



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

**HOUSING FIRST WALES ACCREDITATION
INTERIM REFLECTIVE EXERCISE**

ANGLESEY HOUSING FIRST

SEPTEMBER 2026

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Led by the Wallich, the Housing First service on Anglesey has, according to its staff, been following the Housing First principles since 2013. It was awarded the Housing First Wales Accreditation in 2022, making it the third service in Wales to achieve this.

Following accreditation, a [report](#) was published, which outlined the process, discussed the evidence collected against each of the Housing First Wales principles, and made a series of recommendations to support ongoing improvements and good practice. A [follow-up report](#) was published towards the end of 2023.

The accreditation process is designed to be an ongoing, constructive and supportive journey for the services involved, and as such, this reflective element of the overall process aims to strike a balance between a comprehensive re-evaluation of work already done and a lighter-touch informal series of learning opportunities. We acknowledge and understand that services delivering Housing First are carrying out difficult, intensive work on a day-to-day basis. The hope is that this reflective exercise can help foster learning and development as the accreditation journey continues.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this part of the accreditation journey is to encourage ongoing reflection on learning and outcomes from the main accreditation process, using the original recommendations as a series of prompts. The reflective nature of this exercise means that the Housing First team at Cymorth Cymru act as facilitators, with the bulk of the work being carried out by the team at The Wallich's Housing First Anglesey service.

Two meetings were facilitated, at which Cymorth Cymru's Housing First Policy Officer was present, along with two members of The Wallich's team, including the service manager. During these meetings, the nature of this exercise was made clear and agreed upon.

Next, the original recommendations (included here but present in the final report in more detail) were discussed. The team at The Wallich had its own series of reflective conversations between the two meetings, focusing on the recommendations, areas of learning and good practice, and interesting or noteworthy case studies. The team subsequently came up with some specific aims that they wanted to focus on over the next couple of years.

Notes from these meetings, internal and external, have been used to write this report, which will be shared with the Housing First Anglesey team, the Welsh Government, and – should the team allow it – the Housing First Wales Network and the wider public via Cymorth Cymru's [website](#).

PROGRESS SINCE ACCREDITATION AND FOLLOW-UP REPORT

The original recommendations from the main accreditation report are listed below. These recommendations were discussed and, in some cases, updated as part of follow-up work which took place roughly six months after the awarding of accreditation (detailed in a separate, shorter report). The outcomes of the reflective conversations which took place as part of this process accompany each recommendation. The notes under each recommendation were written after extensive discussion with project staff.

This report should be read with the understanding that, for many services across the sector, the external environment has become more challenging. An example that has had a particular impact on this project is the changing level of engagement on the part of Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlords. There are aspects of service delivery that are completely outside of the control of Housing First services, and while these issues might have made things more difficult for services over recent months and years, the efforts on the part of services like Housing First Anglesey to provide genuinely person-centred, trauma-informed support have only increased.

The Wallich also benefits from operating several Housing First services across Wales. The different services share good practice on an active basis; they can also discuss the challenges they face, as well as potential ways of addressing them. This very practical organisational learning aligns with the reflective, iterative nature of Housing First delivery itself, and is very good to see.

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

The Housing First Anglesey team continue to work very closely with Rent Smart Wales to ensure that properties for clients are at an appropriate and acceptable standard. Commissioners understood the importance of abiding by this legislation from the moment it was introduced. If a client finds a property they like and want to live there, the team will educate both client and landlord about Rent Smart Wales, and what this means regarding property standards. This means that client choice is respected whilst ensuring landlords are held accountable.

The Wallich has a member of staff whose role is to keep on top of accommodation standards and renting on Anglesey. This means that, although all staff members have the appropriate training, there is always someone staff can follow up with should they have any concerns and need extra support.

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

Across Wales, access to PRS properties generally has been a major challenge due to unaffordable rents. The Housing First Anglesey team, which has historically had strong relationships with the local PRS, has noticed a shift when it comes to private landlords who would have ordinarily approached the project to offer their properties. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, landlords who offered their properties for emergency temporary accommodation have not moved away from this type of provision, due to it being more 'financially beneficial'. However, the Wallich have been able to maintain existing relationships with the PRS. The team continue to build new relationships where possible by networking to seek out PRS landlords and opportunities for properties that can meet client needs.

The Wallich hosted a community event with partner agencies to promote the organisation and the service, showcasing how it supports people facing the greatest vulnerabilities and marginalisation. It was purposefully set up to be a relaxed, informal event that was open to anyone who wished to learn more. This was done with the aim of building further relationships with providers, with minimal pressure put on anyone to commit to anything, as well as to offer people support from the external agencies in attendance.

