



# Evaluation of the Newcastle Crisis Housing First service



**Together**  
we will end  
homelessness



## Summary

This document invites proposals to evaluate the Crisis Housing First service in Newcastle over a two-and-a-half-year (30 month) period.

Through a longitudinal, mixed methods approach the evaluation will assess the outcomes and impact relating to four components:

1. **Process:** How the service works, how it is designed to respond to the needs of the target population, who is involved in delivering the service, etc.
2. **Fidelity:** How closely the service adheres to the core principles of the Housing First model, and which internal and external factors enable or inhibit fidelity of the service in Newcastle
3. **Effectiveness:** Service performance and outcomes for clients, and the experience of clients supported by the service
4. **Cost effectiveness:** Whether the service achieves better outcomes than existing homelessness services, and whether it generates savings due to use of other services.

The Crisis Newcastle Housing First service started taking referrals in March 2021 and will run until March 2024. The service is one component of a ten-year partnership between Newcastle City Council (NCC) and Crisis with the aim of ending homelessness in the city. This evaluation will aim provide evidence to inform future commissioning by Newcastle City Council as it transitions to a more housing-led approach in the city. Additionally, the evaluation will allow Crisis to contribute to the evidence base on the effectiveness of Housing First in a UK context as well provide evidence each year on how we can improve the model in subsequent years. There needs to be a focus in the evaluation on sharing evidence to influence policy and practice in an accessible format.

Total funding of up to £60,000 (including VAT, travel and subsistence) over three years is available for this evaluation.

The deadline for evaluation proposals is 8 July 2021.



## **The Newcastle Partnership to End Homelessness**

The formal partnership between Newcastle City Council and Crisis to work together to end homelessness in the city within 10 years, was launched on 20 June 2019. The partnership creates a realistic and exciting opportunity to unite the city to make responding to homelessness everyone's business. In turn, enabling us to align our resources to do more of what's right by making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring in Newcastle. We define 'ending homelessness' as:

- a. No one sleeping rough.
- b. No one forced to live in transient or dangerous accommodation such as tents, squats and non-residential buildings.
- c. No one living in emergency accommodation, such as shelters and hostels, without a plan for rapid rehousing into affordable, suitable and sustainable accommodation.
- d. No one homeless due to leaving a state institution such as prison or the care system.
- e. Everyone who is immediately threatened with homelessness gets the help that prevents it from happening.
- f. Everyone known to be at greater risk of homelessness due to affordability or vulnerabilities will be proactively targeted with advice and support to reduce the possibility that they become threatened with homelessness at an earlier opportunity than 56 days.

The partnership is led by an Integrated Team comprised of staff from Newcastle City Council and Crisis and has dedicated capacity in the form of two Service Designers, who are employed for the duration of the project. Through the establishment of two practice sharing groups with other Housing First providers in the city, the Service Designers will support a process of internal learning that is intended to run alongside the external evaluation of the service.

## **Background to Housing First**

Housing First is a system of support for homeless people with high and complex needs which is designed to deliver a sustainable exit from homelessness, improve health and wellbeing and enable social integration. Housing First uses ordinary housing, which can be privately or socially rented. Housing First is designed to house formerly homeless people with high needs in their own, settled homes as quickly as possible and to provide the support they will need to sustain an exit from homelessness on their own terms.

Housing First uses a mobile team of workers, who visit formerly homeless people in their own homes, providing open-ended and intensive practical and emotional support. Workers need to be prepared and willing to provide practical support with activities such as helping clients with cleaning and tidying their property, as well as accompanying them to meetings, etc. It will



also include acting as service brokers, or case managers, who help to arrange access to any services that someone using Housing First needs, such as mental health services, drug services, health care or social work support. Housing First will also ensure someone is housed adequately and has the required range of household goods and furniture to live independently, also providing help with day to day living skills where needed<sup>1</sup>.

