



THANKS TO STAFF PAST AND PRESENT
FOR 20 YEARS OF SUCCESS

Systems Fidelity Blog

No Housing First service operates in isolation, all services are connected to a wider system of support structures. How can we ensure that this wider system supports the Housing First approach, rather than limiting it?

Background

TPS is clear in our position that Housing First should be the default response to homelessness among people with multiple and enduring support needs.

We are equally clear in our view that these results can only be achieved when we remain true to the 7 principles that define a Housing First service.

Over the 10 years we have been delivering Housing First in Scotland we have faced significant challenges in maintaining fidelity to these principles, challenges that are even more clear now that the model is being rolled out across the country. Many of these challenges arise from the fact that the wider system in which Housing First operates is not itself designed to support these principles.

Systems Fidelity

On that basis we propose that an 'ideal' Housing First service will involve the creation and implementation of a Systems Fidelity approach to development. The concept of systems fidelity is not new, but it has begun to gain traction across Housing First communities in Europe. It refers to the wider systems which Housing First effects or is affected by, and considers the conditions in which Housing First can flourish. It is not enough to attach a Housing First service onto an existing Homeless system without adapting the wider system to ensure we are able to deliver the service with high fidelity to the Housing First model.

We know that an effective approach to preventing or responding to homelessness must involve wider agencies, and we know that an effective Housing First service relies on input from the agencies connected to it. Responsibility for and ownership of the model should not belong to one person, group or organisation, and nor do the benefits or results that it delivers. Every person, group or organisation involved contributes to the ability of the

system – intentionally or unintentionally, through actions or process, in practical ways or in the culture they create –to maintain fidelity to the Housing First principles.

A Systems Fidelity approach should be built on two key considerations:

1. Stakeholder Analysis

Understanding the key stakeholders within the Housing First system is crucial – who they are and what they need. Mapping this out allows us to understand what each individuals / organisation / departments 'stake' is within the system and how communication and interaction is currently managed. We need to bring stakeholders with us on a journey, allowing them to shape this process of change. This is completed by using a standardised stakeholder management tool which analyses the interaction of the Housing First system and stakeholders within this system. All stakeholders represented within the stakeholder analysis will have an influence of at least one of each part of the system that affects or is affected by Housing First.

2. Systems and Process Analysis

Stakeholders must work together to build their understanding of what fidelity to each principle looks like for the parts of the system that they affect or are affected by. This provides a vision of what each aspect of the system would look like around effective Housing First services. Over a period of time each aspect of this system should be discussed by all stakeholders to ensure that it is providing Fidelity to the model and principles of Housing First. It is important to set out what we want from each aspect of the system that interacts with Housing First directly and indirectly. This includes reciprocal understanding of the expectations between each part of the system and stakeholders. This will allow an evolving action plan that is focussed on the Fidelity of the wider Systems. A review of a certain aspect of the system should not happen once and forgotten about. Issues can arise in that aspect of the system at any point or changes to other parts of the system can cause an issue to appear or re-appear. It is an ongoing process, and therefore requires an ongoing commitment from partners.

Aspects of the wider System which interact with the Housing First service could include;

- Allocations of tenancy process
- Assessment process
- Graduating Housing First and opting back in after a period of no support
- Accessing appropriate mental health service provisions, specifically whilst presenting with problematic alcohol and drug use
- Harm reduction processes for Alcohol consumption

- Allocation of a tenancy if a HF service user enters prison and is supported out of prison.
- Shared understanding of risk and developing risk management frameworks for urgent case reviews
- Understanding of Housing First with organisations and departments and use of language that reflects fidelity
- Types of training provision
- Accessing PRS Tenancies
- How challenges are being addressed by different parts of the system against fidelity

Of course, this list is not exhaustive. Understanding the whole system in this way allows us to reflect and learn from what has worked well and what has caused blockages, to reinforce and strengthen what's working and agree the changes that are needed to allow a Housing First service to flourish.

Issues identified within the analysis should be addressed at different levels. Some aspects may be resolved through local Communities of Practice; others will be from meetings between stakeholders however others will require more high level discussion with possible roundtable strategic discussions nationally.

We want to start a discussion around systems fidelity. How we can change or flex the systems around Housing First to ensure each part of the system is delivering high fidelity to the principles? How do we encourage 'buy in' from the wider system? We believe that these are key questions to consider as we develop Housing First in Scotland.