



**HOUSING
FIRST WALES
ACCREDITATION
ACHREDIAD TAI YN
GYNTAF CYMRU**

**ACCREDITATION REPORT
HOUSING FIRST ANGLESEY
JULY 2022**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional support as needed. The concept has been applied most specifically with people who are sleeping rough or at least very marginally housed, and who have chronic and complex support needs. It was developed in New York in the 1990s, primarily by community psychologist Sam Tsemberis. Tsemberis found that providing housing to vulnerable clients who were living on the streets, without the kinds of preconditions usually implemented in approaches to reducing homelessness, had a hugely beneficial impact on the clients' lives.

Over the years, robust international evidence has proven how effective Housing First can be. By implementing Housing First in Wales, we have a real chance to help people who have spent years sleeping rough to access and maintain accommodation for the long term.

In order to have the greatest possible impact, it is vital that projects calling themselves Housing First, or claiming to deliver this approach, are doing so in accordance with the Housing First principles for Wales. There are, of course, many people and projects doing fantastic work across the country, which don't happen to be Housing First. But those that claim to be Housing First must adhere to the principles.

These principles were developed by the Housing First Wales Network, based on international definitions and building on work by Homeless Link in England. The Network wanted to make sure that the Housing First principles being used in Wales were appropriate for the Welsh context.

The principles are shown in a subsequent section of this report. They can also be found online in [English](#) and [Welsh](#), with more detail about what they mean in practice, and a basic scoring system for support providers to assess their fidelity to these principles. International evidence and a substantial amount of published material clearly demonstrate that when Housing First's principles are followed, the approach is at its most effective.

In the next section, the main steps of the accreditation process are depicted visually. The methodology for the accreditation, and how the information was gathered, is also detailed.

Additional context: COVID

Two accreditation processes have been undertaken, and both have resulted in the awarding of Housing First accreditation. (The final reports for both can be found on the [Cymorth Cymru HF page](#)). The second process took place, largely, during the COVID-19 pandemic affecting Wales and the wider world. As such, that report included a section discussing the pandemic and its effect on Housing First and the accreditation process specifically. The text below has been amended slightly to reflect developments in the ongoing situation surrounding the virus, but broadly speaking, remains the same.

The purpose of this report is not to list or discuss all the implications of the pandemic on homelessness and Housing First specifically. The Housing First Network and its associated Sub Groups, Cymorth Cymru, and various other fora have been discussing the impact of the pandemic on homelessness in Wales, as well as implications for Housing First. Guidance outlining these discussions has already been [published](#). To some extent, the urgency surrounding the onset of the pandemic has eased, although the situation remains unpredictable. It could be said that most Housing First projects have returned to something like 'business as usual', although the effects of the pandemic thus far, and potential future developments, could still be myriad and serious.

Since March 2020, the Welsh Government has released considerable tranches of funding, aimed at ameliorating the COVID-19 situation, transforming homelessness policy with a view to being more housing-centred, and finally, to bolstering Housing First as a key part of a housing-centred outlook. This is all welcome, but it is more important than ever that the Housing First principles are adhered to by projects calling themselves Housing First. This increased focus on housing-led approaches in Wales has meant that rapid rehousing models, as well as Housing First with its much more intensive support, need to be clearly defined.

Broadly speaking, the methodology associated with this accreditation process has not changed because of the pandemic, although some specific practices were slightly altered - interviews, for example, have been carried out using online video calling tools. Similarly, the questions asked of people and organisations did not focus disproportionately heavily on responses to the pandemic, given that the Housing First principles remain the same, and the HF Network's [stance](#) is clear. (To put it simply, a project can consider its support Housing First even if it has softened delivery on a principle, as long as there is a clear plan for returning to full delivery of that principle as soon as possible, and an understanding that this softening has taken place. Abandoning a principle, even with good reason, means that the term 'Housing First' cannot be used.)

That said, where good practice in relation to the pandemic has been discussed, or identifiable impacts of COVID-19 on Housing First delivery listed, the material is included here. It is worth mentioning that fidelity to the principles is in itself a factor that can help support providers continue to help people in a meaningful way, even in the face of challenges like the coronavirus pandemic.

DEVELOPING THE ACCREDITATION

As the development and delivery of Housing First projects in Wales increased, it became clear that a mechanism to ensure fidelity with the principles would be required. As such, the role of Housing First and Lived Experience Manager (hereafter referred to as 'Cymorth's Housing First Manager') was funded by Welsh Government, to work within Cymorth Cymru. With the support of colleagues, and the Housing First Wales Network, the Co-ordinator developed an Assessment Framework, to evaluate a Housing First project's fidelity to the principles listed above.

This report details the findings and outcomes of this Assessment Framework being applied to the Housing First Anglesey project.

It should be noted that this report does not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of Housing First as a model, which has been done repeatedly over many years - nor does it seek to evaluate the 'quality' of the support delivered within the Housing First Anglesey project. This is for the commissioning body and funders to monitor and ensure. The view taken by the Housing First Network Wales, and Cymorth's Housing First Manager, is that if a project delivers Housing First according to the principles above, it is likely to deliver support in an effective way, transforming lives in the process.

THE PROCESS

PRE STAGE

Initial conversations with provider.

STAGE ONE

Commitments agreement signed; documents sent to Co-ordinator.
Interview plan agreed and carried out according to Assessment Framework.

STAGE TWO

Interim Recommendations Report shared with provider. Recommendations phase.

STAGE THREE

Final Report shared with Accreditation Panel. Final accreditation decision made.

HOUSING FIRST PRINCIPLES

1. People have a right to a home that is affordable, secure, habitable, adequate both physically and culturally, and with availability of services (as per UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). It should also be dispersed in the community and not as part of an institution.
2. Housing and support are separated.
3. The service is targeted at individuals who demonstrate a repeat pattern of disengagement with hostel accommodation and/ or, individuals accessing rough sleeping or accessing EOS (Emergency Overnight Stay) at the point when the referral is made.
4. Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed.
5. An active engagement approach is used.
6. Individuals have choice and control.
7. A harm reduction approach to substance misuse is used.
8. The service is delivered in a psychologically-informed, trauma-informed, gender-informed way that is sensitive and aware of protected characteristics.
9. The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations, and as such has an explicit commitment to a small caseload.
10. The widest range of services are involved from the outset (health, substance misuse, mental health, police), so individuals can access them if needed or wanted.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out as per the Housing First Wales Accreditation Assessment Framework, devised by the Housing First Manager in partnership with the Housing First Wales Network and the Welsh Government.

POINT OF CONTACT AND EVIDENCE SOURCES

The main point of contact at the Housing First Anglesey project (Jo Parry, Housing First Anglesey Service Manager), agreed upon and liaised with Cymorth's Housing First Manager throughout the process.

Evidence for adherence to each principle comes from two sources:

- Documentation provided by the Housing First Anglesey Team
- Interviews carried out by Cymorth's Housing First Manager, alongside other members of Cymorth Cymru staff

THE INTERVIEWS

It should be noted that, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (which led to various levels of 'lockdown' across Wales during the accreditation period), these interviews were carried out using online conferencing software. In almost all cases, interviews were done via video call, to ensure that the experience of face-to-face contact was replicated as closely as possible. Two interviews were carried out over the telephone.

Sixteen people associated with the project were interviewed, including members of the Housing First team, the team's managers, staff from The Wallich's senior management team, local PRS landlords, local mental health and substance use experts, probation officers, and clients. Interviews were divided up between Cymorth's Housing First Manager, and three other members of Cymorth Cymru staff; the consent forms and privacy notes reflect this.

Three current clients were interviewed, but due to concerns about informed consent and the mental health of one client, material from two interviews were used as part of this accreditation process. Both clients had Housing First tenancies at the time of interview.

In all cases, the relevant consent forms were signed, and interviews recorded.

THE DOCUMENTATION

Documentation was requested as per the Assessment Framework, or identified by the Housing First Anglesey Service Manager as being of use. Additional documents were provided after the project received its Interim Recommendations Report, to evidence the response.

In all cases, any identifying elements for specific service users were redacted from the documents prior to them being set to Cymorth's Housing First Manager.

Hard copies of documentation have been kept in a secure place, and electronic materials stored in a protected folder online. All evidence will be destroyed four months after completion of the accreditation process.

EVIDENCE TYPE, QUALITY AND SCORING

Evidence from each type was catalogued in the Interim Recommendations Report, which was developed by Cymorth's Housing First Manager as part of the accreditation process. The report has only been seen by staff at the Housing First Anglesey project, senior Cymorth Cymru staff (for quality control purposes), and other stakeholder groups with recommendations aimed at them - in this case, project commissioners.

Evidence sources divided into five types:

- Internal policy documentation
- External policy documentation
- Practitioner interviews
- External Interviews
- Client interviews

Evidence was scored as being very low, low, adequate, high or very high - in part, this scoring takes into account the variety of different evidence types (that is, the more types that are represented, the better - making a higher score more likely). In addition, the judgement of Cymorth's Housing First Manager was also used, based on the quality and/or depth of the evidence. As such, evidence scores should be read in conjunction with the associated explanatory notes. This is discussed in more detail alongside the appropriate principles in the next section.

Areas of concern were identified, and any issues with a particular principle were outlined in the Interim Recommendations Report that was shared with the project.

RECOMMENDATION AND BEST PRACTICE PLAN

Various recommendations were devised, based on evidence scores; these are included in this report, alongside any areas of concern (as well as associated mitigating factors).

- The Interim Recommendations Report also functioned as an action plan (in the past, the action plan has been a separate document, but they have now been joined for convenience). Each recommendation had a set of actions attached to it, with a specific stakeholder assigned to that action, as well as a timescale. The individual actions have not been listed in this report, for the sake of brevity, but they simply provided some practical steps to delivering the recommendations. This report will discuss many of those actions as they form the Wallich Anglesey project's response to the recommendations.
- Several of the actions were labelled 'critical' at the stage of drafting the Interim Recommendations Report. In the past, whether or not a recommendation was considered critical to achieving accreditation was discussed with the project, often after the meeting of the Housing First Accreditation Panel. Here, the decision was made to be fully transparent and highlight certain critical recommendations in the Interim Recommendations Report, to give project staff more time to enact them. As such, several recommendations are marked 'critical' in this report.

