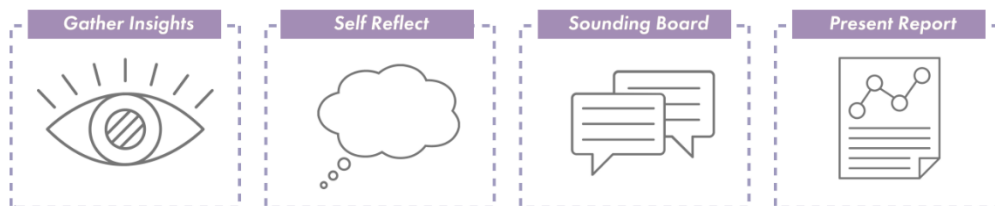




Housing First Scotland Annual Check-Up

Final Report Midlothian



Check-up completed: 24/05/2022

Homeless Network Scotland

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Thank you.

Thank you for participating so fully in the annual check-up process for Housing First.

Housing First means ordinary, settled housing as a first response for people whose homelessness is made harder by experiences such as trauma, addiction, and mental health problems. Combined with flexible, person-centred and open-ended support, it centres safety, choice and peace of mind.

Housing First is branching out across Scotland. From the initial pilots and pathfinder, 24 of 32 local authority areas are now putting Housing First. While the highest demand is in urban areas, all 32 councils in Scotland have people who could thrive with Housing First.

Homeless Network Scotland and Scottish Government are facilitating this annual check-up. In this first year, 13 local authorities are participating (those having at least 1 year of delivery, and not being involved in the pathfinder). We will report separately on emerging themes, great ideas and learning points across all areas.

In this local report we summarise your strengths and successes and the shared commitments explored for the year ahead. And we also leave you with a deliberate provocation from the expert who joined your sounding board!

Home is the best base to build and live our lives. Housing First is normal, its fairer, it works – and we all benefit.

Method

- We facilitated **Housing First Connect**, an online event for all partners involved in Housing First across each of the local authority areas that make up the East Housing Options Hub.
- We invited the local authority lead and key partners to complete the **Self-Reflection Tool**. Five self-reflection scores were returned.
- We will be inviting new tenants to tell us what they think about Housing First by responding to a short text survey. We will be in touch about this shortly.
- We submitted an interim **Messages that Matter** report to the local authority lead and partners, based on the combined insights we gathered from people, the scores from the self-reflection tool and the quarterly monitoring data supplied to the Scottish Government.
- We facilitated a **Sounding Board** with the local authority lead and a small roundtable of your nominated partners to explore the messages that matter. This was also attended by an expert on Housing First from outside Scotland, Alex Smith, Senior Project Manager leading Housing First England, Homeless Link.

Measure

Heriot-Watt university estimates that around 3,560 Housing First tenancies per year, over a 10-year programme, would meet demand from people already in the homelessness system and those forecast to be best-fit for Housing First over the same period. This is generally higher than local forecasts and not linked to the local factors that will influence how fast Housing First can scale up across the area. The number of Housing First tenancies started in Midlothian is 31 as of March 2022.

Housing First Demand Estimates					
Aberdeen City	221	Edinburgh	357	Orkney	6
Aberdeenshire	103	Eilean Siar	8	Perth & Kinross	73
Angus	60	Falkirk	103	Renfrewshire	124
Argyll & Bute	40	Fife	273	Scottish Borders	55
Clackmannanshire	49	Glasgow City	538	Shetland	7
Dumfries & Galloway	109	Highland	91	South Ayrshire	58
Dundee City	181	Inverclyde	44	South Lanarkshire	158
East Ayrshire	79	Midlothian	33	Stirling	62
East Dunbartonshire	20	Moray	39	West Dunbartonshire	136
East Lothian	47	North Ayrshire	132	West Lothian	150
East Renfrewshire	17	North Lanarkshire	185	Scotland	3,560

Table 2: Housing First Demand Estimates 2021-2031 (per year)

Strengths and successes

Midlothian partners were able to clearly demonstrate several foundations that were strong and developments that were inspiring. This includes:

- A different approach to allocations; Midlothian identify void properties and allocate them directly to Housing First at a rate of two per month to overcome issues with housing supply.
- “Flipping” temporary tenancies to Scottish Secure Tenancies in line with the desires of the tenant and taking action to ensure that no one waits longer to secure a tenancy through Housing First than those on other housing waiting lists.
- Offering a furnished property has contributed to the success of tenancies and has evolved the thinking in the local authority that all properties ought to be furnished for people recovering from a period of homelessness.
- The support provided to tenants is of good quality and flexible, support providers work in partnership with housing providers to ensure support is timely when issues arise with the property.

Commitments and considerations

Midlothian partners are exploring the following developments for the year ahead:

- A robust and inclusive commissioning approach can ensure that the delivery of Housing First is commissioned against, and therefore tied to, the principles of Housing First. Consultation during 2022-23 will help develop a commissioning and cost model for Housing First in Scotland that protects low caseloads and the capacity of support workers.
- The long-term approach to funding Housing First is to build it into a range of frameworks, to join up approaches and avoid long-term duplication of services. A shared funding approach, especially with health and social care partnerships and community justice, acknowledges the shared cost-benefits of Housing First.
- Creating a partnership with Scottish Welfare Fund to allow funds to be released more quickly for Housing First tenants, learning from other Housing First partnerships and their agreements with SWF.
- Scope options for colocation of staff to encourage stronger partnerships with specialist support services such as mental health and addictions services.
- Work towards a caseload of seven tenants per Housing First worker, bringing the delivery in line with the Housing First principles

Experts' provocation...

In other areas, teams are rigid in adhering to the recommended maximum caseloads and have developed some “non-negotiables” to sit alongside the Housing First principles, with caseload being one. Midlothian should consider the maximum caseload a non-negotiable factor and bring the delivery in line with the principles.

Housing First – the help.

Whether you are planning, commissioning or delivering Housing First support – there is help on hand. Find out more about the tools and time available for you at www.housingfirst.scot including ‘Branching Out’ - the National Framework for Housing First.