In practical terms this means:

- Rapid housing
- No requirement to stay in a homeless hostel, nor in any form of congregate or communal temporary supported housing, prior to housing being provided (it may be necessary to secure access to temporary accommodation pending the sourcing of the right housing, especially if seeking to provide as much choice and control as possible over the individual's housing options)
- No completion of courses, training or other expectations in respect of demonstrating 'readiness' for housing are required before housing is provided
- No requirement for compliance with treatment, including psychiatric and drug/alcohol treatment, before housing is provided and nor is the ongoing provision of housing conditional on engaging with any support.

Housing First is also distinctive in terms of the degree of choice and control given to clients. Someone using Housing First is supported to design their own package of services and help; they design their own process of exiting homelessness. This could include selecting their own support workers after seeing the strengths and interests that the workers have identified through creation of their own profile page. This control also extends to whether someone using Housing First chooses to engage with treatment, including drug/alcohol treatment and mental health services. Both access to housing and retention of housing are **not** conditional on complying with treatment or behaving in certain ways; housing and support are separated in the Housing First model.

However, Housing First should not be passive; it does not simply offer housing on an unconditional basis to homeless people with complex needs. Housing First workers should engage with service users within a harm reduction framework and follow a recovery orientation, centring on providing people using Housing First with the idea that positive change in their lives, in respect of ending homelessness, improving health, building relationships and becoming part of the community is possible and emphasising that support is available.

Housing First does not tell the homeless people with complex needs using the service how to behave, it does not tell them not to drink or take drugs, but the workers emphasise that positive change – as and when someone chooses to make it – is possible and will be supported.

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<sup>1</sup> .Pleace, N. (2016) *Housing First Guide Europe* Brussels: FEANTSA <http://housingfirstguide.eu/>



Peer support, where delivering Housing First involves people who are ‘experts by experience’ in homelessness, is an essential element to the approach succeeding. There is a broad emphasis on a psychologically informed, strength-based approach, focusing on what the people using Housing First can achieve for themselves, what they are capable of, and avoiding any judgements about how someone became homeless<sup>2</sup>. In the feasibility studies into Housing First conducted by Crisis in the Liverpool City Region<sup>3</sup> and in Torbay<sup>4</sup>, the role of peer support was identified in conversations with people with lived experience of homelessness, both in terms of receiving that support but also showing a keenness to become a peer supporter. Homeless people wanted to use their own experience to support others.

The Housing First approach was first developed in New York by Pathways to Housing in 1992. It has since been widely adopted in the USA and become central to the national homelessness strategies in Canada, Denmark, Finland and France, demonstrating widespread success. In England, since 2010, a growing number of local areas have established Housing First services to meet and identified need.

Fidelity to the model is essential and should not be compromised given the risks to the success of the model which have been identified through the extensive evaluation of Housing First in using it inappropriately.

To be successful, services must follow the key principles of Housing First:

1. Everyone has a right to a home
2. Flexible support is provided for as long as needed
3. Housing and support are separated
4. Individuals have choice and control
5. An assertive engagement approach is used
6. The service is based on people’s strengths, goals and aspirations
7. A harm reduction approach is used

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<sup>2</sup> Padgett, D.K.; Henwood, B.F. and Tsemberis, S (2016) *Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems and Changing Lives* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Blood, I., Copeman, I., Goldup, M., Pleace, N., Bretherton, J. & Dulson, S. (2017) *Housing First Feasibility Study for the Liverpool City Region*, London: Crisis: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/housing-models-and-access/housing-first-feasibility-study-for-liverpool-city-region-2017/>

<sup>4</sup> Hancock, C. (2017) *Housing First Feasibility Study Torbay*. London: Crisis: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/housing-models-and-access/housing-first-feasibility-study-torbay-2018/>



## **The Crisis Housing First service in Newcastle**

The Crisis Newcastle Housing First service started in March 2021. It will aim to engage up to 20 people in Year 1, and then increase that offer to up to a further 20 people in Year 2. The service will have the capacity to support up to 80 people over its 3-year duration, if necessary. It is not a commissioned service. However, the service is being delivered as part of a wider partnership between Crisis and Newcastle City Council with the aim of ending homelessness in Newcastle over the next ten years. As such, the learning from the Housing First service is aimed at informing future commissioning cycles, understanding the financial implications of transitioning to housing led responses and the long-term feasibility and sustainability of delivering a high-fidelity model in Newcastle.

