlines the fact that Housing First is most effective when employed as a key component of an integrated homelessness strategy, focused on homelessness among people with high and complex support needs, including both addiction and severe mental illness.

Housing First has the potential to be used as a preventative service, as well as being used when homelessness has become recurrent or sustained due to someone having high and complex needs, which orthodox services cannot fully meet.

To make an effective contribution to ending rough sleeping in Greater Manchester by 2020 and in reducing and preventing homelessness among people with high and complex needs, Housing First needs to fit within an integrated homelessness strategy.

Role of private rented housing in Inspiring Change

There are many barriers to accessing housing for Inspiring Change Manchester clients including exclusion from social housing lists due to previous evictions or rent arrears. The unaffordability of some of the private rented sector; the lack of a guarantor, unaffordable administration fees; no recognisable tenancy history; and ongoing multiple complex needs also create barriers. However, the programme has successfully housed clients in the private rented sector. Shelter also funds a PRS access scheme in Manchester for single people and for families with lower support needs, involving pre-tenancy work and mediation with landlords, help with the cash deposit and six months ongoing support.

Inspiring Change Manchester employs a dedicated housing “brokerage” worker who provides an invaluable link between potential tenants and landlords.

Inspiring Change Manchester, a small scale experiment in adopting a “whole person” approach to addressing homelessness, has gathered convincing evidence that a “Housing First” style approach to homelessness does significantly increase people’s chances of escaping homelessness and rough sleeping, as well as helping them to deal with other health and social barriers to a fuller life.

<https://inspiringchangemanchester.shelter.org.uk/>

Basis Yorkshire (Genesis Leeds) – helping females and young people suffering exploitation and abuse

Basis Yorkshire (formerly known as Genesis Leeds) provides Safety, Information and Support to:

2. Sexworkers living and/or working in Leeds (female including trans, indoor or on the street)
3. Young people (boys, girls, young women and young men) experiencing sexual exploitation, or those at medium or high risk of being exploited.

Background

- Basis Yorkshire was set up (as Genesis Leeds) in 1989 by volunteers who were supporting sexworkers in Leeds.
- In 1997, a young person's service was established to accommodate the specific needs of girls and young women who were being sexually exploited.
- This was followed in 2018 by Basis Boys to accommodate boys and young men that are being exploited, sexually or in other ways.

The charity also provides high quality training and awareness raising sessions locally and nationally on social justice issues and practice development.

Basis provides support to indoor and street sex workers who identify as women, and young people who are sexually exploited with the purpose of empowering people to make safer and healthier choices through access to information, support and options.

Housing First

Basis secured funding for a year-long Housing First (HF) pilot from November 2016 to fund six tenancies. The funding came from the Big Lottery and WY-FI's Innovation Fund to relieve homelessness, alcohol and drug use, reoffending, and mental health issues in West Yorkshire. There are very few Housing First projects specifically to help sex workers. In keeping with the values of Basis, the Housing First pilot focuses on harm reduction, individual choice and support for as long as it is needed.

The women who participated in the project all experienced high support needs and complex histories of homelessness, substance use, domestic violence, mental and physical health issues, self-harm or suicide attempts. They all had children removed from their care. As a result of these complex needs and histories, previous attempts to use existing models of housing and support had been unsuccessful. The women were involved in a revolving door of homelessness services. An evaluation of the pilot was completed by Emma Bimpson of the University of Leeds in 2018. The key findings from this evaluation show:

- Finding suitable housing – and enabling choice for the women – was difficult as there was some resistance from landlords. Most tenancies were in social rented accommodation with one participant living in the privately rented sector.
- The separation of the accommodation and support elements – crucial to Housing First projects – was vital for the Basis pilot as the fear that the process would be jeopardised through difficulties with either accommodation or support was removed.
- The Housing First case worker was able to coordinate other partner organisations to work with the clients, now that a stable address was available.
- A harm reduction approach was also a critical factor in the project's success. One woman stopped sex working whilst others reported a positive impact in terms of safer working practices and a reduction in harm.
- Harm reduction in relation to problematic drug use meant that women were supported to maintain drug treatment programmes. Five of the women have started on Methadone since they got their tenancies and all have managed to stay on 'script'.

