

Rotherham Housing First

Delivered by South Yorkshire Housing Association
in partnership with Target Housing

Commissioned by Rotherham
Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC)



November 2022

Introduction

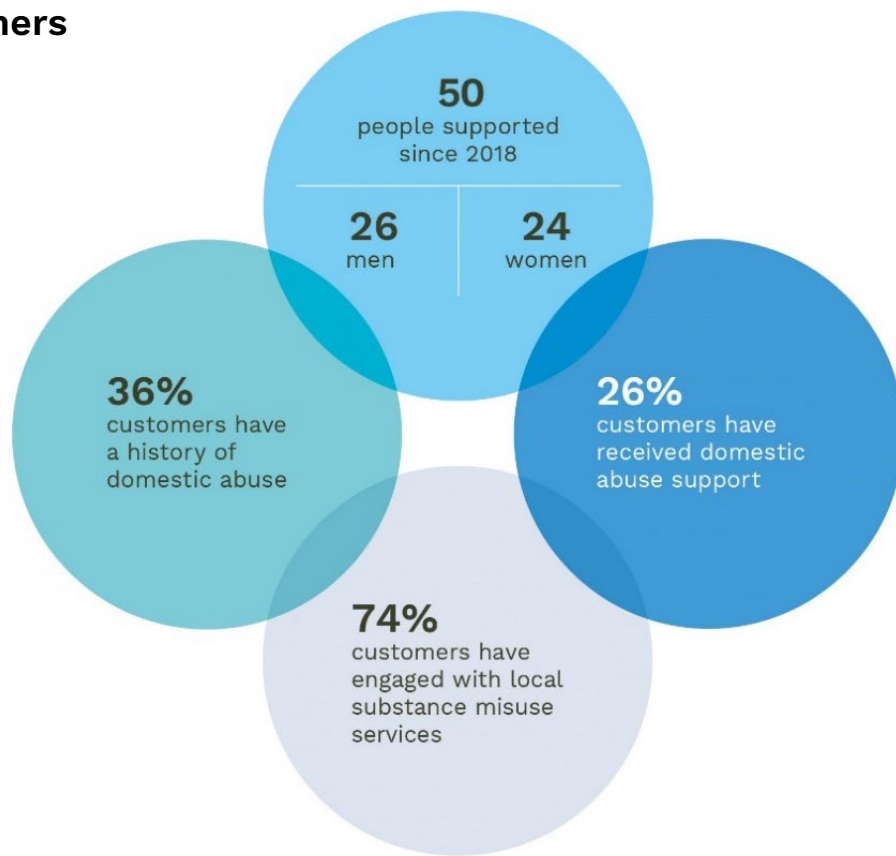
The Housing First model is proven to end homelessness, and works on the belief that housing is a basic human right. Housing First offers people who are experiencing homelessness, and that have multiple and complex needs, a home for life. The home isn't conditional on the person accessing further support, but they should desire to have a tenancy. Multiple and complex needs may include experience of domestic violence, entrenched street homelessness, and/or mental health needs. The model works by offering people a home, first – this acts as a stable foundation for recovery and to rebuild their lives. Housing First customers are supported to settle in their home, and to make choices about how they'd like to build on their strengths and meet their goals. Our customers do not have to access further support to be able to stay in their home, but flexible and personalised support is offered for as long as it is needed.

This impact report shares more about how we capture our customers' achievements and progress, and how we use this data to ensure they can access holistic and personalised support. Our data also shows the effectiveness of high-fidelity Housing First services, and how Rotherham Housing First helps customers to settle in their home and to meet their goals.