The Interim Recommendations Report was shared with the Housing First Anglesey Service Manager, and several meetings were had to discuss them. Senior project staff committed to working on the principles, and it should be noted that interesting ideas to meet the recommendations were discussed in these meetings, laying a positive foundation for the work ahead.

The Housing First Anglesey Service Manager and Cymorth's Housing First Manager agreed on timescales to begin work on enacting and evidencing work on the principles, and determined that they would meet again several months after the report was shared.

In this case, accreditation has been recommended, provided that work on the recommendations continues.

FINAL REPORT PRODUCED

This report forms the main piece of evidence which members of the Housing First Accreditation Panel used as the basis of their decision whether to provide accreditation, or not, to the Housing First Anglesey project.

The finalised version of this report will be translated into Welsh, with both copies being appropriately branded, and then shared with the Housing First Anglesey team and the appropriate contacts in Welsh Government. Some sections of this report were added after the Accreditation Panel met.

The Housing First Anglesey team can then decide whether to publish and/or share this report.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel met and discussed this final report. Sections have been added at the end of the report to make clear what these discussions involved.

3. EVIDENCE

FIDELITY EVIDENCE LEVEL SCORING

In the following text, the evidence level was scored according to the following options:



Categories of evidence based on sources were as follows:

Abbreviation	Evidence Type
IPD	Internal policy document - a document governing the way Housing First is implemented, created within the Housing First team itself.
EPD	External policy document - a document governing or affecting the way Housing First is implemented, created by an organisation or individual outside the Housing First team (the local authority, for example).
PI	Practitioner interview - an interview carried out with a member of the Housing First team, who has experience delivering the service on a day-to-day basis.
EI	External interview - an interview carried out with someone outside the Housing First team itself, but who is a stakeholder when it comes to the delivery of Housing First (some interviewees, for example, worked for a different part of the local authority, but sat on the Housing First Steering Group).
CI	Client interview - an interview carried out with a client, service user, or citizen, receiving support from the Housing First team and either accommodated or waiting to be accommodated in Housing First accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION EVIDENCE LEVEL

The evidence provided in response to the recommendations has also been scored, but using a simpler scale than the evidence relating to an entire principle.



Additionally, the timescale agreed for recommendations to be acted on have been graded as follows:

- Short term: Up to six months
- Medium term: Six to twelve months
- Long term: More than a year
- Ongoing

4. PROJECT CONTEXT

The Wallich's Housing First project on Ynys Môn (Anglesey) began in April 2013 as a twelve-month pilot. The project was set up to support people who were either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Specifically, staff would be working with single people, aged between 25 and 54 years old, with no dependent children living with them.

An important part of the early service development was communicating with various partners, which included the local authority. The local authority was instrumental in recognising the value of the housing first model and the benefits that the model could bring for local people. The health service and in particular the community mental health team, the substance misuse service, and representatives within the criminal justice system would be all key to collectively enable the project to work towards the true Housing First approach that staff were all committed to. Regular meetings took place, with these various local services buying into the model.

Results were quickly apparent. The project started with five staff and twelve clients, and surpassed expectations to house people, seeing positive results within the first three months, having successfully housed all twelve clients. The clients being supported started to live independently, gaining a newfound freedom as they now had their own front door. For some people, project staff believe, this was the first time they had felt safe. Not only was this hugely positive for the clients but seeing clients flourish was massively rewarding for staff.

As time went on, it became apparent that building relationships with local private landlords would be 'paramount', as the manager puts it, to achieve ongoing success in sourcing accommodation. Staff at the project worked to ensure that landlords understood the support clients were receiving, but also made clear that they would support landlords and listen to any concerns they had, prior to or during tenancies.

The manager in Anglesey highlighted a particular client, saying, 'One of the first people we supported into a private tenancy back in 2013 had been...sleeping in a barn [for a year], not admitting to friends and family he was homeless. [He was] still working and using the local leisure centre to shower before going to work. That gentleman nine years later is still in the same accommodation and happily getting on with his life, feeling safe and secure, and always happy to let us know how well he is doing if we should bump into him.'

As more funding became available, the project began supporting larger numbers of people. According to the manager, the team 'continue[s] to deliver a Housing First approach which we are proud of.' The manager also points to the feedback the team has received from clients over the years.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the team remained committed to delivering a service that provided intensive support to those that needed it, and continued to source appropriate accommodation (though this process became slower and more difficult, due to the volume of people presenting locally asking for help).

The project team continues to work closely with a range of local agencies, with members of staff committing to and reflecting on their work, to ensure that support is delivered according to the Housing First principles.

5. REPORTING ON PRINCIPLES AND FIDELITY

PRINCIPLE ONE EVIDENCE LEVEL

Very high

People have a right to a home that is affordable, secure, habitable, adequate both physically and culturally, and with availability of services (as per UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). It should also be dispersed in the community and not as part of an institution.

Summary notes

Extensive evidence exists that the project and its partners are acting in alignment with the first principle. In particular, the way that the Housing First team staff engage and interact with local landlords (the Wallich's Anglesey project is unique in Wales in terms of the extent to which the project relies on the Private Rented Sector for its properties). Support workers from the project have clearly felt empowered to turn down properties offered to the project by private landlords, due to issues with the quality and standard of the accommodation. In cases where support workers have their own concerns about the standard of a particular property, but there are no perceived issues with safety, the ultimate choice remains where it should - with the client or potential client viewing the property.

Many of the landlords interviewed for the project, all of them working in the private sector, demonstrated attitudes aligning with this. One, for example, explained that 'if [the landlord] couldn't live in [a property], [they] wouldn't expect anyone else to'.

All the clients who participated in interviews clearly articulated the fact that they had not been expected to commit to any specific engagement, beyond maintaining basic contact with a support worker. Clients clearly accepted that this did not mean engaging with any support. The clients interviewed described the conditions and quality of their property in very positive terms - in particular, contrasting the accommodation they were currently living in as part of Housing First, with other accommodation they had experienced while receiving other kinds of homelessness support.

Properties in use by the Anglesey project are scattered across the local area, with client expectations carefully managed as to property availability in the most desirable areas; that said, the project staff will do their utmost to secure the kinds of properties that their clients want, even if that takes time. It should be noted that the project's close working with the PRS requires good working relationships with local private landlords, which have in some cases been developed over years. These relationships enable staff from The Wallich to let local landlords know where clients are looking to live, and to serve as examples of partnership working with which to encourage other local landlords (who might, for example, have properties in desirable areas) to work with the project.

Areas of concern or mitigation

There are some issues with documentation and phrasing, particularly associated with conditions seemingly attached to the Housing First tenancy. One such phrase is 'positive lifestyle choices', which is concerning when it comes to Housing First, which should be led by client choice, rather than a support worker's view of 'positive' or 'negative' behaviour. While the project team have agreed to remove this phrase, it was explained that in this context, the phrase referred to enabling a client's strengths, and empowering them to make choices with these strengths in mind. Provided this is explained correctly in the documentation going forward, there shouldn't be an issue here.

Similarly, there are references in some of the tenancy agreements and introductory documentation to a particular aspect of the service, provided by the 'Warden', being mandatory - this phrasing is outdated, and the Warden's service no longer exists; as such, this text should be deleted. Finally, staff in interviews - support workers in particular - seem concerned about, to the point of fixation on, the engagement and disengagement of their clients. This will be mentioned elsewhere, as the focus should be on active engagement rather than the risk of clients not engaging.

It should be noted that the mitigating factors above were all reinforced by clients during their interviews.

There appears to be a local issue with Rent Smart Wales engagement among landlords; this came up several times during interviews. It bears emphasis that this is not a problem for the Anglesey project to solve. It was made clear to that the project will in no circumstances work with any private landlords who are not registered with Rent Smart Wales, which is a legal requirement to let properties. As such, this issue will be referred to the relevant enforcement authorities in the area.

Recommendations

1. Continue to work to ensure that the quality of accommodation remains at an acceptable level

Timescale: Ongoing

2. Work to improve PRS landlord relationships across the board, so potential issues are avoided

Timescale: Medium term/ongoing

3. Ensure that the absence of conditionality is codified at commissioning level, and that documentation is updated to reflect this, while recognising within the documentation that PRS landlord relationships are crucial, and this absence of conditionality does not suggest tenancy issues will not arise and need management - CRITICAL

Timescale: Medium term/ongoing

4. Continue to ensure that the project does not work with landlords not acting in accordance with Rent Smart Wales' legal requirements

Timescale: Medium-long term

Response to recommendations

The responses to these recommendations are admirably robust and thorough - as, indeed, are most of the responses discussed throughout the rest of this report.

Members of the team in Anglesey have recently attended additional training in homelessness legislation in Wales, and The Wallich has hired a Housing Compliance manager to ensure that when it comes to accommodation and its quality - as well as the Anglesey project's interactions with the Private Rented Sector (PRS) - legal requirements are followed. Staff have been re-encouraged to discuss any concerns around properties and their standards with the project's senior staff, as well as the local housing and Housing Support Grant teams.

Project staff will continue the practice of understanding the requirements, perspectives, and indeed properties of the local landlords with whom the project might work. Local landlords have also, clearly, learned to understand and trust the project (although more understanding of the Housing First model across the local area is, as is often the case, desirable).

Since 2019, Wallich staff in Anglesey have participated in local landlord forums, building understanding of Housing First. The frequency of these meetings has dwindled - largely due to the pandemic - but to replace these The Wallich team is working to establish a new local landlord forum, collaborating with the local authority. This would act as a space in which different partners could share examples of good practice, concerns, and updates.