- Providing choice and control at every stage was essential – the location of the properties had huge implications for the women’s work, support networks, safety and wellbeing.
- Coproduction and peer mentoring were designed into the project. However, these aspects have proved to be challenging. Finding someone who was willing to act as a peer mentor for sex workers, and who would be willing openly to discuss their experience with others proved incredibly difficult. The women involved in the pilot were consulted throughout by staff but more work is needed to develop a rigorous process of coproduction.
- Overall, having a secure and comfortable home was described by women as one of the most important features of their progress – enabling them to address and work through some of their experiences and problems without the fear of losing their home. All six tenancies were sustained over the 12 months (Bimpson, 2018).

For more information: <https://wy-fi.org.uk/2018/03/22/housing-first-for-female-sex-workers-in-leeds/>

Threshold Housing First, Greater Manchester – helping women with high needs

Threshold Housing First (now Housing First by Jigsaw Support) was established in 2015 as an innovative project designed to provide a Housing First service for homeless women with high and complex needs, including a history of offending, and for whom other services had failed.

An evaluation of the initial two years of the pilot project was conducted by Deborah Quilgars and Nicholas Pleace at the University of York in 2017. The project received ongoing funding for a further three years.

The pilot focused on the areas of Tameside, Stockport and Oldham in Greater Manchester. The Threshold Housing First pilot project was designed to support 12 women at a time. A team of two full-time workers provided support, one of whom managed the project. Later on in the project a part-time manager was added to the staff team, so that the two support workers could carry a full case load of clients each. The main findings of the evaluation are set out below:

- A total of 33 women used Threshold Housing First project between April 2015 and April 2017 (14 of these cases were still open at the end of the pilot period).
- Criminal justice services were the main point of referral for the service (67%); other referral sources included homelessness services and other Threshold services.
- Over half of the women who used the Threshold Housing First pilot service were recorded as homeless at the point of referral including some sleeping rough or living in tents or refuges. Some came from, hospital, supported housing, or bail hostels. Nine women were described as 'hidden homeless' and 11 women were about to leave prison with nowhere to go to.
- Women using Threshold Housing First had experienced many adverse circumstances in their lives including domestic violence, mental and physical health problems. Drug and alcohol problems were reported by almost all the women participating.
- Around half of the women had experience of prison and several had experience of the care system when they were children. Seven reported that they had been in a psychiatric ward or unit.
- In line with guidance on Housing First, staff worked with 6-7 clients at one time. The high intensity of the support was one of the most valued elements of the support, which everyone praised.
- The pilot service provided many forms of housing and any other kind of support that the individual clients needed.
- Building successful and trusting relationships was identified as being crucial to the success of the pilot project.
- Some practical difficulties arose, including accessing suitable affordable housing in the areas. 18 of the 33 women were in tenancies by the end of the pilot project – 12 provided through the social rented housing stock and six in privately rented homes.
- There was an overall tenancy sustainment rate of 80% - which matches wider evidence on Housing First in both the UK and abroad where rates of tenancy sustainment are generally between 70 and 90%.
- The women who maintained their contact with Threshold Housing First showed a marked reduction in offending behaviour, compared to the patterns of conviction they reported prior to engaging with the service. Only four women were either returned to prison and/or committed an offence during the period when were supported by Threshold Housing First.

The evaluation team concluded:

Threshold Housing First delivered some positive results in its first two year pilot phase. There was clear evidence that it has provided effective support that was highly valued by the women using the service and by partner agencies. There were good rates of tenancy sustainment for those rehoused, and although there had been difficulties sourcing properties,

better sourcing of housing was in place at the end of the pilot...There is a case for Threshold Housing First to be integrated into the strategic response to homelessness across GMCA, where it has the potential to play a preventative role, deliver relief from homelessness at a crisis point and provide sustainable exits from homelessness for women with high and complex needs.