The Crisis Housing First team in Newcastle is currently made up of two Team Leaders and four Coaches, with plans to further expand the team based on the needs of clients over the next three years. This team will work together flexibly to support a protected caseload of Housing First tenants, understanding their priorities around housing and support. This might include connecting them into mainstream services and community resources and networks, but also offers the opportunity to spend time together, in less formal settings, to begin building trust. Each Housing First Coach will have a caseload of 5-7 clients at any one time, depending on progress and mix of support needs. Coaches will support service users to find the right home for them and work with the Crisis procurement manager in Newcastle to pass on key details around the location and type of housing a client prefers, income entitlement, housing history and historic barriers to housing.

Coaches will complete pre-tenancy work with clients to establish their strengths and existing resources. They can support clients to access interim accommodation, apply for ID, make a benefit claim, attend appointments or spend time doing things a client enjoys. During their tenancy, coaches will provide intensive support to minimise harm and help sustain the tenancy. They will be led by the client to understand their aspirations and support them to develop and implement personalised strategies over time. The Housing First team members are ultimately responsible for deciding who can access the service and should become involved in supporting the Housing First client at the earliest possible opportunity.

Referrals into the service are made by a range of organisations throughout the city and assessed by the Crisis Housing First team, as well as being informed by statutory homeless services to ensure suitability and willingness to engage with Housing First principles. Over time it is anticipated that this process will be further informed by a 'By Name List' (BNL) of people who are experiencing homelessness and other forms of multiple exclusion, which is currently being developed as part of the wider work of the Crisis-NCC partnership. The 'By Name List' approach aims to support the systematic identification of people who may benefit from targeted, individualised support and where existing services may have failed to meet the person's needs. The aim is to draw together comprehensive and accessible information about individual named people (including the person's circumstances, needs, connections and service history), in order to inform multi-agency discussions and responses.



## The evaluation

Crisis is seeking a skilled and experienced contractor to undertake an evaluation of the Crisis Housing First service. The aims of the evaluation are to:

1. Understand the effectiveness of the Crisis Housing First service in alleviating homelessness for a specific cohort over a 30 month period;
2. Provide evidence mid-way through the programme delivery to identify the future feasibility of further scaling the model, and to better understand the long-term sustainability of the programme;
3. Contribute evidence in Years 2 and 3 to inform Newcastle City Council commissioning cycles, as part of their city-wide efforts to move to a housing-led approach;
4. Contribute to the evidence base on the effectiveness of Housing First in a UK context.

Drawing on the approach recommended by the Housing First Guide Europe<sup>5</sup>, the evaluation will include the following four components. Crisis would like the appointed contractor to align the evidence gathering with existing UK Housing First evaluations including the ongoing evaluation of the Crisis Housing First service in London (details will be provided by Crisis), as well as the three pilots funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)<sup>6</sup> and the pathfinder areas in Scotland<sup>7</sup>. Specific research questions the evaluation is expected to examine are included under each component.