Ultimately, the priority for each member of staff is, as one team member put it Continuous professional development, and building of knowledge and training, is oriented around improving the support the client receives. Advocacy on behalf of the client, is also key, and enables ‘diplomatically working with landlords to achieve [the] best outcomes.’ Staff mention the ‘open, honest’ conversations they have with clients and landlords. Staff have made clear that clients can voice any concerns about the standard of a property they view - whether they do that through a support worker, or themselves.

The Anglesey project has responded firmly on the topic of Rent Smart Wales, which is admirable given that - as discussed above - the recommendation is not really aimed at the project itself, but rather reflective of the local context.

Staff at the project have affirmed that ‘staff are aware that landlords must... [be] registered [with Rent Smart Wales]’. (It is worth pointing out that, where The Wallich as an organisation does manage properties, it is Rent Smart Wales registered - this does not apply here, but demonstrates appropriate engagement with the system organisationally.) The project staff understand that to qualify for their project funding, they must only work with Rent Smart Wales-registered landlords, as well as it being a legal requirement. Staff will meet with landlords to understand the properties being offered, before the project will work with them. As such, Rent Smart Wales registration can be discussed. To reinforce this, staff search for all landlords on the online register.

In one case, this online search actually highlighted an oversight, whereby a landlord with several properties had one inadvertently not included on the register. This was rectified after the mistake was noted.

With regards to the third recommendation, project management has discussed with the rest of the team the importance of an absence of conditionality and the concept is core to Housing First. Recent new starters have also been part of these conversations, which shows a commitment to emphasising this topic to all staff (it should be noted, in fact, that this point is also true of most of the other recommendations in this report.). People spoken to during this process agree that this message has been emphasised and discussed effectively, and a commitment has been made to ensure that these discussions happen on an ongoing, organic basis - as has already taken place with new starters.

Representatives of the commissioning team accepted the shift in language used in documentation around the project, emphasising the fact that Housing First as a model does not mandate engagement with support. This shift in focus from the ‘top down’ might also assuage some of the concerns project staff have around client engagement.

Recommendations evidence rating: High

Housing and support are separated.

Summary notes

There are many examples of positive working relationships between project staff and the landlords with whom they work (the majority of whom let properties in the private rented sector). The fact has already been highlighted that this project is unique in its strong links with the PRS locally; while other Housing First projects in Wales work with the PRS, the number of private properties let to Housing First clients tends to be much smaller than the number of local authority or RSL (Registered Social Landlord) properties. As has been noted, this work depends on the strong working relationships that have been developed with local landlords over many years.

Evidence provided by the project and its partners as part of the accreditation process suggests that, for the most part, these relationships are in an excellent state at present. That said, given the importance of these relationships to the project functioning and providing the intensive kind of support Housing First is based upon, it was deemed reasonable to include a recommendation about improving these relationships still further. This is discussed below.

Extensive evidence about the lengths to which support workers at the project go, in order to advocate for their clients, as Housing First support should, was provided. Support workers will arrange many different things with landlords on behalf of clients - including, for example, water tests.

Support workers and landlords have a clear understanding of their different roles within Housing First. The working relationships are for the most part open, honest, frank and effective. Staff at The Wallich develop, among their colleagues, a sense of each landlord's approach to housing management and, as such, their suitability to be involved in Housing First delivery. The landlords spoken to as part of this process understood The Wallich's support, and the intensity of it. It is worth noting that some of the landlords interviewed expressed the view that it is precisely this level of Housing First support that increases the likelihood of long-term tenancy maintenance; this makes providing Housing First tenancies, in theory, 'safer' than alternatives. This phenomenon, and the importance of reinforcing awareness of it through the Private Rented Sector, has been discussed in recent work that Cymorth Cymru has carried out alongside the National Residential Landlords Association. The work highlighted the value of leasing schemes set up at a local level to provide Housing First via private accommodation, as well as the [national leasing scheme](#) Welsh Government has developed.

Not only did the landlords we spoke to understand their role within Housing First, they demonstrated a good understanding of the model generally. Given that, when issues do arise for Housing First tenancies, they often come down to a lack of understanding of the model on behalf of project partners, this is encouraging. Essentially, it was clear that the PRS landlords working with the Anglesey project are content to allow the support workers to provide support, and only get more involved when there is a specific issue concerning, or requirement to provide, housing management.

Some specific examples of concerted efforts to avoid eviction arose during the interviews, and showed the power of effective collaboration between Housing First project staff and partners - like landlords. These tenancies are still being maintained, and have gone from strength to strength because of this work. One support worker, for example, highlighted persistent advocacy for a client to a landlord, as well as working with a client to help them understand the landlord's concerns. This client is now comfortable and maintaining an ongoing tenancy.

Areas of concern and mitigation

During our interviews an issue arose that is perhaps more common in small, tight-knit communities. One landlord, for example, seemed to take advantage of their proximity to some of the let properties, walking past and keeping an eye on the properties to 'see if there were any issues'. While it might be impossible for the normal everyday routes of people involved in Housing First to avoid certain properties or locations, using the opportunity to gather more information than necessary about a client does not fit with the spirit of Housing First. Cymorth Cymru and the Housing First Network have done some basic work looking at Housing First in smaller, rural communities, but this work formed the beginning of a conversation, not the end.

When there are issues or perceived issues affecting a client or tenancy, landlords contact the project staff, rather than the client themselves, which is sometimes the right thing to do, depending on the independence levels of a particular client. Landlords and staff should work together to gauge what the proper processes are, in order not to exacerbate trauma.

While the general picture here is mostly positive, as has been made clear above, there was some anecdotal evidence of trickier relationships between landlords and support workers - in particular, the idea that some of the PRS landlords with whom the project works could do with more in-depth knowledge about Housing First and its principles. That is to say, while strong working relationships can be developed over years, it would be better to improve understanding and buy-in over the shorter term.

Recommendations

5. Reflect on issues specific to delivering Housing First associated with rural/small town areas, and develop ongoing good practice guidance, informed by other resources where necessary

Timescale: Medium term/ongoing

6. Continue to reinforce understanding of HF across all stakeholders

Timescale: Ongoing

Response to recommendations

Project managers have committed to sourcing some training in the area of Housing First provision in less urban areas, as well as reviewing Cymorth Cymru resources covering this topic. The team will also reflect on these issues regularly, and share lessons learned. It is also worth noting that the Housing First Network remains a safe, open forum to discuss issues like this, which will more than likely involve someone else experiencing them too.

Many of the responses to other recommendations throughout this report address recommendation six. The landlord forums discussed in the section about principle one, for example, will be set up in large part to develop an understanding and awareness of Housing First as a model - which might in theory lead to more buy-in.

Recommendations evidence rating: Adequate

PRINCIPLE THREE EVIDENCE LEVEL

Adequate

The service is targeted at individuals who demonstrate a repeat pattern of disengagement with hostel accommodation and/ or, individuals accessing rough sleeping or accessing EOS (Emergency Overnight Stay) at the point when the referral is made.

Summary notes

While this principle has been scored as 'adequate', some context is necessary here. The Housing First Network members have decided that a review of the principles currently used in Wales seems timely. A task-and-finish group is currently being set up to carry out this exercise. This is particularly relevant here, because one of the principles most likely to change is this third principle. In fact, discussions about this principle, and the changes the COVID-19 pandemic brought to street homelessness in Wales, were the original catalyst for carrying out the review.

While this report cannot pre-empt the outcomes of the review, there is general agreement across the sector that the focus of this principle should be expanded to ensure that people who are most marginalised, have co-occurring support needs, and are most likely to benefit from Housing First are not excluded if they are experiencing other forms of homelessness to rough sleeping. This work is ongoing; the accreditation process must still, broadly speaking, work with the principles in current use. However, it would seem unreasonable to too rigidly gauge a project's fidelity to a principle likely to change in some important ways.

Turning to this project specifically, considerable evidence exists that in Anglesey, The Wallich works with those most likely to benefit from the Housing First model.

Broadly speaking, the referral process involves a Single Point of Access (SPOA) model, whereby a range of agencies or services can make referrals, but the referrals are routed through the local authority, before being discussed by a Steering Group.

Rough sleeping remains relatively rare in the area, compared to larger urban environments like Cardiff or Newport, for example - this is an example of why a review of principle three is important. That said, the project will usually have several clients who have been sleeping rough for a considerable period receiving support. Additionally, clients in Anglesey for the most part align with the criteria listed in the principle text, having had repeat disengagement with hostel-type or emergency accommodation.

The clients who have experience of sleeping rough certainly receive client-centred support, focused on their experiences and the associated trauma. All the clients supported by the project have the kinds of trauma and complex support needs one would expect to see at a Housing First project. This was evident from conversations with project staff but, crucially, clients too - clients were of course spoken to sensitively, and volunteered the information they wished to. It was clear, though, that they considered themselves to be in the group most likely to benefit from the Housing First model. Staff and clients discussed the fact that many, though not all, of the clients were dealing with substance and/or alcohol use issues.

One client in particular credited the Anglesey project with changing their lives. They credit the project and its support with '[their] job, [their] recovery, and their [life]'.

Empathy and a consideration of trauma is clearly taken by the project staff and many partners of the project, who discussed these topics openly during interviews. Many interviewees specifically referenced training they had attended covering these concepts, and the fact that they were able to directly apply what they'd learned to their practice with clients.

Areas of concern and mitigation

The Risk Assessment document is very old and doesn't seem to apply specifically to a Housing First approach - an issue that has come up several times in this report. Risk assessment when it comes to HF clients should be documented and specific. Additionally, different stakeholders seem to have different understandings of the local homelessness context. A deeper understanding, across the project and its partners, is needed, so interventions like Housing First can be most effectively targeted. A 'safety assessment' that was designed by The Wallich staff and is now apparently in use by the local authority sounds like a document that takes a person-led approach to this aspect of referrals, but was not made available as part of this exercise.