More information available at: <https://support.jigsawhomes.org.uk/information-article/housing-first/> and on the pilot evaluation: Quilgars, D. and Pleace, N. (2017). *The Threshold Housing First Pilot for Women with an Offending History: The First Two Years. Report of the University of York Evaluation*. Centre for Housing Policy: University of York.

Housing First for Youth, Rock Trust, Edinburgh

Rock Trust Edinburgh, aims to end youth homelessness in Scotland by ensuring that every young person has access to expert services, tailored especially for young people, to help them to avoid, survive, and move on from homelessness. It was set up in 1991 by the West End Council of Churches in Edinburgh who wanted to do something practical for homeless young people in the city.

The Trust works with young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Its core purpose is to advise, educate and support young people to enable them to build the personal skills and resources required to make a positive and healthy transition to adulthood. The Trust also works to ensure that the public, policymakers, commissioners and practitioners understand the issues, make decisions and take action which will end youth homelessness.

In 2017 Rock Trust launched the first ever Housing First for Youth project in the UK. The pilot project was initially for two years and has recently been extended. The Rock Trust works in partnership with Almond Housing Association in West Lothian to house young people leaving care. The objective of the pilot project was to gather further evidence of the role that Housing First can play in helping young people, and particularly young people leaving the care system for whom homelessness is a high risk. According to the Rock Trust:

Recent Scottish Government statistics suggest that at least 21% of care leavers become homeless within five years of leaving care (Scottish Government, 2016), while practitioners suggest this could be as high as 30 – 50% due to issues with self-declaration.

<https://www.rocktrust.org/housing-first-for-youth/>

Asking young people to “self-declare” on their real situation acts as a big barrier.

Traditional ‘staircasing’ routes into long-term accommodation are often difficult to achieve for young people with high support needs who have experienced significant trauma and instability throughout their lives.

The Rock Trust Housing First project provides accommodation on an immediate, permanent and unconditional basis. Fully furnished tenancies are provided by Almond Housing Association and the Rock Trust team provide holistic support to each individual young person designed and adapted around their needs, and covers education, employment, health and wellbeing, as well as housing. In summary, The Trust sets out to secure a youth Housing First method that works.

Housing First works on the belief that housing is a basic human right. The Housing First for Youth model extends this right to young people, and acknowledges that young people have specific needs related to their age. We will take a ‘whatever it takes’ philosophy in order to support the young people to maintain their tenancies and prevent them from ever becoming homeless.

<https://www.rocktrust.org/housing-first-for-youth/>

More information available: <https://www.rocktrust.org/>

London Borough of Newham Housing First pilot project

This small scale Housing First project was set up in April 2018 to work with 12 entrenched rough sleepers, with high level complex needs, whose needs cannot be met by other existing provision, and who would be helped off the streets and into self-contained, independent accommodation, with full wraparound support provided.

The aim of the LBN Housing First Pilot is to successfully demonstrate that Housing First is a viable service option that enables the Council to provide secure accommodation, with wraparound personalised support, to some of the borough's most vulnerable street homeless people.

It will also test the assumption that Housing First can make a significant contribution to the Council's strategic aim of reducing rough sleeping in Newham and preventing homelessness.

The Housing First pilot project is being delivered in the London Borough of Newham by Single Homelessness Project (SHP). SHP have many years' experience delivering Housing First services in other areas of London, including as part of the Fulfilling Lives service in Islington and Camden.

Throughout the duration of the pilot there are two Housing First support workers employed by Single Homeless Project, working directly with the clients. Each support worker has 6 clients – this follows Homeless Link's Housing First guidance in the UK whereby support workers in Housing First should have a caseload of 5-7 clients.