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 (even if no conditions, still need to be aware of tenancy issues and how to manage these). All must be aware of the importance of no conditions.

The team make sure that conditions are not attached to a tenancy, in order to avoid setting clients up to fail with unrealistic expectations. As Anglesey is a small island, and members of the community often know one another, it can be difficult when names are perceived negatively. However, the project will attempt to rid negative perceptions by educating services and individuals, building those relationships. The team set up a task force with The Wallich's Housing First team in Swansea to look at policies and consider potential amendments to documentation, in order to make them more Housing First specific. For example, the 'tenancy support closure documentation' has a caveat at the bottom that highlights that a different approach will be taken with Housing First projects.

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

This recommendation aligns with the first recommendation - for example, when determining suitable landlords and accommodation standards. The Wallich's Service Manager reiterated the importance of ensuring legal requirements are met by all landlords. Commissioners working with The Wallich have, in various contexts, specifically and strongly affirmed the importance of Rent Smart Wales and the safety of clients. Commissioners would support advocacy on behalf of a client in the event of somebody having concerns that legal requirements are not met.

The team will regularly check if properties and landlords are registered. One such check led to finding that, although a particular landlord and property were appropriately registered with Rent Smart Wales, it did not meet the associated accommodation standards. This serves as a valuable reminder that Rent Smart Wales registration does not automatically mean a property remains in appropriate condition (the Housing First Wales accreditation process evolves over time instead of being a 'one-off' exercise to avoid this exact kind of assumption, in fact). The scenario also highlights how important the involvement of support staff is, along with their advocacy on behalf of the client.

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.

As the Housing First team on Anglesey is small, members are regularly able to reflect on ongoing or new issues that can occur for clients, including issues that might be more common in rural areas. Many concerns can be addressed quickly in this way. When it comes to choice and control, Housing First support workers work to ensure that they have honest conversations with clients about the difficulties of living in certain areas on Anglesey and the ability to travel to appointments, or indeed to travel for any other reason. Such conversations are never had with the aim of diminishing a client's ability to choose where they live, but to ensure that clients have as much information as possible. That way, they can consider the realities of potential decisions and feel empowered to make a genuinely informed choice; staff will respect this choice, regardless of any personal feelings about a particular decision or situation.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the team developed new ways of working. For example, phone check-ins (as opposed to home visits) have been an option for clients who prefer a regular phone call. Broadening the options for contacting clients has helped combat concerns about isolation for those living within rural areas.

The Housing First service works with a local scheme that refurbishes electrical goods. This means tablets, phones, and laptops can be purchased for clients at reduced costs. Being able to access digital tools can allow clients to feel more connected to support staff as well as different community groups, preventing feelings of social isolation. The team are also conscious that a lot of clients may not feel comfortable using technology and will support them in being able to use digital devices or make use of community hubs like libraries, where help accessing resources might be provided.

6. Continue to reinforce understanding of Housing First across all stakeholders.

As discussed in the six month follow up post accreditation, the team continue to attend provider forum meetings regularly. They continue to reinforce the model and the importance of it. The team also recently held a meeting with the local authority due to staff turnover. The meeting allowed an opportunity to reinforce the principles of Housing First to existing staff but also to educate newer members of staff on the model. The service area manager has offered her support on a regular basis to continue to strengthen the local authority's understanding of Housing First.

The team are always seeking opportunities to reinforce understanding of Housing First within mental health and substance use teams, to ensure everyone across various support sectors are working in the most appropriate way with Housing First clients. The Housing First Anglesey project continues to maintain its good reputation and good working relationships with stakeholders across the county. This has fostered good working relationships with other Housing First projects keen to bolster their efforts to support clients in other parts of north Wales.

7. Review documentation and ensure that project documentation is Housing First specific and up to date.

Although the Housing First principles have been [amended](#) since accreditation was awarded in 2022, the nature of the amendments didn't mean that any large-scale changes to the documentation on Anglesey were necessary. The team continues to stay in touch with other The Wallich-led Housing First services across Wales. This is evident in the communication between the Swansea and Anglesey projects, which focused for a time on potential alterations to documents to make them more Housing First-specific, as well as supporting the development of other Housing First projects across north Wales.

8. Continue to ensure that 'most in need' groups are targeted. Consider: those sleeping rough, accessing mental health/substance use treatment, use of temporary accommodation and/or tenancy failures. The Housing First glossary signed off by the Network (found at the end of accreditation reports) contains a definition of Housing First's target client group.

The team continues to have conversations with the local authority when referrals come through. They like to maintain an understanding as to how the local authority identifies referrals as appropriate for Housing First. This links to recommendation six, in which relationships with stakeholders and their knowledge of Housing First is paramount to targeting the right client group.