The four components are:

### 1. Process evaluation

The evaluation will explore the process of implementation and the quality of the Housing First service by examining questions including:

- 1.1 **What are the goals of the service, and how do project activities work towards achieving these goals?**
- 1.2 **What is the target population and how are they engaged with the service? What are the referral routes into the service? How do these differ from those used in commissioned Housing First services, and what difference does this make?**

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.housingfirstguide.eu/website/wp-content/uploads/2016/HFG/Chapter5.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-first-pilot-national-evaluation-reports>

<sup>7</sup> <https://homelessnetwork.scot/housing-first/pathfinder/>



- 1.3 Under what conditions (local context) was the service established, and how does Housing First (both the Crisis scheme and other services in the city) fit with local strategies to reduce homelessness?
- 1.4 How was the service designed, and how does this respond to the needs of the target population?
- 1.5 What are the inputs to the service (resources, staff training and support, etc.) and how do these inputs support service delivery?
- 1.6 Who is involved in delivering the service, what are their roles and which activities do they perform?
- 1.7 How are networks between partner agencies structured and how do they function?
- 1.8 What have the impacts of Covid-19 been on all of the above, and how is the service responding?
- 1.9 What are the attitudes and experience of other stakeholders, e.g. housing providers, landlords (specifically their willingness to and experience of providing Housing First accommodation, and any financial or other impact of the Housing First client group on their business)?

## **2. Fidelity assessment**

The evaluation will assess the fidelity of the model used by the Crisis Housing First service and aim to answer questions including:

### **2.1 How closely does the service follow the key principles of Housing First?**

Fidelity should be assessed at a minimum of three time periods (suggested at 12 and 18 and at the end of project delivery). A validated assessment framework should be employed.

### **2.2 Which internal and external factors enable or inhibit the fidelity of the Crisis Housing First service in Newcastle?**

This includes consideration of how such factors may change over time and how this could determine sustainability of the service within an area. Factors should include but are not limited to:

- Capacity of and buy-in from other services (including protocols with statutory services, e.g. health, police, welfare, etc.)
- Internal Crisis policies and procedures and how these align with Housing First
- Availability of appropriate tenancies





- How Housing First fits within Newcastle City Council's current homelessness strategy, and the forthcoming citywide Plan to End Homelessness that is being developed as part of the 10-year Partnership.

### **3. Effectiveness evaluation**

Crisis is aiming to understand the extent to which a range of outcomes are achieved by people supported through the Housing First service. Crisis suggests that the measurement of outcomes draws on the Housing First Europe Research Hub's evaluation framework which has been tested in Canada and is being used at other sites in Europe. Crisis would also like the appointed contractor to align the evidence gathering with existing UK evaluations including the three pilots funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the pathfinder areas in Scotland. This will allow results to be directly compared to other Housing First programmes. Analysis of outcomes data should enable insights to be derived about the effectiveness of the Housing First service during Covid-19 and post-Covid-19 contexts. The evaluation should seek to answer questions such as:

#### **3.1 To what extent are 'hard' outcomes achieved by the Housing First service?**

The 'hard' outcomes will include:

- a) No. of new tenancies (by landlord type, e.g. Private rental sector, Housing Association, Council);
- b) Average length of time for an offer of a tenancy;
- c) Average length of time for a tenancy to start;
- d) No. of tenancies sustained at 12, 18, 24 months and at end of project;
- e) No. of planned moves and relocations;
- f) No. of tenancies ended and reasons why (i.e. as a result of eviction, abandonment, long-term prison sentence, death of the tenant);
- g) No. of homelessness applications made after HF tenancy ends.

#### **3.2 To what extent are 'soft' outcomes achieved by the Housing First service?**

The 'soft' outcomes will include changes in:

- a) Satisfaction with housing situation;
- b) Mental and physical health;
- c) Wellbeing (to be defined and its component parts considered);



- d) Substance use (drugs and alcohol);
- e) Service use, including the relationship of clients to existing or new health and mental health service provision in the city;
- f) Social inclusion (including relationships with family and friends);
- g) Economic status and financial wellbeing
- h) Community engagement and meaningful activity;
- i) Experience of crime (as a victim and/or perpetrator) and challenging behaviour
- j) 'Soft' outcomes that have been identified as important by clients