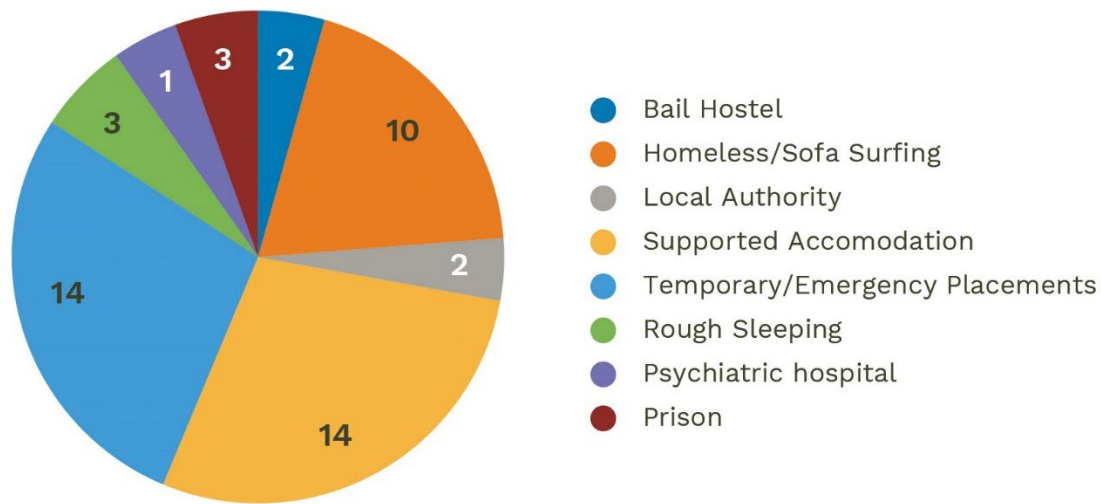
Housing First principles



Our customers



Our customers' living arrangements at the time of referral to Housing First



There is a strong economic case for a national roll out of Housing First.

For every £1 invested in Housing First, there are savings of £1.24 through reduced use in other services.

Source: Home for All: The case for scaling up Housing First in England, Crisis.



In the 2015 Hard Edges report, the costs of rough sleeping to the public purse were calculated to be between £14,300 and £21,200 – which is three to four times the cost to public services than the average adult.

In 2018/9, local authorities in England spent £1.1 billion on temporary accommodation, which is a 78% increase over the last five years.

Source: Temporary accommodation and the cost of homelessness in England, Shelter.

Celebrating success – big and small

The people we support in our Housing First service have experienced multiple disadvantages – this may include adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), mental health complications, physical and emotional abuse, addiction and/or homelessness. We use the quantitative New Directions Team Assessment (sometimes known as ‘The Chaos Index’) to help us to measure our customers’ progress, and to help in our support planning.

In this report, we’ll share the impact that Housing First has made to our customers’ scores on both the **New Directions Team Assessment** and the shortened **Warwick-Edinburgh Wellbeing Scales**. We also recognise that **small changes** are significant markers of progress. We believe that these achievements should be captured, and so we will also share the stories of success that our customers and support staff have celebrated.

“I can't believe how quickly I have changed and taken control of my life, my health, my wellbeing and my money - the service and your support is massive to me.”

Rotherham Housing First customer

“That was absolutely banging! It's been brilliant, really enjoyed it! ”

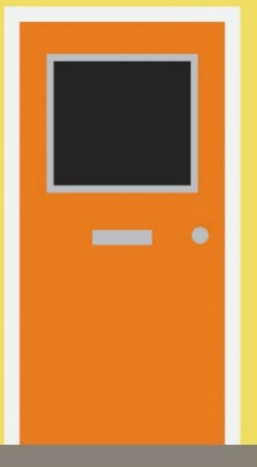
A Rotherham Housing First customer’s feedback after going shopping and for lunch with their Target Housing support worker.

Elastic tolerance

L's story

L came to Housing First after being evicted several times. L's history included high levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB) from high-risk and high-harm domestic abuse and offending. Our priority was to build a trusting relationship with L, and to liaise closely with Domestic Violence services to support with safety planning and stability.

Due to L's offending and ASB, our service had regular contact with South Yorkshire Police to share intelligence and manage risk. We recognised the importance of L having accommodation to maintain her safety and wellbeing, and so we built up a strong case for an injunction to help manage visitors to L's property. The problems with neighbours continued, so we developed a plan with Rotherham MBC to offer L a new tenancy while continuing to receive support from Housing First.



Initially, this solution was met with some resistance, but we persisted. L has now been in her home for over a year with regular, flexible support from her Housing First keyworker. To support the move to a new home, we also offered L specialist support from a trauma resilience service. Importantly, this also helped other services understand L's behaviour through a trauma-informed lens. We will continue to support L until she is ready to transition away from the Housing First service.

Managing ASB is part and parcel of delivering Housing First services - many of our customers will have had previous tenancies that failed due to ASB. ASB is often the result of exploitation against a customer – this could include cuckooing, domestic abuse, offending, and gang-related activity. We are

committed to supporting people with challenging ASB, and we use a range of tools and techniques to do this.

Our work is underpinned by our strong partnerships with other agencies and services – particularly, Neighbourhood Police, Environmental Health, Adult Social Care and Community Safety. Our Housing First team lead on Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings (MDTs) and attend tasking meetings and community multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs). Our housing management approach aligns with Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) to ensure that the action we take is trauma-informed, and **considers ‘why’ something is happening and not just ‘what’ is happening.**



We aim to balance accountability with flexibility, and empower our teams to use **elastic tolerance** when working with customers. This often allows us to use the least restrictive option - for example, using injunctions to restrict visitors, rather than applying sanctions against the customer themselves.

