



Housing First: Key Lessons from the Global Evidence

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What is Housing First?

- The first slide of presentations about Housing First all over Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland in the last five years
- We all know what it is by now...

What is Housing First

Eight core principles:



Housing is
a human right



Choice and control for
service users



Separation of housing
and treatment



Recovery orientation



Harm reduction



Active engagement
without coercion



Person-centred
planning



Flexible Support for as
Long as is Required



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What is Housing First

- While it can be reduced to a core set of principles...
- Which the *Housing First Guide Europe* does
 - As does *Housing First England* etc.
- The reality is more complex



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What is Housing First?

- High intensity case management
- Intensive Case Management (ICM)
- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)
- ICM
- ACT/ICM
- ACT



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Success in Housing First

- Is not the success of *one* model
- Canadian and French programmes
 - Targeted on homeless people with severe mental illness
 - Using ACT/ICM models, full interdisciplinary teams
 - Full randomised control trial
- Housing First in London
 - Two support workers with a much lower caseload intensifying their existing support model
 - A couple of University of York researchers doing a tiny observational study (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013)



Ending Homelessness

- Yes
- Typically around eight out of ten housed @ 1 year
 - Though every Housing First service is not the same, or targeted on the same people, or working in the same context
- Better than existing services
 - For high and complex needs associated with recurrent and sustained homelessness
 - ‘Entrenched’ rough sleepers and the revolving door
 - Particularly when compared to abstinence-based, treatment-led models with strict regimes, but that is a North American and to extent a Northern (Mainland) European comparison



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Health, Wellbeing and Integration

- Stable, adequate housing produces some gains
- Alongside a broadly effective support model
- But
 - Mental and physical health do not consistently improve
 - Nor are improvements necessarily rapid
 - Addiction does not always improve
 - Although it does not worsen
 - Community integration variable
 - Emotional support and relationships variable



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Cost effectiveness

- Compared to recurrent and sustained use of homelessness services without a positive outcome, yes
- Where it reduces emergency service use and frequent contact with criminal justice service, yes
- But people have to have high needs and be within certain patterns for this to be true
- And what Housing First costs is not consistent



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Housing First?

- *There is growing evidence that social service interventions are more successful if provided to people in their own home, but no miracles are to be expected. Housing First is neither a miracle cure for all homelessness people, nor should it be seen as an isolated approach for a tiny proportion of the most excluded. Volker Busch-Geertsema, 2011*



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Housing First?

- Well, yes
- But need to be careful about what that means
- Careful about how it is used
- Careful about what you expect from it



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Finland

- The definitive gold standard of a successful Housing First strategy
- Has achieved a functional zero in homelessness
- Fantastic!
- But they *don't have* a Housing First Strategy
- They have an integrated, interconnected, coordinated **National Homelessness Strategy**, full of prevention and full of other support and homelessness services
- Of which Housing First is one element with a specific role



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Not a Panacea

- Yes, we have a new way of doing things
- Its not the only way, looks like Critical Time Intervention probably works too
- And that quite a lot of the stuff we were doing already may actually be relatively effective
- Can use Housing First, can learn from it
- I've been advocating Housing First since I saw it do incredible things for no money in the SHP Camden Housing First pilot in 2012
- And I'm seeing Housing First doing remarkable things for homeless women with complex needs in the Threshold Housing First service in Manchester right now
- But let's also be careful, be precise and be sure we know we're doing with Housing First



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Thanks for listening

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