**3.3 What are the reasons why certain outcomes are achieved or not (including reference to the factors considered in section 2.2 above)?**

**3.4 What is the experience of people supported by the Housing First service?**

#### **4. Cost-effectiveness assessment**

Assess the costs of this Housing First service compared to other homelessness services providing for the same target group to examine these questions:

**4.1 To what extent is the Crisis Housing First service achieving better outcomes than existing homelessness services, including other Housing First services, for the same/lower level of spending?**

**4.2 To what extent is the Housing First service generating offsets/savings due to changes in the use of other services (service type, frequency of service use)?**

### **Methodology**

Whilst we are looking for the successful contractor to develop and finalise the methodology for this evaluation it should address the following elements:

- Appropriate evaluation methods should be employed to address each of the evaluation questions, with due consideration paid to the vulnerable nature of the project beneficiaries. In selecting evaluation methods, an appreciation of the limitations imposed by the government's Covid-19 response guidelines should be demonstrated.
- A longitudinal mixed methods approach to the evaluation using quantitative and qualitative techniques to engage beneficiaries, stakeholders and funders.



- A comparative element to better understand and contextualise the outcomes and cost effectiveness of the service (for example by retrospectively comparing service use patterns and outcomes for Housing First members before and after entering the Housing First service)
- The evaluation design should be informed by the voice of people with lived experience of homelessness, as well as front line staff.
- Crisis will provide access to data collected regularly by the Housing First team and recorded in the Crisis case management system, MAPS, which will support the measurement of 'hard' outcomes outlined above. MAPS data includes:
  - demographics, housing and personal history, support needs, strengths and aspirations, equality and diversity information, benefits entitlements, etc.
  - tenancy details and sustainment
  - relevant case notes
- Crisis may also be able to provide access to anonymised qualitative data collected by the Service Designers as part of the regular shared practice meetings with front line staff, and with strategic management, where agreed by group members. The contractor should indicate how this data could be integrated into the evaluation design.
- The psychological provision for Housing First will be led by the Crisis Skylight Regional Lead Psychologist, who is based in Newcastle. The team will be using a Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) to understand why people may experience various forms of distress, confusion, fear, despair, and troubled or troubling behaviour. It is an alternative to the more traditional models based on psychiatric diagnosis, which has been co-produced with people who have used mental health services. Part of this work will collect information on how the framework is being used by staff with members and how effective it is. We would like the contractor to consider how this information could be integrated into the wider data collection for the evaluation.
- Where additional data collected is required to answer the evaluation questions, validated measurement tools should be used where possible to enable data collection that is consistent with other Housing First services in the UK and internationally.
- It is important that the evaluation focuses on improving rather than just proving; it should provide robust evidence which demonstrates the difference made as well as the challenges experienced. Client and front line staff views of the service will be key to understanding this.
- Interim and final evaluation findings should provide evidence at the 12, 18 and 32 month mark on the performance of the service and identify improvements to the



model for subsequent years to maximise its impact on beneficiaries. The evaluation should produce learning for Crisis and Newcastle City Council and contribute to the evidence base on the effectiveness of Housing First in a UK context.

## Terms of reference

The evaluation will require consultation with internal stakeholders of Crisis and its partner organisations. Stakeholder management and communication will be a key part of this project.

The evaluators will develop an approach in consultation with the Crisis Research & Evaluation team and the Newcastle Place-Based Programmes team, to ensure that this addresses the evaluation aims. **Please note that a degree of flexibility in the evaluation approach may be required in order to respond to any evolving needs on the ground.**

## Outputs

The main outputs of this evaluation project are:

- A framework for the evaluation, including a detailed work plan and timetable;
- Regular progress updates at intervals agreed with the Evaluation Manager;
- Interim reports after 12 and 18 months highlighting findings and recommendations for change, to enable learning which directly informs practice improvement where possible. The 18-month report should be robust enough to inform NCC commissioning, and include a feasibility study to guide the potential scale up of the service in the final 12 months of delivery;
- A final evaluation report which sets out findings of the four components of the evaluation and of the project overall;
- Innovation in dissemination: External and internal dissemination are vital parts of this evaluation process. As well as supporting engaging communications to our internal stakeholders, we expect the evaluators to assist in the development of innovative dissemination to external stakeholders, including at key launches and events.