It should be noted, however, that staff at The Wallich project in Anglesey explained that, to them, the referral process seems to work well, and clients most likely to benefit from Housing First are coming into the project.

Recommendations

7. Review documentation and ensure that Housing First documents are HF-specific and up-to-date
- CRITICAL

Timescale: Short-medium term

8. Continue to ensure that the most 'in need' client groups are targeted, whether they be people sleeping rough or people in mental health/substance use treatment; persistent use of temporary accommodation and/or persistent tenancy failures should also be considered. The Housing First Network has agreed a definition of the target client group for Housing First, which should be consulted for this; it is worth noting, however, that the review of principles is likely to affect this - CRITICAL

Timescale: Medium term / ongoing

Response to recommendations

Steering Group minutes are already taken, which contain information about clients accepted into the project, as well as any not accepted (this is very rare, as only one person has not been accepted so far). Steering Group minutes clearly show clients being discussed fairly, and clients who are being re-referred equally fairly.

A review of project documentation, aimed at developing more Housing First-centric information and policy, is underway. Evidence suggests that this is a collaborative process, led by management but involving all staff, enabling the team to share insight and reflect as the relevant documents are being drafted.

Recommendations evidence level: High

Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed.

Summary notes

An extensive amount of varied evidence demonstrates the fact that The Wallich's support in Anglesey is flexible, and is provided for as long as somebody needs it (the excellent, enduring relationships evident between ex-clients and the project staff they stay in touch with, are a fantastic example of the support lasting for a long time). Additionally, the COVID continuity plan included plans to ensure that the flexibility of support existed throughout and beyond the pandemic. Notably, this included a focus on ensuring that flexibility was still available to clients even if face-to-face contact was impossible or not ideal.

Clients spoke clearly about the different ways in which they received support from the Anglesey project staff, and the flexible nature of that support. Crucially, clients didn't just agree that support was flexible, but actively provided examples - in one case, support workers engaged with a client to help support them in establishing their own business at the same time that they were working another job. Similar examples around the kinds of activities that support workers undertake with clients, who feel these activities improve their mental health, were also provided. As is often the case, these examples aren't necessarily complex, but might just involve meeting a client outdoors, or supporting them to engage in a particular interest of theirs.

It should also be noted that the fact that the project has been running for over half a decade means that some clients have received support for many years, or in some cases, have themselves decided they were ready to move on from Housing First. There are several examples of clients staying in touch with project staff just for the sake of staying in touch, which is testament to the powerful effect The Wallich Anglesey's support has had. Additionally, staff have confirmed to that should one of these ex-clients enter crisis, the team would seek to re-establish support which is in keeping with the spirit of Housing First and its lack of time limits or restrictions.

It is worth highlighting the issue of 'graduation' from Housing First support as a wider issue for the Network to discuss, as Housing First grows older in Wales - this is an area where representatives from The Wallich in Anglesey could provide useful insight.

Areas of concern and mitigation

Responses from those interviewed, and discussions in documentation, demonstrated some inconsistency around potential time limits for support. Some support workers and documents referred to a two-year limit on support. Others referred to a two-year limit, with a process to essentially ask for more time to support a person. Still others referred to a theoretical two-year limit which in reality didn't apply any more, and a final group referred to no limits existing at all. It is likely that the reference to two years reflects the time limit that previously existed for services funded by the Supporting People Programme, a limit which has been removed for its successor, the Housing Support Grant.

This poses two problems - the inconsistency itself is concerning, as is the idea that Housing First comes with any limits at all. Additionally, a knock-on effect comes in the disclosure that some support workers would, in a well-meaning way, talk about the upcoming end of support with clients. (The Housing First Network's stance is that people who have experienced trauma should not experience further anxiety caused about the potential for their support to end.)

The annual budget set by the UK Government often restricts the Welsh Government to single-year budgets, which then impacts on local authorities' ability to guarantee long-term funding for services. However, the Welsh Government has strongly endorsed Housing First and committed to maintaining and expanding the model as part of rapid rehousing in Wales.

As a result, local authorities should be more confident than ever that Welsh Government policy and funding will support the continued commissioning of this model. As such, references to time limits should be removed from documentation, and project staff should be supported to understand this. This would then mean clients didn't have to engage with discussions about their support ending.

Recommendations

9. Ensure there are no time limits associated with support in this project. Housing First support is not time limited - CRITICAL

Timescale: short term/ongoing

Response to recommendations

Like many of the other recommendations made in this report, this has been extensively discussed within the team. As such, members of staff in Anglesey have reflected on the absence of time limits, as well as how this matter should (or should not) be approached with clients. The approach has been called 'focusing on the here and now' with clients, and staff have accepted the fact that they should not be adding stress to clients' lives, however inadvertently.

There is evidence that this topic was discussed and reflected on in an effective and thoughtful manner: in team meetings, members of staff talked through the answers to questions like 'what if a client asks how long they have support for?' Members of the management team explained that they thought other members of staff now felt far more confident in this area.

In terms of the specific two-year time limit that has been referenced above, no current project documentation refers to such a time limit. As such, conversations with staff to ensure the team are approaching this in the right way form the main response to this recommendation; conversations like those described above.

This issue was also discussed with commissioning staff. In all, it is clear that the individuals and organisations involved in delivering Housing First understand that there should be no time limits attached to the support. New policy documents devised for the documentation review (discussed in more detail elsewhere in this report) will make this message clear, and ongoing team meetings and reflection between members of staff should also reinforce this concept.

Recommendations evidence level: High

PRINCIPLE FIVE EVIDENCE LEVEL

Adequate

An active engagement approach is used.

Summary notes

There is evidence that staff at the project work to active engage with clients, and to carry out assertive outreach to build relationships with clients and potential clients. Examples were discussed with members of the team of how clients and potential clients who had been taken to hospital still received the flexible support Housing First is known for; the same goes for prison sentences.

Interestingly, staff mentioned some of the inadvertently positive effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic - the fact that some clients, and potential clients, might be more likely to engage over the phone or online as opposed to face-to-face - particularly at first. In this way, the situation enabled outreach.

While project staff in Anglesey clearly engage actively, and carry out assertive outreach, this is not properly reflected in project documentation. As this report makes clear, there are wider issues when it comes to Housing First documentation at The Wallich; most documents are general in nature, rather than specific to Housing First. This problem is compounded when it comes to this fifth principle; there are very few, if any, discussions about the approach in any of the documentation provided.

It is worth noting that the project management view the assessment and referral process as working well, and allowing for the time that is needed to build relationships with clients and potential clients. Clients themselves spoke of these relationships being built in a positive way. Because the project works with a wide variety of people, who may not have been sleeping rough, a variety of methods to actively engage in outreach are needed. Evidence suggests that project staff attend different forums and drop-in centres to engage in this work.

One issue that arose was that some new and/or potential clients had heard about Housing First and essentially expected permanent accommodation almost immediately - referred to during interviews as wanting a home 'there-and-now'. Clearly, this is a misconception that might arise in any Housing First project, or indeed any project oriented around finding accommodation for a person. (It is worth pointing out that the clients spoken to as part of the accreditation expressed that they had been understanding during their waits for accommodation.) This is also an issue with no easy solution, besides project staff working to develop and manage expectations - again, work common to staff at Housing First projects - which they clearly do.

Ultimately, the area of active engagement is one that the team would benefit from looking at and documenting more coherently, before building awareness among the team, even though it is clear that good work is already being done by many of the support workers. The lack of documentation, for example, might impact on new starters who have little to refer to. This is an area that has been discussed with project staff, and the team has committed to addressing - as will be discussed in a subsequent section.

Areas of concern and mitigation

Many of the issues above fall into this category, but seemed so tied to delivery of this principle, that they were discussed above.

There was some anecdotal evidence from clients who suggested that at times they didn't know 'what was going on behind the scenes'. Additionally, the use of non-engagement and safety-check protocols seemed to err on the side of overcautious, and appears to have led to concerns on the part of support workers about clients 'not engaging'. Housing First as a model should focus on encouraging engagement in an active way, not fretting about a lack of engagement, which often resolves over time.

Recommendations

10. The active engagement and assertive outreach carried out with clients who are not yet accommodated needs to be more coherently documented in a specific outreach strategy, with guidance for staff.

Timescale: Medium term

11. Continue to ensure staff have the time they need to engage with and learn about clients, over a reasonable period of time, and get to know clients as best as is possible.

Timescale: Short to medium term / ongoing

12. Continue to try and mitigate 'there-and-then' accommodation attitude by managing expectations as part of the active engagement process.

Timescale: Short to medium term / ongoing

13. Ensure that new outreach strategy adapts to new post-COVID context, which might involve less rough sleeping.

Timescale: Medium term / ongoing

14. Continue to ensure that staff understand the active engagement model, and that fears around client 'non-engagement' are discussed and assuaged.

Timescale: Ongoing

Response to recommendations

The Anglesey project's management staff are contributing to discussions at an organisational level about some of these issues; that is to say, The Wallich is looking at good practice, taking all its Housing First services into account. The manager in Anglesey has committed to sharing drafts of documentation and policy covering this topic as it becomes available.

In Anglesey specifically, project staff regularly make contact with referring organisations to ensure that the people being referred are suitable for Housing First, and are most likely to benefit from the model. Project staff make contact with the client within 72 hours, although staff might need to work for longer with a client, taking several weeks in some cases to build relationships. At this early stage, clients or potential clients with mental health issues will be referred to the designated support worker for mental health, as well as support workers and project managers. Support workers are led in this initial contact by clients, as is the case through a person's entire Housing First journey. For example, this might take place face-to-face in a variety of potential contexts, or on the phone, or online - it's up to the person receiving the support. Support workers understand that building strong relationships can take time, and the phrase used in one instance - 'whatever it takes' - highlights an active engagement approach too.