There have been several occasions where the The Wallich's Housing First team has had to question how appropriate some referrals from the local authority have been, and whether Housing First is the appropriate support service for certain individuals. Due to the burgeoning strong working relationship, local authority staff are open to these questions and keen to refine their understanding of who the model is targeted at. The team can then support the local authority to look at other services in the community that may suit a certain referral more than Housing First. The project is open to new ways of targeting suitable Housing First clients and are always looking at ways to improve the referral process to ensure it is a 'fair' process.

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

The Housing First Anglesey team has ensured, and will continue to ensure, that there are no time limits to support. This is emphasised to both existing and new staff members. It is considered most important to focus on the individual and taking their support needs on a day-by-day basis, at their pace, rather than overwhelming an individual with the prospect of 'life-long support'. This comes with the understanding that people's needs are likely to change over time. There is also the caveat that life-long support is reliant on continued funding. However, the commissioners of the service are very supportive of the project and value what they offer to people. As long as funding remains available, support will remain in place for as long as is needed.

An example was given of a client who started receiving support thirteen years ago. They no longer require or need regular, ongoing support and are managing independently. However, they were able to get in touch with the project to request a food bank voucher when they were struggling financially recently. This example shows what life-long support looks like in practice, as well as demonstrating the strong relationships that are built between staff and clients.

10. Active engagement and assertive outreach with clients not yet accommodated need to be more coherently documented, potentially in a specific outreach strategy with guidance for staff.

Following the six-month follow up work, a task force was set up within the organisation, aiming to review service documentation; this task force included staff from The Wallich's other Housing First services across Wales. Some of the work done here has already been mentioned; as another example, the Housing First teams all contributed to outreach guidance that more specifically discussed the unique nature of Housing First and its clients, and how support might differ at a practical level.

Staff are aware of the importance of outreach work and are given guidance, like the guidance mentioned above, on the best way to approach clients. For example, changing shift patterns to meet potential clients where those clients are at a given point, and maintaining patience while building those relationships. Although staff regularly conduct outreach work, management emphasises the importance of professional boundaries and employees being able to separate their work and their personal lives.

The values of people working hard in this sector (and delivering an intensive and intense approach in the Housing First model) naturally tend towards empathy, and a real drive to deliver the best support. This inbuilt conscientiousness makes it natural for staff to worry when it is difficult to get in contact with clients. Over time, there is the risk that a member of The Wallich's team might end up working longer hours, for example, without proper processes being followed. The very nature of the Housing First model, in fact, means that flexibility and a lack of rigidity are to be expected – but a balance needs to be struck in order to ensure staff safety and wellbeing. Thus, the management team knows that supporting staff to navigate work life and to provide opportunities for reflection within work time are key strategies to ensure that members of staff don't 'take their work home with them'.

11. Ensure staff have the time they need to engage with and learn about clients, over a reasonable period of time, in the best possible way.

As discussed above, senior members of staff within The Wallich organisation, as well as managers within the Housing First Anglesey team, work to make sure that staff caseloads are kept as low as possible, enabling person-centred work. However, there can be periods in which caseloads are slightly higher – due to staff turnover, for example; while waiting to fill a vacant role, the team will of course be smaller.

Furthermore, recruitment can be challenging. At times, the sector and its associated workforce could be described as 'stagnant', with the recruitment process taking longer than it should. Turnover between staff members has, recently, been leaving longer vacancies and thus longer gaps in capacity. Job roles associated with Housing First are, clearly, intense and demanding, and will be described as such to potential employees. This, again, means that finding the right people for the work can take longer, particularly when times are already economically challenging.

This all means that staff caseloads can fluctuate. They are still managed very carefully. The Housing First principles used in Wales were amended in 2024 to reflect less of a prescriptive approach to caseload numbers, but an emphasis on caseloads feeling comfortable and safe for staff and client – this is the approach taken by the team on Anglesey.

For example, caseloads will normally sit at between 5-7 clients but can go up to 8 clients for some staff, ensuring that changes are accounted for across the team. As the team is small, staff members tend to know all clients well, even if a client is not on their own caseload. This is reassuring for clients, who understand that there will always be someone to talk to. It also means that staff can support each other and balance tasks between each other at times the team is over capacity.

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

The service tries to manage realistic expectations regarding property availability, affordability and waiting times, while ensuring that clients have as much choice and control as possible in the current housing climate. Members of the team approach conversations with clients respectfully and honestly. The most important thing, according to staff, is maintaining a balance whereby a client does not feel like everything is pointless, but also does not expect too much, too quickly. This is predicated on honest conversations, which demonstrate trustworthiness, which then bolsters relationships between staff and clients.

