



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-20

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

DATE: 24TH FEBRUARY 2020

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC
HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY
SERVICES**

Agenda Item No. 7

**Overview of Housing First and
Project Developments in Rhondda
Cynon Taf**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with information about the principles of the “Housing First” Housing Model and to give an update on the delivery of pilot Housing First Projects in Rhondda Cynon Taf including the outcomes achieved to date.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended:

- 2.1 That Members scrutinise the content of the report and consider any further actions required as a result.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 Housing First is an evidence based approach to successfully supporting homeless people with high needs and histories of entrenched or repeat homelessness to live in their own homes. It has been widely adopted across the United States and is central to the national homelessness strategies in Canada, Denmark, Finland and in France. It is growing in popularity in countries including Italy, Sweden, Spain and increasingly the UK. Successful Housing First pilots are operating in Newcastle, London, the Midlands, Wales and Scotland. In RCT, a number of small pilot schemes have been undertaken in the last 12-24 months and the outcomes will be used to inform a number of the Council's future housing policies.

4. **HOUSING FIRST PRINCIPLES**

4.1 The overall philosophy of Housing First is to provide a stable independent home and intensive personalised support and case management to homeless people with **multiple and complex needs**. Housing is seen as a human right by Housing First services, there are no conditions around "housing readiness" before providing someone with a home; rather secure housing is viewed as a stable platform from which other issues can be addressed. Housing First is a different model because it provides housing "first" as a matter of right, rather than "last" or as reward.

4.2 Multiple and Complex needs are persistent and interrelated health and social care needs which impact on an individual's life and ability to function in society. These may include:

- Entrenched street homelessness, repeat service user or being otherwise vulnerably housed
- Mental, psychological or emotional health needs.
- Drug and / or alcohol dependency.
- Contact with the criminal justice system
- Physical health needs
- Experience of domestic violence and abuse.

4.3 Mainstream services are often not equipped to support individuals with these overlapping needs. Housing First has been shown to be effective in supporting people with histories of street homelessness or other types of homelessness where contact with services has been unsuccessful in breaking the cycle of instability. **There are a number of core principles that underpin a successful Housing First model:**

4.3.1 **Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed.** This means:

- Providers commit to long term offers of support which do not have a fixed end date. Recovery takes time and will vary by individual need, characteristics and experiences.
- People have the right to a home
- Housing First prioritises access to housing as quickly as possible.
- Eligibility for housing is not contingent on any conditions other than the willingness to maintain a tenancy.
- The housing provided is based on choice, affordability, quality, community integration rather than the type of housing.

- The individual will not lose their housing if they disengage or no longer require the support.

4.3.2 **Housing and Support are separated.** This means:

- Support is available to help people maintain a tenancy and to address any other needs they identify.
- The offer of support stays with the person. If the tenancy fails, the individual is supported to acquire and maintain a new home.

4.3.3 **Individuals have choice and control.** This means:

- They choose the type of housing they have and its location within reason and as defined by the context.
- They are supported through person- centered planning and are given the lead to shape the support they receive. Goals are not set by the service provider.

4.3.4 **Strengths, Goals and Aspirations are taken into account.** This means:

- Individuals are supported to identify their strengths and goals
- Individuals are supported to develop increased self-esteem, self-worth and confidence, to integrate into their local community.

4.3.5 **An active engagement approach is used.** This means:

- Staff are responsible for proactively engaging their clients: making the service fit the individual instead of trying to make the individual fit the service.
- Caseloads are small allowing staff to be persistent and proactive in their approach and not closing the case when engagement is low.
- Support will continue if the individual loses their home or leave their home temporarily.

4.3.6 **A Harm Reduction approach is used.** This means:

- People are supported holistically
- Staff support individuals to undertake practices that reduce harm and promote recovery in other areas of physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Staff support individuals who use substances to reduce immediate and ongoing harm to their health.

4.4 Housing First differs from traditional floating or tenancy support models in several respects. Floating Support Workers may have caseloads of 20 – 40 people whereas Housing First workers will typically support an initial caseload of 5 – 7 people. Housing First employs active engagement, supporting individuals by recognizing and emphasising their strengths and capacity for positive change and links with relevant services that help to meet the full range of an individual's needs. Smaller caseloads enable a more intensive, flexible and personalised support for a cohort of people who have not previously successfully engaged and been supported by other housing services due to the level and complexity of their housing needs. Evidence suggests that, over time, those housed by Housing First require less support from services and in some cases, may no longer require support. However, this is completely dependent on the individual and may take several months or years.