In terms of client choice and expectations around properties, honest conversations are key. The Wallich staff will work towards whatever wishes a client has in terms of property type and area, using the local authority, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), or the private sector, as has been discussed previously. Clients are empowered to make informed decisions based on information about likely timescales around properties in given areas. Specific examples of the team discussing this have been provided, and specific dates during which more discussions on this topic have also been booked.

All staff have attended in-house training covering active and positive engagement with clients and potential clients. Additionally, a prompt to support workers is made by The Wallich's internal systems every four days if a client's notes have not been updated. This is not a command to contact the client, but is a way of maintaining active engagement and being assertive, by keeping support workers aware of which client's notes have been updated. It should be emphasised that this reminder is for the staff, not for clients - that is to say, it does not mandate engagement on the part of the client, but encourages active engagement on the part of the support workers.

Less visible homelessness seems to be quite rare in the area, but the project carries out its active engagement to try and reach as many people as possible. Staff go beyond meeting the requests of clients, to actively try and support them in a client-centred way.

Recommendations evidence level: High

Individuals have choice and control.

Summary notes

A wide range of evidence suggests that staff at the Anglesey project work to foment choice and control among clients, and to empower them accordingly. Similarly, evidence also demonstrates that the project team will do their best to encourage partner organisations to offer similar levels of choice and control whenever possible.

One example involves pet ownership. The project, acting in accordance with the spirit of Housing First, will accept clients who own pets - and, in fact, actively support them in a person-centred way when it comes to looking after these animals - while being open and honest about which of their landlords will also accept animals in properties. This allows clients to make a clear and informed choice about where they want to live. Not only that, however - project staff will work with landlords to make clear that the more a client's choices can be respected, the higher the chance of successful tenancy maintenance.

Many other examples of encouraging choice and control on the part of clients were discussed. One client discussed the choice they made to begin their own business, while working a second job. The client was empowered to make their own choices, engaging with their support worker to talk through the logistics, opportunities and possible pitfalls of such a busy day-to-day life. The client made very clear how well they had been supported, and how much they had been encouraged to make choices right for them. Another client discussed the fact that they had been able to make choices about their mental health support, and was supported in doing so.

Support workers described their approach thusly: they treat clients as 'experts in their own lives', which is very much in keeping with the spirit of Housing First - that is to say, people are experts in their own lives and can make choices accordingly, but are provided with the accommodation and support to thrive.

Several support workers emphasised the importance of open, honest relationships with clients in order to be able to foster a sense of choice and control, which bears out the experiences of other people working in Housing First who have participated in the accreditation process.

When it comes to active inclusion, one example was highlighted: a client who was dealing with many complex issues really wanted to go to the cinema, but lacked the confidence. Staff members changed their shift patterns to actively support the client to go to see a film, which the client enjoyed.

Areas of concern and mitigation

The phrase 'positive lifestyle choices' appeared in some early project documentation, and seemed to suggest that support workers would take some role in assessing the perceived 'quality' of a client's choice, in effect helping to steer them in accordance with their own values, not the client's. Similarly, the well-meaning concerns that some support workers expressed about client engagement, and the kinds of outcomes they perceived to be attached to Housing First as a model, might cause an issue in that priorities other than client choice might arise. (It should be noted that there is no evidence that this has actually happened.)

Similarly, there were some concerns among staff about the tension between the outcomes that tend to be attached to funding for homelessness services, and the fact that Housing First is only genuinely predicated on boosting tenancy sustainment. By emphasising this fact in documentation, staff might feel more comfortable about this tension. During discussions with project management, it became clear that the various 'positive by-products' that are often - but not always - associated with Housing First (for example, a reduction in substance use, or improved mental health) might well have a positive impact on tenancy maintenance. As such, the delineation between different outcomes of Housing First should be carefully phrased.

After some discussion, it became apparent that the phrase ‘positive lifestyle choices’ actually meant empowering the client to make choices they thought would be positive for their own lives. Again, there is no evidence that the phrase had ever been taken by staff to mean that their own values should take precedence over those of the clients.

Recommendations

15. Ensure that contract-related outcomes do not conflict with client choice, and that the true Housing First measurement metric, tenancy sustainment, is seen as distinct from other ‘positive by-products’ - reduction in substance use, for example. This recommendation accepts that these ‘by-products’ make tenancy maintenance more likely, and as such cannot be completely separated conceptually - CRITICAL

Timescale: Medium term/ongoing

Response to recommendations

Phrases like ‘positive lifestyle choices’ have been removed from documentation, and the ongoing document review that will lead to more Housing First-specific policies, will not contain phrasing or language that suggests anything other than client choice drives decision-making during support. It’s worth noting that members of the team fully understand the issue with phrases like this, and endorse a change in language.

Project staff also pointed out that they are working to develop awareness of, understanding of, and buy-in to the Housing First model among local partners. They have, and will continue to, manage the expectations around Housing First tenancies: clients are likely to be able to maintain their tenancies - more effectively than in the past, at least. Expectations around the reduction of substance use, or an improving in mental health, should be carefully managed, and this is something project staff are aware of and committed to.

Project management explained that although tenancy maintenance is the focus - and this has recently been discussed with support workers and other staff, to ensure representative of the projects are all ‘on the same page’ - the ‘positive by-products’ tend to, if they arise, go hand-in-hand with increased tenancy maintenance. This is a fair point, and one that was also made by representatives of the commissioning team. Commissioners also accepted the fact that documentation produced going forward should emphasise the key metric of tenancy maintenance.

Recommendations evidence level: High

PRINCIPLE SEVEN EVIDENCE LEVEL

High

A harm reduction approach to substance misuse is used.

Summary notes

Strong evidence exists to demonstrate the harm reduction approach taken at the Anglesey project. For example, the client drug policy document is exemplary, and one of the most detailed, understandable and understanding documents covering this area that has been submitted to the accreditation process. This is despite the lack of specific focus on Housing First - it seems that the entire organisation takes a full harm reduction approach to its clients.

Similarly, the safe injecting policy is comprehensive, and clearly outlines an approach that allows clients to use substances if they need or want to, but allows a place for support workers and other staff to provide safe equipment to do so - the epitome of harm reduction.

Given the unique relationship this project has with the Private Rented Sector, it is worth discussing the role of private landlords and the understandable risk that some might perceive that role as including policing of drug use in their properties. From interviews with landlords, it is evident that many of the landlords working with the project understand that this is not their role, and also understand that clients of the Housing First project might well have issues with substances and/or alcohol.

Interestingly, the relationship between the project staff and local landlords is a factor here. Managers explained that they would develop an understanding over time of which landlords were likely to accept, however tacitly, substance use in their properties. They can then use this knowledge when working with clients to ensure that clients can make choices about where they move that are not likely to cause them issues. This, essentially, is another way of building the honest relationships with clients discussed in the section on the previous principle. This also reflects, again, how important the relationships with, and understanding of, landlords in the local area are.

One of the clients interviewed candidly discussed their issues with alcohol, and how the project staff worked with them on this. The fact that this client settled into the project so well, and had a new-found sense of stability, meant that they could in fact significantly reduce their alcohol intake - and was supported to do so. Support workers discussed harm reduction options (changing the type of alcohol, consumed, for example, or reducing the quantity by a small amount each day) without pushing any decisions on the client.

Areas of concern and mitigation

The alcohol consumption policy, like some of the other documentation provided, is quite old, and would likely benefit from a review - this would keep it in line with most of the other documents, which have at least been recently reviewed.

There is also the need to ensure that a harm reduction approach is considered a key part of the Housing First model from the initial level of service design down; that is to say, commissioning documents would benefit from taking a firmer stance on this going forward. Harm reduction, while a concept that might impact landlords and the project's relationship with them, should not be a housing management function instead of a key pillar of the model. What's more, the lack of a requirement to be abstinent from drugs and/or alcohol should be treated in the same way.

Similarly, while there is a potential tension between harm reduction and safeguarding, when it comes to adults in Housing First, the balance should be more in favour of harm reduction. This again should be reflected from the commissioning level on down.

Recommendations

16. Build understanding of the fact that harm reduction is a core principle of Housing First - CRITICAL

Timescale: Short-medium term / ongoing

Response to recommendations

One question that came up during discussions about these recommendations can, roughly, be summarised like this: if clients are not mandated, or even expected, to engage with support, how can we deliver harm reduction to those clients?

We agreed through discussion that harm reduction should be delivered wherever possible. That is to say, when a person is engaging with support, that support can and should take a harm reduction approach. Additionally, there might well be opportunities to take a harm reduction approach with a client or tenant, even if they are not engaging with other aspects of support.

This recommendation was discussed with commissioning staff, who committed to emphasising the importance of a harm reduction approach to the Housing First model - particularly in documentation produced about the project and the support it provides.

The harm reduction work already being carried out at the project will continue, and has, as discussed above, been firmly endorsed by clients. It should also be noted that the new documentation produced in response to these recommendations will also build on the excellent harm reduction discussions in existing policies. There is also evidence that this message is being emphasised to the team, and to new starters.

Recommendations evidence level: High

The service is delivered in a psychologically-informed, trauma-informed, gender-informed way that is sensitive and aware of protected characteristics.

Summary notes:

As might be expected from a section with evidence scoring 'very high', there exists diverse evidence demonstrating a strong buy-in to delivering psychologically-informed support to clients, but also to providing this kind of support to members of staff who might need something similar. (In fact, on the latter point: the Housing First principles do not suggest but rather mandates trauma-and psychologically-informed-support, for clients and staff.) The idea of psychologically-informed environments (PIE), along with an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) or other forms of trauma, a person might have experienced during their life.

This section discusses some examples of the evidence provided in support of this principle - it should be noted that only a small portion of this evidence can be included for brevity. The Wallich developed an organisation-wide COVID policy. While the issue of this document not being unique to the Housing First model still exists, as has been detailed elsewhere, the planning and creation of this policy demonstrates a commitment to supporting clients and staff - as well as keeping them safe - during difficult, unpredictable situations.