For example, if a client wants to live in an area that has higher rent prices, staff will respect their choice, but also suggest cheaper alternatives, such as living in a more affordable area close by. Having conversations that are built on the foundations of respect and honesty, while providing the support that a client needs, has been the best way of managing expectations, and the team will continue to do this.

13. Going forward, approaches to outreach should adapt to new post-COVID context, which might involve less rough sleeping.

As the initial accreditation was ongoing during the COVID-19 pandemic, the context of homelessness was rapidly changing. Many people sleeping on the streets were moved off the streets and into temporary accommodation. This affected the availability of properties for permanent accommodation, as accommodation that could have been used by the project was being used for temporary accommodation. The team has always worked in a pro-active way, supporting clients whether they are still rough sleeping or are residing in temporary accommodation, and will continue to do so.

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

Discussions during the original accreditation process acknowledged that some client engagement is needed to facilitate a Housing First approach. A basic commitment to the idea of receiving Housing First support tends to be necessary as a baseline. As became apparent during that process, staff can end up feeling overly concerned about client non-engagement (or, indeed, potential client non-engagement), and management recognise that this is only natural as human beings when working in such an intensive role – particularly those with values well-aligned with the Housing First ethos.

Managers within the Housing First Anglesey team support staff in assessing what is 'ordinary' for an individual in terms of non-engagement. For example, it may be normal for a certain client to disengage for a month, but has been seen by outreach staff and appears well. From a welfare perspective, there might be no concerns in this situation, and of course it isn't mandatory to engage with support. Client non-engagement would only ever result in a closure of support in very limited circumstances – for example, if a client has decided to leave the area, and has no intention of returning, and there is no concern for their welfare. However, a client would never be penalised for disengaging, and staff will continue to provide support in the way that the client needs. This will continue to be emphasised to both new and existing staff.

15. Ensure 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' – a 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.

Empowering client choice, and being client-led in all aspects of support, remain at the forefront of the service. The team recognises that some clients will want support with substance and/or alcohol use, and will work with them accordingly, taking a harm reduction rather than a punitive approach. Abstinence is not mandated, but clients who seek abstinence will be supported to do so. Harm reduction support continues to be the standard across The Wallich and will always be the approach when working with clients with addiction issues. However, some clients may not be ready or willing to access support services. Staff will make clients aware of the services that are available in the area such as mental health and substance use support. However, there is no pressure or expectation that they need to engage with these services to have a tenancy. When a client is not willing to seek support, sometimes staff might feel frustrated, but it comes from a place of caring as opposed to judgement and will not change their right to accommodation. Staff will reflect on these feelings rather than allowing them to impact their work.

16. Build understanding that harm reduction is a vital part of Housing First.

Harm reduction, as discussed, remains the standard across The Wallich as an organisation. Management continue to ensure all staff work towards a harm reduction approach with all clients and thus appropriate training is mandatory for existing and new staff; this means that a common understanding exists of what harm reduction looks like in practice. One part of the training offered is naloxone training, so all staff know how to administer naloxone correctly when it is needed. This is offered both internally and externally, and currently all staff are up to date with their training. Management will make sure naloxone is within date and staff will always carry naloxone with them in the event that it needs to be administered.

The team also had a training opportunity with the 'enhancing lives' team based under Betsi Cadwaladr. It was useful to build these links, as the hope is that a fast track option could be developed, meaning support would be available more quickly for clients needing support for their substance use – although this is still in development. However, having those relationships in place will help both staff and clients in locating the appropriate resources. The follow-up accreditation report highlighted that harm reduction training is ongoing and remains prioritised at an organisational level.

As discussed in an earlier recommendation, the rural nature of Anglesey means that resources are slim and clients are often situated considerable distances from services. Public transport is also sparse, making it harder to travel. As such, staff understand that appropriate planning and thought needs to go into their engagement with clients, particularly if drug and/or alcohol use is ongoing.

The Housing First team continues to build links and relationships with partner services in the area – substance use and mental health teams in particular - with the aim of sharing good practice around harm reduction. Clients are also supported to access these services.

17. Ensure that recommendations from the PIE feedback report are carried out.

The Wallich as an organisation values psychologically-informed approaches and PIE (psychologically-informed environments). A Head of PIE Operations is employed to oversee this work, which is also embedded into the Housing First services that The Wallich runs. The management team works closely with the Head of PIE Operations to ensure documentation and practice both align properly with PIE. Recommendations from the PIE feedback report, which had been carried out by a third party just prior to the initial accreditation process, have been wrapped into The Wallich's general PIE work.