The service was intended for entrenched rough sleepers with a verified local connection. The eligibility requirements for the scheme required people to:

- have been rough sleeping in and around the borough for over 2 years
- have failed to address their substance misuse or other support needs (by not engaging with support services)
- have support needs that cannot be met by Newham's existing supported accommodation provision
- not be subject to the single room rent condition (i.e. be 35 or over)
- be in receipt of, or have access to, UK benefits.

Housing First clients were to be housed in Private Rented Sector (PRS) accommodation, to be sourced by SHP or LB Newham. People would receive housing related support services to be delivered over however long a period of time proved necessary and to be tapered or increased depending on the needs of individuals. Suitable landlords were identified by publicising the support that Single Homeless Project would provide, and by guaranteeing rent payments. Landlords embraced the support which they could not provide.

The vast majority of Housing First clients were temporarily housed in the Courtney Hotel (a private hotel within the borough, used by the London Borough of Newham for emergency accommodation) as a stepping stone before acquiring their own independent tenancies. This staging post would enable Housing First workers to engage with service users from the very offset of leaving the street, and to begin the process of accessing welfare benefits etc. where needed in order to move on to longer-term housing.

So far, twelve former rough sleepers were housed within the first year of the pilot; all held out their tenancy, although one had a spell in prison but returned, and one was struggling with mental ill health. The outcome overall was positive for most clients¹.

¹ More information on the LB Newham Housing First pilot can be found in LSE Housing and Communities (2020). *Opening Doors: An evaluation of the London Borough of Newham's Housing First pilot project*. CASE; LSE: London

7. Conclusions

Throughout LSE Housing's research into homelessness, we have collected examples and models of innovative efforts being made to tackle homelessness. We set these out in this report, and in our accompanying 'case study' report. This report has a particular focus on Housing First. Housing First is an approach that is housing led, puts people and their lived experiences at the centre of services, and provides unconditional support.

Housing is a basic need that all people have a right to. Housing First strikes an immediate chord with the wider public. For entrenched rough sleepers for whom other interventions have been unsuitable, it offers shelter first, then "wrap-around" support. It meets the basic need of a home before anything else; it accepts a wider responsibility for supporting people, allowing them to gain a sense of control and offering the opportunity to meet their own goals and aspirations.

Housing First has an impressive record in ending homelessness for former rough sleepers with high needs who have become marginalised from society. Providing people with their own homes, without making the homes conditional on achieving certain targets, linked to a community-based support service, enables people to develop confidence and life skills.

There are efforts being made across the UK in statutory and third sector organisations to relieve and prevent homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) has provided a shift in focus towards prevention and early intervention. Alongside this, systemic change is underway in many places.

The recent events of COVID 19 and enforced lockdown have had a far-reaching impact on homelessness services. The government announced in late March that all rough sleepers must be housed within a few days and across the country, local authorities as homelessness service providers took on the task of getting thousands of rough sleepers into accommodation. Similarly, the government put a block on all evictions for three to four months, to minimise the risk of increased homelessness due to rent arrears.

Sharing of knowledge and information is vital in the effort to counter homelessness and to help ensure that policy decisions are founded on evidence and good practice. In 2018 the Centre for Homelessness Impact was launched as *an independent organisation that supports the use of data and evidence in bringing about a sustainable end to homelessness*. The Centre works to support organisations in the field of homelessness and beyond to make evidence-led decisions and adopt evidence-led practices. In April 2020 they published a book called *Using Evidence to End Homelessness* which brings together contributions from leading actors in homelessness on how to use evidence to make better decisions and inform public policy, so that society as a whole can benefit.

However, these measures are temporary and the longer term problems of increasing the supply of low-cost rented housing is far from resolved. So too are the issues of insecurity and low quality housing in the private rented sector. A much wider policy response, with funding to match, is urgently needed if we are to end homelessness.

This report demonstrates the value of Housing First, as part of the comprehensive effort needed to reduce and eventually remove homelessness from our streets. We hope it will lead to stronger government support, a growth in community led efforts, and an actual reduction in street homelessness.

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