Similarly, The Wallich's business plan exemplifies and discusses this commitment, and how the support The Wallich provides for its clients is at the heart of what the organisation does. (Once again, it is a shame that very little documentation exists that focuses on the Housing First model, and what might make it different - which is why a recommendation deals with this.)

The psychological service specification clearly outlines the protected characteristics and The Wallich's robust approach to them, which aligns well with both the Housing First model. In previous accreditation processes, it has been clear that organisations and individuals do act in alignment with legislation governing the protected characteristics, but at times in documentation this was somewhat less well made clear. This is not the case with The Wallich's approach to PIE and trauma, which is documented in policy and carried out in practice. The documentation contains references to therapeutic support being made available for members of staff who might be experiencing deferred trauma.

What is more, the positive change procedure is a good example of trauma-informed concepts. Additionally, this is a relatively new document compared to some of the other policies, which demonstrates some thinking around PIE, organisation-wide, done recently. It is also clear that project staff are encouraged to build reflective practice into their daily work, and all the evidence suggests that team meetings and similar opportunities for reflection happen often, and are taken advantage of. Email exchanges provided by the project demonstrate a solid understanding of the importance of PIE, reflection, and more specifically, gender-informed approaches. (Some of the project management staff have a background in domestic violence support and clearly utilise that knowledge in this role.)

Training builds on this, and The Wallich's programme of PIE training is comprehensive. All staff are required to attend a PIE course spanning several days, and all aspects of PIE and trauma-informed approaches are worked through, including gender-informed work. Support workers were able to demonstrate the understanding approach they take to the cultural backgrounds of different clients.

During interviews with clients, they reinforced the sense that the project works according to a trauma- and psychologically-informed model. Clients were open about the fact that their support workers made an effort to understand past traumas, as well as a client's background more generally. This was built into a person-centred approach and allowed for more flexibility in support, bolstering delivery of other principles.

Areas of concern and mitigation

Some of the language in tenancy agreements, particularly around modifications to properties, is not very trauma-informed. That said, this is quite a common aspect of tenancy agreements and the legal language therein. Discussions with The Wallich staff have made it clear that clients do have control over their environment and can choose to live how they want in their accommodation. The language of tenancy agreements is a feature of having to carefully cultivate strong relationship with local PRS landlords, which has been discussed elsewhere.

A social distancing risk assessment document was provided during the accreditation process, but seems to be in an unfinished draft form. There is also a domestic abuse policy, which seems to focus only on what to do if members of staff are perceived to be experiencing this issue. This is, of course, admirable and The Wallich should be commended for using such a document. However, the fact that no equivalent exists for clients should be rectified, and would bolster the gender-informed work already being carried out.

While for the most part, members of the team in Anglesey spoke very highly about the support they received, both from managers and colleagues and externally funded sources of therapeutic support, there was at least one instance of a person mentioning that they hadn't felt particularly well supported during a very difficult period, which suggests there is some room for improvement. It should also be noted in mitigation that staff agree the support available to them has improved over time.

Recommendations

17. Ensure that the recommendations from the PIE Feedback Report are carried out

Timescale: Medium-long term

18. Continue to ensure that staff are supported to deal with vicarious trauma, through regular reflective practice and psychological support where appropriate - CRITICAL

Timescale: Short-medium term/ongoing

19. Continue to develop gender-informed approach, and think of ways to actively include people experiencing less visible types of homelessness - CRITICAL

Timescale: Medium term/ongoing

20. Continue to develop links with specialist VAWDASV organizations

Timescale: Ongoing

Response to recommendations

In response to the recommendations made above, The Wallich team in Anglesey re-emphasised some of the training courses that staff had been on, including training on LGBT+ issues - including a 'beyond the rainbow' course - and domestic abuse. External specialist organisations had provided this training, as well as guidance on specific issues. The team has also committed to more proactively inviting specialist organisations to meet with them - for example, BAWSO, DASU and services like Dyn, IDVAs and ISVAs. Speaking of ISVAs, one of the senior members of staff has completed this training and can share knowledge with the team.

The team has also committed to continuing to review, and reflect on, how the service is delivering PIE. The 'Pizzaz' tool is in use at the organisation, and can be used for this continuous improvement. Reflection will take place during team meetings, supervision, and appraisals.

In terms of recommendation 17, the team has been through the PIE report, which has now become an ongoing live document, reviewed to assess progress and best practice.

Additional work to ensure that reflection is taking place throughout the team, and that staff feel supported and are supported through their work, has already taken place. Nearly all staff have attended additional training focused on trauma-informed work, PIE and reflection. Staff who haven't been able to attend thus far will be attending soon. PIE training that goes beyond the set of PIE training mandatory for all Wallich employees has also been delivered to the team. What's more, senior staff at the project attended PIE training and aimed at managers, and people supporting other members of staff. More specifically, vicarious trauma training has been offered to the team.

Interviewees pointed out that the pandemic has made reflection harder, as face-to-face activities have been made more difficult. The team is clearly working to mitigate this. As is the case with some of the other recommendations, multiple conversations with the team - including new starters - have emphasised the fact that reflection is key, and that members of the team are there to support other members of the team. This is ongoing work, and will also be built into new project documentation.

Members of the team in Anglesey accept the fact that they can build on the gender-informed work already underway. One member of senior staff in the team has a background in domestic violence support, and has put this knowledge and insight into effect at the Anglesey project, particularly in conversations and reflection with staff. Several members of staff have participated in domestic violence awareness training, and one member in particular wants to further develop their specialist knowledge by taking part in an IDFA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) training course. Project managers acknowledge the positive impact this knowledge would have on the individual as well as the rest of the team.

The project has worked with several clients trying to escape violence. One recent female client, for example, was supported closely by project staff and referred to other specialist organisations in the area.

The project has built links with local specialist agencies working in the area of domestic violence. Anglesey staff have worked with the local Women's Aid, the local third sector organisation Gorwel, and a local refuge, to provide clients with support. Recent training in gambling awareness discussed how this issue can manifest differently for different genders (and, again, tend to be more hidden in women). This has given project staff a grounding in being aware of gender's effect on certain needs and issues. Managers in Anglesey have committed to inviting representatives of local specialist agencies to their meetings, to reinforce the relationships that already exist.

Recommendations evidence level: High

The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations, and as such has an explicit commitment to a small caseload.

Summary notes

There is a variety of strong evidence that shows fidelity to this principle, including some examples of innovative good practice - including the involvement of the Participation and Progression Mentor, who works with clients in Anglesey to support their strengths in terms of getting involved in Wallich activities, or building employability should a client wish this.

Across the documentation, we saw examples of a client-centred focus. The exemplary substance use and safer injection policies mentioned above are so comprehensive that they are not just examples of good harm reduction, but of a client-centred approach. That is to say, the support provider - the staff in Anglesey - take cues from the clients as to how they want to spend their lives, and help empower them to do so.

Some of the tenancy-related documentation mentions the strength of having tenants involved in their own housing management and decision-making, which is clearly a client-centred approach.

Similarly, at an organisation-wide level, references to the Service User Shadow Board, a panel of clients that works alongside The Wallich's Board of Trustees, highlight the client-centred approach, and the opportunities for involvement in a range of activities, that are also open to Housing First clients in Anglesey.

The Housing First Network has discussed the importance of personalised budgets, with amounts allocated to empowering clients and enabling support providers to be client-led. These kinds of budgets are used at The Wallich's project in Anglesey.

One example of client-centred support, and support workers engaging with clients to help empower them to do what they want to do with their lives, came up during an interview with a client. This client had a job interview approaching, and was finding their life quite stressful, because they were also working another job. The support worker who worked with this client knew, due to the strong relationship the two had built over time, that the client, deep down, really wanted to get the job the interview was for - for a start, because the client repeatedly said so. The pair worked together to get to the root of what the client wanted, and what choice they felt was best for them - which was attending the interview. The client accepted afterwards that they were likely experiencing a nervousness that was to be expected.

The references earlier in this report to how the project has supported a client to start their own business is another example of a strengths-based approach and supporting someone to reach their goals and aspirations.

Email exchanges with ex-clients who had moved on from Housing First support also demonstrated a similar commitment on the part of The Wallich staff to work with clients to support them to make choices right for them.

When it comes to caseload, evidence was presented that in recent years, this has been managed according to the principles used in Wales. Basic research carried out by the Network suggests that caseloads should be limited to between five to seven clients, depending on context. Clients emphasised the fact that their support workers had time for them, and there was evidence of 'doubling up' to reduce single-point dependency, and allow clients to build relationships with different people, while having some consistency.

Areas of concern and mitigation

At one point, according to a member of staff, they were managing nine clients. This was a long time ago, and no similar situation has since arisen. It should be noted that numbers recommended for caseloads have long been established at the project - in this instance, some members of staff had left, and remaining members took on additional clients so nobody went without support. There does not seem to be any risk of this happening again.

Recommendations

21. Continue to ensure that management of project workload and capacity is done carefully

Timescale: Short term/ongoing

Response to recommendations

Staff client ratios are managed carefully with staff working on between 5-7 clients, often 5, once 8 when there were low staff numbers due to staff leaving and difficulties recruiting.

Staff work 2:1 with many clients and they also try to ensure that clients know all staff to avoid an over-dependency on one support worker. Support worker caseloads now average seven, and at the timing of writing, it was confirmed by project staff that the project was full with no voids and, therefore, new referrals cannot currently be accepted.

Recommendations evidence level: High

PRINCIPLE TEN EVIDENCE LEVEL

High

The widest range of services are involved from the outset (health, substance misuse, mental health, police), so individuals can access them if needed or wanted.

Summary notes:

There is strong evidence regarding the involvement of other services in the work of the Anglesey project. Representatives of the project in Anglesey, as well as the partner agencies being discussed, all highlighted excellent working relationships - in particular, members of local substance misuse and mental health teams cited the strength of these relationships, reinforcing the views of the project management and support workers.