The organisation and its Housing First services have taken some interesting approaches during this period. There has been a shift from 'risk management' concepts with clients towards the language of 'safety' instead. This is considered a gentler approach, but one that still gathers important information that staff may need to be aware of.

Training in trauma-informed approaches forms part of the induction for all members of staff joining the service, and the material is always available if staff need a refresh in their learning. PIE is incorporated into how staff interact and work with clients on a day-to-day basis. In practice, PIE is considered in all aspects of support. For example, being within an office space may feel too overwhelming, so Housing First workers can take a 'walk and talk' approach if it helps a client feel more relaxed, supported and safe. This is true particularly when clients with complex needs are new to the service and need time and space to allow trust to grow organically.

Staff members new to Housing First can find things difficult, and have to adjust to the flexibility of the Housing First approach (even when care is taken to recruit people with the right values). This is mainly due to the differences between how the Housing First team works and other settings – the local authority, for example. New staff members might be used to a more 'professional' office space that uses a glass window to separate client and staff, which is contrary to what PIE represents. Although Housing First staff hold professional working relationships with clients and ensure professional boundaries are in place, this appears less overt and formal than other work environments. There is an emphasis on helping clients feel at ease.

PIE helps build trust between client and support staff, gently removing the fear of authority or perceived punitive approaches, which clients might be used to when dealing with police, probation, mental health etc. Although working with PIE is about supporting the client in getting what they need from the service, it also helps staff learn more about their client. Patience on the part of support workers is also key. For example, one client might be happy to spend a couple of hours with a staff member, whereas others may only manage ten minutes and then need to reconvene at a later date. The incorporation of PIE into the Housing First, a model with no time limits, allows this kind of thing to be possible with no judgement or repercussions.

18. Continue to ensure that staff are supported with vicarious trauma through regular reflective practice and psychological support when appropriate.

The management team in the service is well aware of the impact the day-to-day work may have on support staff. The Wallich provides specific vicarious trauma training for staff, so that they are able to spot the signs of trauma within themselves and their colleagues. All area managers are trained to support staff, should a specific traumatic event occur. For example, an area manager from a different location would come and chat with the support worker, as well as providing a follow up session within 4-6 weeks. However, management staff understand that support does not stop at training staff.

As previously mentioned, the element of reflective practice continues to be an ongoing, regular process via which staff within the team can provide support for one another, alongside regular contact with management. Time is also set aside within team meetings, should there be concerns about a particular case, staff wellbeing and how best to support the support worker. More formally, someone externally will come and hold reflective practice sessions for all staff every 8 weeks.

Previously, The Wallich did try and 'schedule' reflective practice sessions on a weekly basis to ensure reflective practice was being undertaken. However, it felt difficult to 'schedule' a reflective session when new incidents occur naturally all the time; it can be hard to commit to reflecting in the context of a pre-arranged meeting. Therefore, it is seen as a 'reflect when you need to reflect' approach, and area managers will make that time to provide a supportive space for staff. Reflection is actively encouraged within these various approaches.

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

The team acknowledge the importance of Housing First being a welcoming, inclusive space for all, and being person-centred remains at the heart of support. They recognise that in recent years, more women are accessing Housing First support than have done previously. The stance of the service remains that 'people are people', and inclusivity and support will always be at the heart of Housing First.

The local authority recently opened temporary accommodation specifically for women experiencing homelessness. The team has made sure that members of staff regularly engage with women accessing this accommodation, to support move on into permanent accommodation, and offer Housing First support, if the women are interested.

Locally, people sleeping rough are almost always men, which is broadly true at a national level (although women are believed to be under-reported in official statistics). The team remains alert to any changes in the area.

Members of the team have participated in training on working with LGBTQ+ clients to ensure that they understand how to respect how someone chooses to identify, that they feel safe, and to help enable the establishment of good support networks.

The service on Anglesey has supported two clients who were transitioning, and worked to ensure that they felt supported and safe. The team actively promotes and takes part in Pride Month every year, as part of The Wallich's organisational participation across their social media and within services.

It is always emphasised by area managers and other staff at The Wallich that all staff must be welcoming and actively empowering at all times, not just regardless of protected characteristics, but making the effort to support people for who they are.

20. Continue to develop links with VAWDASV organisations.

Relationships continue to be ongoing with local services providing specialist support to survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV), developing slowly since the start of the accreditation process. Within the last few months, The Wallich's staff have had a meeting with representatives from Gorwel, a domestic abuse and homelessness prevention service based on Anglesey. Both services had new members of staff, and therefore this was seen as a good opportunity to present on both services, covering background and current work, as well as the potential for working together. As such, relationships between the Housing First service and local VAWDASV organisations are constantly evolving, and the team remain active in terms of looking for opportunities to work with partner organisations in the area. Specialist VAWDASV organisations have a deeper understanding of how best to safeguard victims and survivors, so these links are vital.