5. HOUSING FIRST PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS – RHONDDA CYNON TAF

WISDOM HOUSING PROJECT

- 5.1 The Wisdom Housing Project was set up in 2018 and was the first project in RCT to be developed based on the principles of Housing First. The need for the project was identified, through recognition of a number of high risk individuals leaving prison, who would otherwise have been faced with homelessness or the prospect of having to sleep rough.
- 5.2 The project has been developed in partnership with Trivallis (Housing Provider), POBL (Support Provider), South Wales Police and the Probation Service with the support element currently funded through Supporting People Grant (which will become the Housing Support Grant as from the 1st April 2020). Referrals for the project are considered at Multi Agency Screening Panel (MASP). Each referral to be considered for the project is assessed by POBL whilst they are still in prison to determine their suitability for the project. Individuals accepted on the project are supported whilst they are in Prison and provided with resettlement support.
- 5.3 Properties for the project are sourced by Trivallis based on client need and an understanding of risk to client and others including the wider community. Each individual is allocated a property on a licence which is then reviewed at three months. Subject to there being no issues, they are allocated a Six Month Assured Shorthold Tenancy, which reverts to an Assured Tenancy at 9 months providing them with security of tenure. All properties are fully furnished to ensure they are homely and welcoming. Other Housing Associations have confirmed their willingness to work with us going forward on Housing First Projects.
- 5.4 Project Outcomes: The project to- date has received 8 referrals with 2 individuals returning to Prison. Six individuals are retaining tenancies of which three are for over three-month period. It must be noted that all six have not re-offended to-date or previously lived independently or maintained a tenancy

OTHER HOUSING FIRST PROJECTS

- 5.5 In recognition of the increasing number of individuals presenting as homeless with high support needs and a history of failed tenancies in supported accommodation, private rented and the social housing sector. Funding was sought through the Welsh Government Housing First Trail Blazer application process. The application was successful allowing development of three further Housing First Projects:

5.6 Assertive Outreach Project

The project provides support to up to six homeless individuals all whom have significant substance misuse and mental health needs and a history of repeat homelessness and tenancy breakdown. Since the project started in January 2019:

12 placements have been accepted on the Scheme.

2 have left the project and 1 returned to prison.

2 have been allocated and are successfully maintaining their tenancies.

5 are engaging well in support and are awaiting allocation of properties.

2 have been recalled to prison due to breach of licence with 1 due to be released in February.

1 is engaging in volunteering

5.7 **Rapid Response**

The Rapid Response Project was set up in September 2019 and provides housing and support to lower risk offenders in Cardiff Prison and Eastwood Park which is a female only prison, who are being discharged back to Rhondda Cynon Taff. Since the start of the Project,

6 placements have been made onto the scheme (4 male and 2 female).

3 have been allocated a property and are successfully maintaining their tenancy.

3 are currently placed in temporary accommodation awaiting an offer of accommodation.

5.8 **Housing First – Young People (16-24)**

Additional funding has recently been secured through the Innovation Fund in partnership with Llamau to develop a Housing First model to support up to 10 young people. The project is still its infancy and in the early stages of development, with two young people currently being supported through community outreach work.

6. **CONSULTATION**

6.1 There are no consultation implications arising from this report.

7 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATION**

8.1 There are no funding implications arising from this report. The Housing First Pilots in RCT to date have been funded via specific Welsh Government Project Grants and or Welsh Government Supporting People Grant and Homelessness Prevention Grant.

9 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report however the duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness is a legal requirement of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

10. **LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

10.1 Homelessness is a key national priority as demonstrated by the Welsh Government Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness (October 2019). The RCT Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 supports that national agenda as well as local priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. Housing First is an action identified following the Homelessness Needs Assessment which underpins the Strategy. Housing First

Schemes are person centred by design and are therefore wholly consistent with the “People” Priority of the Council, which seeks to ensure that people are able to maintain independent and positive lives. Provision of appropriate housing to vulnerable people in the right communities and with the right support also supports the “Place” priority which aims to ensure that in RCT we “create neighbourhoods where people are proud to work and live”.

10.2 Housing First is an early intervention and preventative approach to preventing homelessness for people with complex needs. The Projects are delivered wholly in collaboration with partnership support in the provision of housing and the delivery of integrated support required for the individuals to enable them to maintain their tenancies. The initiative therefore fully considers the sustainable development principles and will support the Council to contribute to four of the seven well-being goals, namely:

1. A more equal Wales
2. A prosperous Wales
3. A Wales of cohesive communities
4. A healthier Wales

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 Housing First is an evidence based approach to successfully supporting homeless people with high needs and histories of entrenched or repeat homelessness to live in their own homes. It is specifically aimed at targeting intensive support for homeless people with multiple and complex needs and relies on a multi-agency approach to be successful. Early project outcomes are positive and will inform longer-term understanding of how Housing First can be adopted as a permanent housing option in RCT.