## Funding available and timetable

Total funding of up to £60,000 (including VAT, travel and subsistence) over three years is available for this project.

Key dates:



- The deadline for evaluation proposals is 8 July 2021.
- The successful bidder will be expected to begin work as soon as possible; no later than 1 September 2021.
- A detailed evaluation framework, including work-plan and timetable, will be required no later than 15 September 2021.
- The first interim report should be completed no later than 1 September 2022 (month 12).
- To align with Newcastle City Council's commissioning cycle, the second interim evaluation report should be completed no later than 1 January 2023 (month 18). Interim findings must be comprehensive enough to inform future commissioning design and should prioritise cost-effectiveness, outcome evaluation findings.
- The final evaluation report should be completed no later than April 30 2024 (month 32).

## **Format of bids**

The tender proposal should clearly identify:

- Relevant experience in similar projects/initiatives
- CVs of key members of the evaluation team, including details of two referees
- The proposed method(s) to be used
- A detailed work plan with milestones and deliverables
- The basis on which the fee would be calculated, broken down into different phases as appropriate, and showing the relevant daily rates against each member of the team to be employed on the project
- The staff to undertake key areas of work, and where management responsibility for the project will rest. A single point of contact for all correspondence relating to the project should be provided
- Confirmation that work can start by 1 September at the latest.

## **Evaluation criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- Full understanding of the specification, including the purpose and scope of the project



- Demonstration of relevant skills and experience of the evaluation team in impact and process evaluation, and in working with vulnerable adults
- Suitability of proposed method(s) and approach for involving different stakeholder groups, including beneficiaries, in the evaluation. In proposing evaluation methods, an appreciation of the limitations imposed by the government's Covid-19 response guidelines should be demonstrated, as well as consideration of appropriate methods over the longer-term
- Demonstration of how the voice of people with lived experience of homelessness informs the evaluation design
- Clear explanation of how the proposed study would:
  - enable Crisis to objectively assess the effectiveness of the project
  - provide recommendations on how to further develop the service offer
  - support Crisis to promote evidence of 'what works' and influence ongoing policy and practice in an accessible format
- Clarity and feasibility of a detailed work-plan, including analysis of risks to successful completion. This includes confirmation that risk assessments are in place that reflect undertaking research and evaluation work in the Covid-19 context
- Value for money

## **Management of the project**

The contractor will be expected to keep the Evaluation Manager informed of progress with periodic summary reports. Crisis, and other members of the project group, will have the opportunity to comment on any draft reports before they are finalised.

Responsibility for this project will lie with the Evaluation Manager, with whom the contractor will be expected to agree a programme of work and deadlines for its deliverables.

## **Intellectual property**

Any information gathered during the course of the project and not already in the public domain is deemed to be the property of Crisis. The information provided in the reports, and the rights to all other outputs, shall become the property of Crisis.



## **Data Protection and confidentiality of data**

The project team must act in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

## **Submission of proposals and enquiries**

Proposals should be submitted as a Word or PDF document via email.

The deadline for proposals is Thursday 8 July.

Proposals must be received by the deadline. Late proposals will not be accepted. Proposals and enquiries must be addressed to:

Anna Tomson (Service Designer): [anna.tomson@crisis.org.uk](mailto:anna.tomson@crisis.org.uk) and Katie Hardcastle (Research and Evaluation Manager): [katie.hardcastle@crisis.org.uk](mailto:katie.hardcastle@crisis.org.uk)

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview and required to deliver a detailed presentation of their project plans.

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