It is important that members of the team understand different forms of abuse and how they might present themselves, in order to pick up on any warning signs. Therefore, specialist organisations and these relationships built with them are acknowledged as essential. As such, this work remains a priority and will be explored further in subsequent accreditation work.

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

This recommendation links to earlier conversations about caseload size and appropriate levels of support, alongside the maintenance of staff wellbeing. Project workload continues to be monitored closely and the ideal is seen as 5-7 clients per staff member. However, it is also recognised that some clients within that caseload may not be engaging, or do not want much support at that time. Therefore, staff can be more flexible with the numbers of clients in order to support more people on Anglesey that need Housing First. Care needs to be taken here, as clients might experience some kind of crisis and require more intensive support at short notice.

As such, managers try to avoid a situation where staff members are supporting more than seven people for extended periods. The only circumstance in which capacity is exceeded is if staff members have left and recruitment is ongoing. However, when this circumstances like this happen, staff are able to support one another with their caseloads to avoid burnout. Management are always grateful and open to feedback should staff feel like they need more support and will explore ways in which this can be achieved to ensure staff needs are being met.

Although the team want to support as many in need of Housing First support as possible, managers have previously made decisions to put a temporary hold on incoming referrals, so staff are not overwhelmed, but also to avoid compromising the quality of support provided to the clients

22. Continue to develop relationships with external partners.

Some of this work has already been discussed – with local VAWDASV organisations, for instance. Members of staff from the Housing First Anglesey service also regularly sit on the local Vulnerable Adult Risk Management (VARN) board, which is made up of different services that play a key role in protecting members of the public who are vulnerable - for example, the ambulance, police, and probation services. These meetings can be valuable in ensuring that clients receive the wrap-around support then need. One service might be privy to information that other services are not aware of, which can support collective thinking in how best to support someone in the community. This approach also enables close partnership working, building connections and contacts which might be useful for others using these services in the future.

As well as building more formal working relationships with partners, enabling the development of relationships and connections within the communities that clients live in is just as important. For example, engaging with a client around their hobbies and interests and helping them investigate what might be available locally, offering support to access different communities or activities, is seen as a key part of person-centred support. Members of the team are excellent at seeking out services or groups in this way, empowering clients to explore and develop their interests, and at the same time broadening the client's own personal network; this leads to more opportunities for clients to forge new relationships and bolster existing ones.

As was highlighted previously, a community day in the local town hall was arranged by the Housing First team. This was open to clients, as well as interested members of the general public. The team also invited various partner services, including Digatref. Although both the Wallich and Digatref already have good working relationships, initiatives like this one provide an opportunity for bonds to strengthen, and for service staff to stay up-to-date with how things are going with partner organisations.

Furthermore, the event served as a useful, relaxed space for clients to meet other support providers. In one case, as well as having an enjoyable day out, a client was able to chat with several different providers regarding their support needs, as well as getting contact numbers for each of them. This left her feeling 'elated' by the end of the event, which emphasises how valuable this kind of community initiative can be.

CASE STUDY: JOHN

Part of this reflective work include selecting a case study that demonstrates a particularly interesting application of the Housing First principles, or good practice when it comes to the model. The Housing First Anglesey team has provided a case study, reflecting on and discussing support that has been provided to their client, John (the name has been changed). The case study below has been anonymised to prevent personal details being identifiable.

The next section outlines John's background, and the key elements of how he has been offered support by the The Wallich's Housing First service on Anglesey. Specific aspects of John's support are covered to highlight things that others might find notable.

JOHN'S BACKGROUND

John began his support on the 14th of January 2025. At the commencement of support, he was facing a no-fault eviction from a PRS property, experiencing ongoing mental health difficulties, and living with a long-standing history of substance use issues. These factors significantly increased his vulnerability and placed him at risk of homelessness and deteriorating health.

At the time, John was open to the local substance misuse service for support with his drug use. He had been waiting approximately 3 years to be allocated a place in a detoxification facility. He was also previously open to working with the Community Mental Health Team but did not engage due to poor memory with appointments, as well as having to manage ongoing physical health difficulties. These combined factors significantly increased John's vulnerability, placing him at risk of homelessness, which would compound the problems of his deteriorating physical and mental health.

The client attended a detox programme for heroin addiction in October 2025 and successfully completed treatment. Since completing detox, he has remained abstinent from all substances, demonstrating considerable commitment and resilience throughout his recovery journey.