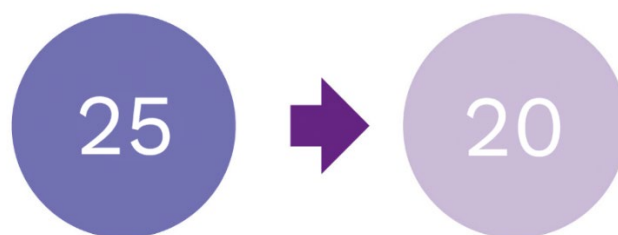
New Directions Team Assessment (the Chaos Index)

We use the quantitative New Directions Team Assessment, otherwise known as the Chaos Index. This assessment is widely known in commissioning and embedded amongst Housing First services across the UK. It was developed by South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust, and focusses on the behaviours of an individual across 10 areas, including engagement, anxiety, substance misuse, self-harm, risk, and housing. The assessment asks individuals to score against statements - for example, '0: I rarely miss appointments and actively engage' to '4: I don't engage or attend appointments.' There is a maximum total score of 48 available.

Our teams also use the New Directions Team Assessment as a measurement tool to reflect progress and to help our support planning. The full assessment is completed at the start of placement, and then repeated six months later - the data below shows our customers' scores on this framework.

We have seen a **reduction in scores from 25 to 20** from people's first to latest assessment, indicating that our customers experience greater stability and security in their first six months of Housing First.

New Directions Team Assessment scores



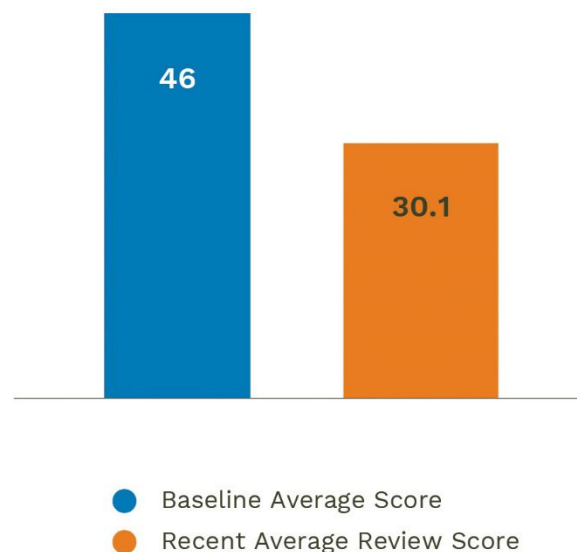
Health and wellbeing

When a customer moves into their Housing First home, we work with them to co-produce a support plan. For many of our customers, one of the first steps is registering with health services, such as a GP and dentist. Our keyworkers

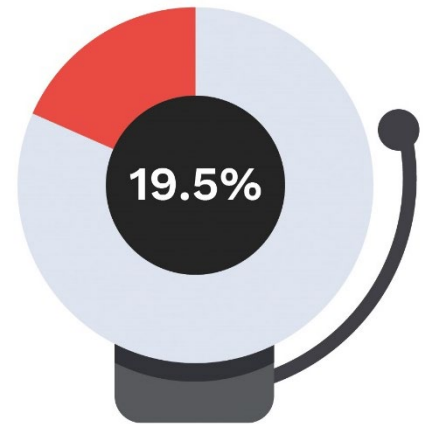
support our customers to access healthcare and aim to ensure that their needs and wants are listened to and met.

We work with our customers to develop short term goals around healthcare to ensure sustainable and consistent treatment planning, with a focus on continuity of care. People with a history of homelessness and complex needs have limited access to Primary Health Care, which results in poor health and lower life expectancy. Our customers may have also experienced discrimination, and barriers to access healthcare services, because of factors including their previous behaviour and lack of engagement with recovery services. We ask our customers to ‘indicate on a scale of 1-100 (0 being worst imaginable health state) how good or bad your own health is today, in your opinion?’. We also ask our customers about their levels of pain, mobility, and their mental health and wellbeing.

All our Housing First customers told us that they have challenges around their health. Our data shows that our customers have reported a **16.1 improvement** at the review stage, which indicates improved health outcomes following their move to Housing First.



We ask customers how much they have used services such as A&E, police, mental health crisis teams, and the fire service. We understand that people with a significant history of homelessness have increased levels of unplanned care and involvement with these public services - this is both detrimental to the customer, and to the limited resources of public services. Our data shows that **our customers' use of unplanned and crisis services has reduced by 19.5%.**



All of our customers have told us that they have challenges with addiction and using substances - we understand some people that have experienced complex trauma will have challenges around addiction and accessing treatment, and that using substances can be a coping mechanism. We ensure that a trauma-informed approach is taken when supporting customers to manage addiction, and create a flexible and non-judgmental approach to recovery. Our review score shows a **5.4% reduction in our customers' use of substances and/or alcohol.**