Support workers also discussed links with the local police, probation officers and people working within the welfare system. An interesting example of the involvement of perhaps less expected organisations in Housing First came up during one interview: a support worker managed to secure the services of a solicitor for a client on a pro bono basis. This highlights the strength of links across the local community.

The project has developed links with local specialists in domestic violence, although evidence suggests more work can be done here. Strong links with the local substance misuse team were also cited. A new harm reduction team has recently begun its work on the island of Anglesey, and collaboration between this team and The Wallich staff has already shown positive results.

Crucially, clients reinforce this. One in particular spoke about the mental health support they had received, with The Wallich's facilitation. They also referred to some contact they had had with the local substance use team, although this was not as comprehensive as the former. A different client who was interviewed also made clear that they had received extensive support from the local mental health specialists, and that The Wallich support workers were instrumental in setting this up.

Areas of concern and mitigation

Some members of The Wallich team pointed out that some partner organisations didn't work in a particularly trauma-informed way. This is a common issue across Wales, but particularly important for Housing First clients who may need to interact with several public services in order to get the multi-agency support they require. While the Housing First project on Anglesey can continue to promote a trauma-informed approach with local services, there is clearly a role for the Welsh Government and the ACE Support Hub to continue to encourage a trauma informed approach across all public services in Wales.

Recommendations

22. Continue to develop relationships with external partners

Timescale: Medium-long term / ongoing

Response to recommendations

As is the case with some of the other recommendations, this will need following up over time - initially, we have committed to contacting the project in roughly six months to revisit this issue. The team are committed to acting on the above recommendations, and have shared a list of various stakeholder groups with which they will communicate to encourage understanding of and buy-in to Housing First, from strategic to operational levels, with everyone in between. Originally, events were planned to further this goal, but the COVID-19 pandemic has likely changed this, at least for some time. Nevertheless, the team have committed to continuing to engage with local stakeholders as much as possible, including via strategic discussion groups established by the local authority. Senior staff at the project are developing a delivery plan that will advocate for additional Housing First units, and are gathering evidence to bolster communication on a daily basis.

To some extent, the work of developing understanding of, and strategic buy-in to, Housing First, needs to happen across Wales and is therefore a shared objective with the Welsh Government, the Housing First Network and Cymorth Cymru. As such, these conversations will continue to take place during meetings of the Network and other relevant strategic groups.

Project staff and management have all had trauma informed training and work in a PIE way with clients, with ongoing training to support with those who have experienced trauma in the past.

The Wallich management staff also highlight the strong working relationship with the Hergest Unit of the local health board, and the local harm reduction team. Additionally, a focus on trauma-informed work has seen a shift from risk assessments to 'safety assessments' - a form covering this, developed by The Wallich, has been adopted by the local authority, bolstering the referral process.

Staff maintain contact with a variety of substance use and mental health services, as well as the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Recommendations evidence level: Adequate

6. ACCREDITATION RECOMMENDATION

This section was written prior to the Accreditation Panel meeting.

I recommend that The Wallich project in Anglesey be accredited as a Housing First Wales project. In totality, the wealth of experience of delivering the principles at the project has come from years of delivering support according to the Housing First model, and working closely with the local private rented sector (along with social landlords). Even though the Housing First Network did not yet exist in Wales when the project began, and the Wales-specific set of principles had not been drawn up, the project was endeavouring to work according to existing research about the model.

This has continued, and evidence exists in support of the project's fidelity to all the principles currently in use. There are, of course, areas for improvement associated with some of the principles. Additionally, the recommendations marked 'critical' are those deemed to be the most important and vital to receiving accreditation.

It is heartening, then, that the response to the recommendations has been so robust - the sections dealing with responses are far longer in this report than the previous accreditation reports. In many cases, the response involves the managers and/or the team committing to certain actions or approaches. The specific nature of these commitments, however, suggests that the team has put real thought into them. There are, of course, clear areas to follow up in the subsequent report that tends to be developed several months after the awarding of accreditation.

In other cases, ongoing work in response to the recommendations has been shared - drafts of documentation, for example. It is also worth noting that the response to all the recommendations has been thorough and considered, even those deemed 'best practice' recommendations; the team seems committed to developing any potential good practice when it comes to fidelity.

Local partners involved in the delivery of Housing First also deserve their share of credit, and will be specifically named during the official accreditation awarding event - and on the official certificate - should the panel agree that accreditation is appropriate. (It is worth pointing out that many of the private landlords who work effectively with the team in Anglesey might not want their individual names listed in such a way, but that their work has been recognised during this process.)

Finally, it should be noted by readers of this report, and the panel, that the team in Anglesey were eager to take part in this process; this eagerness continued during the process, and the team are clearly passionate about delivering Housing First in the best possible way.

7. ACCREDITATION PANEL MEETING

As per the Panel's Terms of Reference, three members of the Panel met with Cymorth Cymru's Housing First and Lived Experience Manager, and Director. To make a final decision on accreditation, the Terms of Reference dictate that all panel members must agree on a decision. The Panel spent most of the working day discussing the accreditation process, this report and specific examples of practice that demonstrate adherence to each principle.

The Wallich's Service Manager for Housing First Anglesey, and the Area Manager for Ceredigion, North-West and Central Wales attended part of the meeting. These two members of the Anglesey project's management team answered specific questions and shed more light on aspects of project the Panel had queries about. The Panel identified several issues that will be part of a wider conversation about Housing First in Wales, facilitated by the Housing First Network.

ISSUES RAISED DURING PANEL MEETING

General praise for project

Members of the Panel were impressed by several elements of good practice at the project.

Specifically, these included: the project's success at building and sustaining relationships with the local Private Rented Sector; evidence from recent years in Wales suggests that this is not easy. Other relationships are also admirable - the open, honest engagement with commissioners (which we saw first-hand as part of the accreditation process), for example.

The harm reduction ethos taken by project staff (and, it seems, in the wider organisation) is also notable, and seems to be part of a strong, reflective culture at The Wallich. The drive on the part of staff to continue educating themselves, and - what is more - to educate and reflect with partner organisations and individuals, also looks to be part of this culture, which directly benefits clients. While some documentation does need updating, it is clear that the practice is exemplary.

The Panel also commented on the quality of relationships with commissioners, landlords and other partners. The project has clearly worked hard to develop these relationships and this resulted in positive outcomes for clients, and open and honest conversations which helped to mitigate potential issues.

Members of the Panel agreed that, given some of the project's successes in areas perceived across the sector as challenging - harm reduction and landlord relationships in particular - some thought should be given to sharing good practice, via the Network and beyond.

Local housing market - focus on PRS and risk mitigation

One question from the Panel sought to get a sense of why the Anglesey project had pursued work with the local PRS, rather than social housing. Additionally, given the current volatility of the PRS - the pandemic and incoming legislative changes being two examples of changes that might provoke landlords to sell their properties and leave the market - the Panel asked about any risk mitigation work that staff had done.

We were told that when the project was established, the team didn't want to create an over-reliance on the limited social housing stock, but they were aware of how many private landlords and properties were available on the island. As a result, they deliberately set out to see how the project could successfully make use of this provision. Over time, relationships with landlords developed, they appreciated the amount of support they received, and continued to work with The Wallich over time. This has led to the current situation, wherein the Anglesey project doesn't work exclusively with the PRS, but the private sector does account for the majority of the properties let to Housing First tenants.

With regards to risk mitigation, project staff outlined some of the thinking they had done in this area, and also made it clear that senior staff at The Wallich have been having these discussions too. In practice, it seems that landlords approach The Wallich to ask about upcoming legislation, and to get insight and support from The Wallich as to sector context. Specific examples of landlords having these discussions with staff in Anglesey were provided. This demonstrates how strong relationships can bolster against risk.

Benchmarking the standard of accommodation

Members of the Panel were interested as to whether there were specific quality benchmarks used by The Wallich to assess and confirm the suitability of accommodation. Rent Smart Wales registration, and the requirements involved therein, are used. The Wallich also has dedicated health and safety staff who will carry out checks on a property. There are instances in which project staff have called on the Environmental Health Unit locally, with the landlords being aware of this (this is another example of where a strong relationship with local landlords is important). These calls were made to ensure work was done on the property in question to keep clients safe and secure.

The newly appointed Compliance Officer will support the whole organisation's work to ensure compliance with standards, including the Housing First projects. The organisation has, for example, embarked on a review of tenancy agreements across Wales, as part of its preparation for implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016. The project management spoke about having two-way communication between the Compliance Officer and the Housing First project to ensure.

The referral process

Panel members asked project management about the referral process, and how the scope of potential referrals is kept wide enough to ensure that people who might benefit from Housing First are not overlooked - especially given the relative rarity of rough sleeping in the area. Project management explained the role of the Single Point of Access (SPOA) via the local authority. Regular contact is made with the local authority to ensure they understand the capacity available in the project, and the local authority will alert the project if people who may benefit from Housing First are identified. The project management gave a recent example of being alerted to two people sleeping rough on the island, and went out early in the morning to find them. They managed to find one of the people, who declined support - project staff, however, used the opportunity to explain their role, and provide the person with the relevant contact details. These activities are a vital part of Housing First, because the potential client is now aware of the service and support available.

As mentioned above, at the time of writing, the project was at capacity, and not able to accept any clients. Members of the panel noted this, and asked for more information about how demand is managed in these circumstances.

Project staff described how good relationships and regular monitoring meetings ensure that the local authority commissioner is aware of the project's capacity and can make alternative support arrangements on an interim basis while capacity is managed. The monitoring meetings also provide opportunities for discussions about whether pressures are temporary or likely to be longer term, and therefore whether the project requires increased investment. Members of the Panel discussed caseloads and workloads with the project management team, who explained how 'doubling-up' on staff ensured that Housing First clients continued to have strong relationships with support workers if a member of staff was absent. They also talked about the importance of limiting caseloads to ensure high quality support, and the need for elasticity so that staff could respond to someone requiring increased support.