CHALLENGES TO HOUSING FIRST DELIVERY

Following the no-fault eviction, a possession order was put in place, and John was required to leave his accommodation. Due to the impact of his mental health on his wellbeing, he did not feel able to access shared temporary accommodation. Instead, he chose to sofa surf between October and February 2026 as it felt like the only current appropriate approach available to John for his health.

However, this period presented significant concerns for support staff, as unstable housing and a lack of secure accommodation increased the risk of possible relapse and deterioration in mental and physical health. This was particularly important, as John had recently completed the detox programme and was determined to maintain his sobriety. Therefore, support staff made sure an active engagement approach was followed to ensure John's safety and wellbeing were protected.

For example, regular contact was maintained, and ongoing encouragement, guidance, and practical support throughout this challenging time was provided. John had access to support when needed, and he developed the understanding that his support worker would always be there to meet him, and extra support for his sobriety and health could be provided if needed.

Additional challenges arose when sourcing accommodation within the PRS. Despite John's commitment to recovery and sustained abstinence, his history of substance misuse created barriers when approaching potential landlords. Landlords expressed concerns, demonstrating how stigma can continue to be attached to people. This limited some housing opportunities and made securing suitable, permanent accommodation more of a challenge. However, John remained patient and engaged throughout this process, continuing to demonstrate his commitment to maintaining his recovery.

Although a main goal of Housing First is permanent housing, there are many challenges that must be managed in the interim. Ideally, the transition between homelessness and permanent housing should be quick, easy and based on choice, but the challenges mentioned above highlight the importance of engaging with a client regularly as accommodation is sourced, particularly during turbulent times.

Cymorth comments: John's situation highlights the importance of relationship building with the PRS, and of educating local landlords about the model. It is clear from the reflective report that the team works hard to challenge stigmas and assumptions made. The discussions the team has had, in addition to the detail of John's case, highlights just how effective and impactful the model can be on some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in the community.

SUPPORT FOCUSED ON

John's support involved many different aspects. First, maintaining engagement and motivation during a period of housing instability was particularly important; John felt particularly vulnerable and precarious at this stage in his support journey. It was important that John had a strong, reliable support network that he trusted and felt comfortable to engage with, while waiting for permanent accommodation. The certainty inherent in his support and his relationship with the service counteracted the uncertainty that comes with waiting for a suitable tenancy.

Support also heavily focused on supporting John's continued abstinence and recovery. As mentioned previously, following the detox programme, it was particularly important to John that he was able to maintain his recovery and avoid relapse. This would have been particularly difficult during insecure periods without permanent housing. However, due to the active approach taken by his support workers, he was able to discuss challenges and when he felt that his recovery was at risk. These open conversations and being able to engage with support in the ways that meant most to John, bolstered his own commitment to his recovery journey; John managed to maintain his abstinence.

As time passed, the team was constantly looking for suitable housing options that would align with John's preferences and needs. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, some landlords were apprehensive in providing accommodation, largely based on assumptions and stigma. However, with such a strong and trusting relationship built between support worker and John, the open communication fostered patience. Liaising with housing providers and advocating on John's behalf was an important aspect of The Wallich team's efforts to provide permanent accommodation as efficiently as possible. It also helped to ensure that the housing aligned with John's choices and needs; this could mean challenging partners when appropriate, additionally ensuring accommodation offered was safe and suitable to reside in.

Cymorth comments: The support provided shows the commitment of the project to build upon and create new relationships to provide permanent housing for clients. Such relationships are vital, particularly because in the current housing climate it is difficult to source housing and find appropriately priced accommodation. The Wallich's Housing First team on Anglesey is clearly committed to advocating for clients and showcasing the benefits of Housing First to landlords in order to build local buy-in to the model.

Support also focused on John's physical and mental wellbeing, linking up with the appropriate services which could provide extra support if John wished. This involved encouraging John to access the relevant mental health support, as well as encouraging John to engage with his GP to address any physical health concerns. John's support worker also played an advocacy role, liaising with the substance misuse service on the client's behalf for additional support when required. John was supported to attend appointments, with staff from the service going with him if he requested this.

Cymorth comments: It is clear through this case study how important multi-agency partnership working is, and that it plays a vital role in an individual's Housing First journey. Without access to the appropriate care for someone's health concerns, there is potential for such issues to seriously hinder a client's opportunity to thrive. As much as a client's support worker is key to Housing First, the model cannot work to its full capabilities without buy-in from other support sectors. These other organisations and agencies should work in a trauma-informed way; this often requires a Housing First service to 'lead by example' and share insight and good practice around trauma. The Wallich's Anglesey team clearly take this aspect of partnership working seriously.