We use the shortened version of the **Warwick-Edinburgh Wellbeing Scales** to measure our customers' wellbeing. We ask our customers to rate statements including 'I'm feeling optimistic about the future' and 'I've been feeling close to others'. The data incorporates all customers that are currently accessing the service. We are pleased to see that the review follow-up score shows **an improvement of 10.1%.**



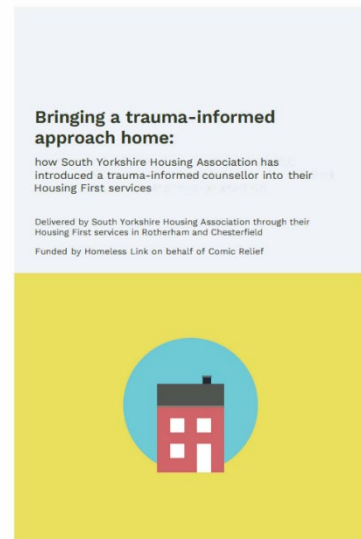
**“Thank you ever
so much for all
your help, support
and guidance that
you are so
willingly and
happy to provide
me.”**

- Rotherham Housing First customer

Health and Wellbeing Coach

In 2020, we delivered a pilot programme to embed a Trauma-Informed Counsellor into our Housing First services. The impact of that service can be found in [our report](#).

We have built on our experience of this role, and listened to feedback from employees and customers, and used our learning to introduce a new Health and Wellbeing Coach across our homeless services - including Housing First. The Health and Wellbeing Coach is a specialist role that supports customers who have co-occurring mental health conditions and drug and alcohol use issues. They co-locate with local drug and alcohol services, and advocate for the people on the Housing First service to get the best support they can. We're early in this work, but our hope is that the Health and Wellbeing Coach will strengthen the pathway to support people to get the treatment that they need.



“Thank you to the Health and Wellbeing Coach for supporting G with his substance misuse. She was non-judgmental, and assisted him with engaging with CGL (substance misuse service) and ensuring his methadone script was correct for his need. This helped G manage and lower his substance use - benefiting him financially and helping him to feel safe and secure in his home.

The partnership between myself - as G’s keyworker - and the Health and Wellbeing Coach has been greatly received by G, and has allowed me the time to focus on his bills and housing concerns. G says this has made him feel **‘really supported, organised and in a better place to move forward with his life in his own time’.**”

- Housing First keyworker

High Fidelity Housing First

We work with our partners to deliver high-fidelity Housing First. We are committed to this because we understand that the effectiveness of the service is linked to how closely we adhere to the key principles which underpin delivery.

This year, we are undertaking a self-assessment of our Housing First services and we will commission an external provider to evaluate our fidelity against the Housing First principles in 2023. Through our self-assessment to date we have identified the following examples of how we are delivering high fidelity Housing First:

- Low caseloads: The capacity of the service does not exceed seven individuals to each full-time keyworker.
- Support is provided at a time and a place agreed by the individual
- If people are hospitalised or in prison the team will continue to have contact with them and work proactively to sustain their tenancy. People on longer prison terms will be supported to re-access the service on their release.
- In Housing First, the resident holds the tenancy and any decision they make about their support does not affect their housing.
- Individuals have choice over when, where and how they are supported, and the focus of the activities that they undertake with their keyworker.
- Keyworkers are persistent, assertive and consistent in their approach. They try new and creative ways of building and sustaining relationships.
- Keyworkers are aware of harm reduction and relapse prevention techniques and use them in support.

Supporting A to return home

Customer A recently served a prison sentence meaning they would have a long period of time before returning to the community. Their keyworker contacted the prison and arranged a video call with the customer. During the appointment they agreed a plan for A's release including when and where they will meet. They also organised outstanding repair work at the customer's home, and the keyworker sourced a phone for A to help with contact and agreeing which services they may need support with accessing. This proactive approach allowed A to have some choice with their release, and reassurance that their Housing First support would remain in place.

The next 12 months

We are committed to working as a partnership to continuously improve our approach to Housing First, and to meet the high expectations of the Housing First fidelity scale for all of our customers. Over the next 12 months we aim to improve our offer to customers in the following ways:

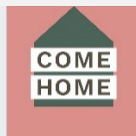
1. Undertake a review of affordability of Housing First for customers who are exiting the service, including reviewing our pipeline of properties of two-bed accommodation.
2. Deliver a small pilot providing a £200 personalised budget to our customers, and evaluate impact.
3. Embed reflective practice sessions into Housing First service and explore viability of ongoing clinical supervision for frontline keyworkers.
4. Explore how we can engage and work with people with lived experience across our Housing First services.

A painting by a Housing First customer to decorate their new home, created using art materials provided by the service.



If you'd like to find out more about Rotherham Housing First, please get in touch.

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