Dispersed housing and client choice

During the Panel meeting, the fact that The Wallich project in Anglesey is supporting several clients who live together in different flats inside the same building. The dispersed model of accommodation is a vital part of Housing First - in fact, staff from the Anglesey project pointed to challenges in the early years of the project where a large number of clients were accommodated together. These examples highlighted why a congregate model can be problematic, and must be avoided in Housing First - unless client choice overrides this. In this current instance of multiple clients in one building, client choice was indeed the deciding factor in where the clients lived. The project management highlighted that this can often be influenced by some areas being more desirable, affordable and close to transport links and services.

As always, relationships between support workers, clients, and landlords, involving transparent and honest communication, has given rise to this situation. The project managers made very clear that clients had been accommodated according to their wishes, and had not been housed in close proximity to each other for any other reason.

WIDER ISSUES FOR THE NETWORK/SECTOR TO CONSIDER

Harm reduction and good practice

Members of the Panel noted the strong harm reduction ethos being evidenced in the Anglesey project. Traditionally, this has been a challenging issue for homelessness and housing support services, given the legislation governing the use of substances. It therefore sensible to consider opportunities for sharing good practice with Housing First projects and the wider homelessness and housing support sector. . In particular, the Panel noted the culture of learning and reflection at the Anglesey project and the wider organisation. This culture features a drive not just to improve practice within Wallich services, but to help educate and inform partner organisations - this report has included examples of this taking place at the Anglesey project.

Anti-racism and the Housing First principle review

The Panel discussed the ongoing principle review, and considered how to explicitly reference anti-racism, alongside the need for trauma- and gender-informed approaches. This goes beyond merely respecting the protected characteristics, and is a kind of active inclusion. This will be discussed at the relevant point by the task-and-finish group working on this

8. AWARDING

Cymorth Cymru, after meeting with the panel, was pleased to announce full accreditation to the Housing First Anglesey project led by The Wallich, working in partnership with the Isle of Anglesey County Council, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board mental health services, North Wales Substance Misuse Services, North Wales Probation Service, Digartref, Kaleidoscope, Grŵp Cynefin and local private landlords.



Awarded by Cymorth Cymru:

- Alex Osmond (Housing First Policy and Practice Coordinator)
- Katie Dalton (Director)

With thanks to our Accreditation Panel:

- Rebecca Jackson (Platform)
- Tamsin Stirling (Independent Housing Consultant)
- Joy Williams (Local Authority Housing Networks)

9. GLOSSARY

Various terms are used throughout the documents associated with the Housing First Wales Accreditation. So that different stakeholders understand exactly what we mean when we use certain phrases, we have devised this brief glossary. Any questions about the terms here should be addressed to the Housing First and Lived Experience.

- **Active engagement/assertive outreach** - these terms refer to an approach to engaging with and communicating with clients or potential clients, whether they are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, or potentially suited to Housing First specifically. Essentially, working in an active or assertive way means a support worker should bear in mind that the person they are trying to reach might have many reasons not to want to engage. Some of these might be short-term and temporary while others might be more ingrained. While respecting the right of anybody not to engage with someone else, support workers should be willing to try different approaches with their clients - at the same time as working in a way that is trauma-informed and person-centred.

For example, a support worker might be on the receiving end of verbal abuse, and should make it clear that they are willing to draw a line under it if the client decides at any point they want to talk (while also making it clear that such abuse is not acceptable). Support workers, understanding that somebody might not want to talk to them at one moment, might tell a client that they will be sitting in a nearby café, should they change their mind. Support workers will need to be patient and understanding. A support worker might suggest a venue for speaking that they perceive would put a client most at ease - a local park, for example. Because many of the clients suited for Housing First will have been let down by the system repeatedly, active and assertive engagement means making clear that the same thing will not happen in this instance, and that the support worker will always be willing to talk; however a client is feeling, and whatever trauma they have internalised, 'the system' as represented by a support worker or outreach worker will be there for them when they are ready. Building relationships takes time, of course, and support workers should be prepared to put this time in.

Engaging in an assertive way means ensuring that the different organisations, individuals and agencies are committed to the same approach, so that it becomes a multi-disciplinary way of working. That said, it should be remembered that certain clients might have difficult relationships with certain organisations, and as such, the support offered should be separate from any specific organisation or agency.

Support workers and other people offering support should be willing to meet clients in a variety of settings - in a police station after an arrest, for example, or in a GP's surgery. Similarly, clients should be seen at a variety of times - people might swap shifts to see clients at night, for example, or in the early morning.

A key element of active engagement is that clients are offered a situation better than the one they are currently in - for example, they might prefer bed and breakfast accommodation to a hostel place. Support workers should, in effect, have a toolkit of approaches, in recognition of the fact that different clients might have very different needs and engage differently.

- **Choice and control** - these concepts are fundamental to the delivery of Housing First, but can mean a range of different things. In practice, choice and control refers to the support and accommodation being client-led. For example, choice might refer to the client expressing a preference for an area in which they want to live - but might equally refer to them taking the lead role in deciding how their home should be decorated.

Control means giving them an active role in these decision processes. The fact that Housing First imposes no conditions on tenants, beyond the basic requirements any tenancy agreement would impose, means that basic choices like whether to engage with a specific kind of support are down to the client.

It should be noted that, at a minimum, clients usually need to commit to at least having a conversation with a support worker at regular intervals. Housing First support workers often need to build relationships with clients, so that they can discuss the choices open to clients in a fair, open and non-judgemental way. As one Housing First worker has put it: “How can we know what a client wants if we don’t talk to them?”

Support workers should bear in mind that different clients will have different needs, and encourage them to make positive changes to their lives, while still respecting their decisions. This requires compassion, respect and understanding. Support workers should not offer help that clients do not need, and should be open and honest about the various choices that might exist at a particular point in time.

- **External organisation** - service, organisation or agency that is neither the support provider engaged in delivering Housing First, nor the landlord letting the accommodation, but is built into the Housing First project as a key stakeholder. See the definition for ‘stakeholder’, below.
- **Fidelity** - the extent to which a Housing First project aligns with the principles of the approach; in this case, the principles drawn up by the Housing First Network Wales.
- **Gender-informed approaches** - a service that, when planning and providing support, considers how a person’s perceived gender might affect their situation and support needs. It is more likely, for example, that a female sleeping rough has experienced domestic violence; this might necessitate ‘target hardening’ for their accommodation, or affect their choice of accommodation. Services should also be able to respond sensitively to requests for male or female support workers where appropriate.
- **Harm reduction** - policies and approaches aimed towards reducing the negative consequences of drug use, while emphasising the quality of life of an individual over the cessation of their drug use. A harm reduction approach accepts drug use a complex phenomenon and focuses on keeping people safe, and on the rights and needs of people who use drugs. For a more complete definition, visit this [page](#) at the Harm Reduction Coalition.
- **Housing First accredited project** - a service that adheres to the principles drawn up by the Housing First Network and has gone through the accreditation process before being awarded accreditation.
- **Housing First Network Wales** - the group of experts and practitioners in housing, homelessness, and related fields, who meet to oversee the implementation of Housing First across Wales, and how it can be carried out effectively.
- **Housing First Network Wales Accreditation** - sometimes abbreviated to ‘Accreditation’, it affirms that a project delivers Housing First according to the principles drawn up by the Housing First Network Wales. Organisations that do not receive accreditation do not deliver Housing First, but may well deliver an effective and necessary service.

- **Housing First target clients/client group** - This phrase will be used throughout the assessment process and associated documents. Housing First works most effectively with people who tend to experience issues with substance use and mental health. In many cases, but not exclusively, they will have experienced or be experiencing rough sleeping, or homelessness of some sort. They may have engaged with various services and organisations to varying extents.
- **Housing management** - A collection of activities taking place as part of the letting of a rented property; including, but not limited to, rent collection, housing maintenance, dealing with ASB, and resolving disputes with neighbours. Housing management tasks are usually carried out by a landlord, whether private or social.
- **Landlord** - the organisation or individual letting the accommodation to a Housing First client.
- **Potential Housing First project** - a project undergoing assessment for the Housing First accreditation.
- **Psychologically-informed approaches/environments** - support approaches and environments that take into account a person's psychological context, and work according to the five principles listed in this document, as well as reflective practice.
- **RSL Management Function** - the arm of a Registered Social Landlord acting as landlord according to the definition in this glossary. This will often involve activities such as collecting rent, addressing concerns or complaints about or from tenants, overseeing repair and maintenance and other similar duties.
- **Separation of housing and support** - In order to ensure closest adherence to the Housing First principles, there should be no undue influence on the way support is provided to clients. It must be accepted that the provision of housing is not conditional on engagement with support; people accessing Housing First need to be assured that the support provider is there to focus entirely on support issues, and this will not affect their housing. Housing management activities are to be kept as separate as possible - for example, support workers will not deliver or enforce such activities (rent collection, for instance, or ASB enforcement). They might, however, choose to discuss such issues with tenants, acting as advocates for the clients.
- **Service provider** - the organisation delivering the potential Housing First project support, as opposed to letting the accommodation itself. This may be abbreviated to 'provider' or 'provider organisation' in various documents.
- **Stakeholder** - any agency, organisation, group or individual involved in a Housing First project and therefore likely to be part of the accreditation process. These would include, but might not be limited to, the commissioning team, staff at the service provider, representatives of the health service, representatives of local mental health teams, representatives of local criminal justice, representatives of local substance misuse teams, and the tenants themselves, as well as clients who might be engaging with an organisation but who have not yet been accommodated in a Housing First property.
- **Trauma-informed approaches** - models that recognise the trauma that people have faced in their lives and structure systems around recognising and responding to that trauma. This definition comes from [AVA](#).

This is a living glossary - if you think other terms should be included, please contact us directly.