**A guide to Housing First for mental health professionals**

This briefing is an introduction to Housing First for mental health professionals, including CPNs, Crisis Mental Health teams, G. Ps, psychologist, psychiatrists and those who work in local authority, hospital and community-based services. For more detailed information visit <https://homeless.org.uk/areas-of-expertise/housing-first/>. For local information, please contact the Housing First service in your area (see below).

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**5. Your local Housing First Service**

**3. Who it is for**

**2. Context**

**4. Housing First and your role**

**6. Supporting the approaches**

**1. What Housing First is**

**7. Next steps**

Housing First residents have very high levels of anxiety and depression and [31% attract a diagnosis](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102005/Housing_First_Evaluation_Third_process_report.pdf), such as schizophrenia. Housing First has a significant impact on mental health, with [66% of people reporting improvements.](https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/83966/1/Housing_First_England_Report_February_2015.pdf)

Unconditional access to permanent housing with open-ended specialist support. Housing First adheres to seven key [principles](https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/the-principles-of-housing-first/), watch [Michelle’s Story.](https://vimeo.com/684255605)

Housing First can support the mental health sector.

* Talk to colleagues about Housing First
* Look at Housing First resources
* Connect with your local Housing First team
* Build partnerships and joint working protocols with Housing First teams

For every [£1 spent on Housing First, £1.56 is saved](https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CSJ-Close-to-Home-2021.pdf), including to Mental Health services

There is a [71% improvement in engagement with mental health services plus 80% engagement with meaningful activity](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(22)00117-1/fulltext). Housing First residents are however very vulnerable and at [high risk of death](https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/Reducing_changing_or_ending_Housing_First_support_2021_full_report.pdf), including suicide and overdose.

People facing multiple exclusion and disadvantage who experience a combination of issues. For many, their current circumstances are shaped by long-term experience of poverty, deprivation, trauma, abuse and neglect.

Housing First uses three key approaches:

1. [Trauma informed care](https://homeless.org.uk/areas-of-expertise/improving-homelessness-services/trauma-informed-car/)

2. [Strengths-Based practice](https://homeless.org.uk/areas-of-expertise/improving-homelessness-services/strengths-based-practice/#:~:text=It%20involves%20re%2Dframing%20the,organisations%20and%20those%20accessing%20them.)

3. [Harm reduction](https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/supporting-people-who-use-drugs/)

These structural inequalities intersect in different ways, manifesting in a combination of experiences including homelessness, substance misuse, domestic violence,

contact with the criminal

justice system and

mental ill health.

You can read the above resources and seek training to ensure consistency in support.

**TO BE COMPLETED BY HOUSING FIRST SERVICE**

Name of service: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Lead Contact: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Capacity of service: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Mental health teams have a vital role in supporting Housing First residents at different points in their journey. Key activities may include:

* Facilitating a referral for a mental health assessment and taking a flexible approach to the assessment
* Supporting residents to access counselling and medication, taking into account [dual diagnosis](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng58) and working alongside your local Drug and Alcohol service
* Working closely with the Housing First team, sharing information and attending multi-agency meetings

Referral information (if relevant):

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Any other information:

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