POSITIVE PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES

The support given to John meant that his desired goals were achieved. The team saw a reduction in potential 'risks', which in turn meant John's sense of safety increased. He was able to access the appropriate services to support his health and wellbeing. John engaged positively throughout support and maintained regular communication. He demonstrated a strong commitment to his recovery, continued to work on this, and remained focused on achieving stable accommodation despite the challenges he faced. John's determination and consistent engagement resulted in a positive housing outcome. He was offered an opportunity to access suitable, sustainable and affordable accommodation in the area he desired, and moved into his privately rented new home in February 2026.

Since securing accommodation, John settled in well and is managing his tenancy effectively. His mental health has improved, and he is now actively engaging with mental health services to support his ongoing wellbeing. His physical health also became more stable with increased engagement with his GP, allowing him to focus on maintaining his recovery and independence.

Most significantly, the client has remained substance-free since completing his detox regimen in October 2025; John achieved this despite experiencing a prolonged period of housing instability, ongoing health concerns and the challenges associated with securing accommodation. This demonstrates his commitment to recovery and his ability to maintain positive changes during challenging circumstances. It also underscores the power of Housing First, applied according to the principles.

CLIENT FEEDBACK

John expressed his appreciation for the support he received, highlighting the positive impact of the service during a particularly challenging period in his life. As John put it: "If it wasn't for Kat from The Wallich, I would be living on the streets, smoking heroin with no help and no idea what to do. She saved my life and gave me hope. Kat believed in me from day one and stuck by me through it all. I will never forget what Kat did for me over the last year." The phrase 'believed in me from day one' in particular highlights the power that Housing First has when it comes to advocacy on a person's behalf, and being trustworthy in way that the 'system' often hasn't been for people who have experienced multiple kinds of trauma and system failure in the past.

CONCLUSION

This case study demonstrates how sustained support and effective advocacy, combined with the client's determination and engagement, can lead to successful outcomes even in the face of significant challenges. John has achieved stable accommodation, maintained abstinence from substances, improved his mental health, and is now in a much more secure and positive position.

A positive closure of support was completed in May 2026, with the client equipped to continue managing his accommodation and wellbeing independently. However, in accordance with the principle of support without time limits, it has been made clear to John that support will always be available should he need it. This has also been demonstrated earlier in the report, with clients accessing different levels of support during difficult periods.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Ensuring that referrals are appropriate for the service, targeting the appropriate cohort of people. This is important, as the aim of Housing First is to offer wrap-around / multi-agency support to enable people to move into permanent housing, for those who might find this difficult without the intensive support from Housing First.
2. The importance of educating people on the Housing First model. There have been staff changes within The Wallich and other partner agencies, therefore it is particularly important to educate new teams in existing partner services to the principles and aims of Housing First to ensure effective multi-agency working.
3. The importance of encouraging staff to remain positive and confident in the work that they are doing. Staff are passionate and keen to support clients to achieve outcomes and may be disheartened if they don't. So, reassuring staff that if an outcome was not achieved the first, second or third time, not to give up. Great outcomes have been achieved after many months of 'little' progress - perseverance is a must and has amazing results.

FUTURE AIMS

1. To continue to present to all agencies on the Housing First model. It's important that services have the knowledge of what Housing First is and the benefits of the model. For example, showcasing the wrap-around multi-agency support and the importance of choice and control of accommodation and harm reduction, and the outcomes this can lead to.
2. Continue to build on partnership working: being able to build and foster good working relationships to ensure robust wrap-around support. Continue to educate other services on the model to encourage buy in from partnership organisations that are critical to the wellbeing of the client.
3. Securing affordable housing to offer a wider range of property to clients. Although difficult in the current housing crisis, we will continue to build relationships with landlords across Anglesey to secure a wider array of accommodation

NEXT STEPS

The next stage of the accreditation, as signed off by the Housing First Network Wales, takes place roughly six years after the initial awarding. As such, the aim is to begin this part of the process in 2028. Some details still need clarification, but the next stage of the process will involve more substantive re-accreditation work than the reflective exercise carried out here, without being a complete retread of the original piece of work, and with the acknowledgement that a set of recommendations focusing on areas for improvement already exists.

Until then, contact will be maintained between Cymorth Cymru's Housing First Manager and Housing First Policy Officer and the Housing First team on Anglesey, so that issues can be discussed, and progress on recommendations and other areas of practice can be talked through in an informal way. The same goes for the aims that the service has identified, which will be a key additional area of focus for the next stage of the accreditation.