

For immediate release



New position to drive forward Housing First in Wales

Work to reduce rough sleeping in Wales through the internationally acclaimed Housing First model has been strengthened by the creation of a new Housing First Policy and Practice Coordinator.

Funded by the Welsh Government, this position will support the implementation of Housing First across the length and breadth of Wales. It will be based at Cymorth Cymru, the umbrella organisation for homelessness, housing and support services in Wales, which runs the Housing First Wales Network.

In recent years the Welsh Government has thrown its support behind this model, making 'trailblazer' funding available to establish and deliver Housing First schemes across several areas of Wales. The model has strong international evidence behind it and is credited with drastically reducing rough sleeping in Finland. A number of schemes in Wales are already underway, with local authorities, housing, support providers and health working together to provide permanent housing solutions and support for people who have been rough sleeping.

The Housing First Policy and Practice Coordinator will be responsible for increasing understanding of Housing First and supporting organisations to develop and implement the model in line with nationally agreed [principles](#). A critical part of this will include the development of a quality mark to ensure that organisations adhere to these principles and therefore deliver schemes which are as effective as possible and have the greatest possible impact on people's lives.

After a thorough recruitment process, Cymorth is delighted to announce the Alex Osmond has been appointed as the new Housing First Policy and Practice Coordinator.

Alex Osmond joins the Cymorth team from The Wallich where he produced a number of impressive reports including [Support that Saves](#), which evidenced the impact of The Wallich's services on people's lives and public services. Drawing on a background of project management and research experience, Alex is well equipped to support organisations that deliver Housing First – and those that are considering it.

Cymorth Cymru Director Katie Dalton said:

"We're absolutely delighted to have appointed Alex, who has an excellent understanding of the Housing First model and how it could transform the lives of people who have previously been failed by the system. We were extremely proud to establish the Housing First Wales Network in 2017, bringing together people from across a range of sectors to develop and support the delivery of this model. The new Coordinator position will play a crucial role in ensuring schemes comply with the nationally agreed principles and have the greatest possible impact. Alex is passionate about tackling homelessness and has impressed us on numerous occasions, so I have no doubt that he will make this role a huge success."

Housing First Policy and Practice Coordinator Alex Osmond said:

“It’s been clear for some time that Housing First can be transformative for vulnerable people with incredibly complex lives. It’s a privilege to be involved in implementing it across Wales, and I’m excited to get moving.”

What is Housing First?

Housing First offers a rare opportunity to adopt an evidence-based, widely evaluated approach that works with specific people who are experiencing entrenched homelessness, either repeat homelessness or rough sleeping. Often, they have experienced persistent difficulty engaging with services, due to their particular experiences in life making it harder for them to engage through routes that are more traditional and inflexible.

Housing First turns that traditional model on its head, and offers people a house first and foremost, with intensive support around their tenancy. This is different to the traditional ‘staircase’ model, where people will go through steps to prove they are tenancy-ready. The model has been widely evaluated across the world in different countries, with different policy contexts, including Ireland, New York, and Canada. The rates of success are startling, with Housing First in Finland helping to reduce the numbers of homeless families from 1,370 in 1987, to 214 in 2017. Similarly, the impact on single homeless people was just as successful, reducing numbers from 17,110 in 1987 to 6,615 in 2017.

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