

Developing Housing First

The ‘non-negotiables’

This document outlines the essential components of the Housing First model for those commissioning and planning services. It defines the non-negotiables that **must** be in place to ensure that services can operate in line with the key Housing First Principles.

Housing First: a philosophy or a model?

Housing First is both a philosophy and a service model. The *housing first* philosophy reasons that everyone has a right to housing regardless of their individual circumstances and, in many countries, is used to describe a range of services offered to different groups of people.

However, the Housing First model is a distinct service design for a specific group of people. These services are recognised internationally through the adherence to a core set of principles which describe the ethos and ways of working. In England, the Housing First model has been used since 2010. It follows the [Principles for England](#) and is highly effective at supporting people with high and complex needs.

Introducing the ‘non-negotiables’

The ‘non-negotiables’ of the Housing First model in England have been created to:

- assist in the planning and development of new Housing First service
- help existing services determine whether they are a Housing First model
- help existing services reflect on whether they have drifted from the Principles

Planning a new Housing First service

The way the service is planned and commissioned can shape how it is delivered and impact its long-term effectiveness. Design your service in line with the non-negotiables to give support and housing providers the best chance of achieving high fidelity. Also refer to the Principles and related guidance:

www.hfe.homeless.org.uk/principles-housing-first.

Determining whether your service is a Housing First model

Many types of services recognise the Housing First Principles in the way they are structured or deliver support. But for a service to be classified as Housing First - and distinguished from other similar models - it **must** have the non-negotiable components. This is not to say that other models are not effective, but they are not Housing First.

Reflecting on fidelity to the Principles

A number of factors can affect how closely a Housing First service can adhere to all of the core Principles (service ‘fidelity’) at any given time. Although services should always try to achieve high fidelity to all seven Principles, the ability to do so can depend on internal and external factors like staff training and procedures.

Some of the Principles are also harder to define in practice. For example it's difficult to say that in all scenarios you are 'strengths-based' or offering people 'choice and control'. But the non-negotiables **must** be in place to better enable you to deliver an all-round high-fidelity service.

| The non-negotiable | Description | Why? |
|---|---|--|
| People experiencing multiple disadvantage | The Housing First service is targeted at those experiencing multiple disadvantage who are most vulnerable and for whom other types of housing and support has been ineffective. | Evidence shows that this model achieves better outcomes for this client group, than other types of services, and is most cost-effective. |
| Permanent offer of support | There is no time limit on the amount or duration of support provided. Support follows the person and is not linked to the tenancy. People can access the service even if their case has been closed. Support is commissioned in line with the Principles. | Trusting relationships and unconditional support are key to recovery and should not be time-limited as each person's need for support will change over time. |
| Non-conditional access to housing | Individuals are not required to show 'housing readiness' such as being drug-free or engaged in mental health services. They have the right to refuse offers of accommodation. | The staircase approach does not work for some and housing should not be seen as a reward. Giving a home provides a base from which other support needs can be addressed. |
| Stability of tenure | Individuals have tenancies, not licenses, and the same security of tenure as any other resident in that type of property. | To make people feel safe and empowered, and therefore to begin recovery, they should not feel like their home can be taken away from them. |
| Small caseload size | A Housing First worker's caseload does not exceed more than 7 people and there is no expectation of turnover. | In order to deliver flexible and personalised support, staff need to have capacity to be responsive to the needs of those they support. |

Further Information

Further information about the Principles of Housing First and guidance of how to implement them for a high fidelity service can be found at www.hfe.homeless.org.uk/principles-housing-first

For more detailed guidance on developing and delivering Housing First services visit www.hfe.homeless.org.uk/resources



What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

Let's end homelessness together

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