



Housing First 4 Youth



Housing First for Youth is a model of housing and support likely to be effective when delivered to young people, aged between 16 and 25, who have experienced or are experiencing multiple complex issues (for example, trauma, mental health issues and/or substance use issues) and are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

These are often young people for whom existing services have proved ineffective or who have been failed by established systems (it has been demonstrated within the UK to be effective when offered to care-experienced young people, for example).

The Housing First for Youth Sub Group of the Housing First Network in Wales has adapted the core principles of Housing First to reflect how Housing First for Youth providers work in Wales. The result is the following ten principles:

- Young People have a **right to a home**, with no pre-conditions that is affordable, habitable and adequate both physically and culturally.
- Housing and support are **separated**.
- Flexible support is provided **for as long as the young person wants it**.
- The young person will make **choices** about what kinds of transitions they wish to make, and service providers will work ensure that multi-agency transitions are carried out.
- Individuals have **choice and control** over the way in which they engage with services.
- The service is based on the young person's **strength, goals and aspirations**.

- Services will take a **harm-reduction approach**.
- The service delivered is **strengths-based, psychologically informed, trauma-informed, gender-informed** and is aware of protected characteristics
- The services or support around an individual will take the time to understand the young person's interests and will work with them to **build links with communities of interest and place**.
- Widest range of services are involved from the outset so that there this **meaningful choice of services** offered to the young person.

What does the scheme hope to achieve?

HF4Y builds on the core principle of the Housing First model, that housing is a Human Right. The youth-specific principles, however, are based on the understanding that the causes and conditions of youth homelessness are distinct from adult homelessness, and therefore the solutions must be youth-focused.

As aforementioned, HF4Y aims to provide an additional housing and support option for those young people who have experienced significant trauma, instability, multiple moves and lack of security through their early lives, for whom more traditional housing options and 'pathways' into housing would not be appropriate.

Location

Internationally, HF4Y schemes have been implemented across North America for the past decade and have more recently been rolled out across a number of European countries, including Ireland and Scotland.

In Wales, since 2018, there are six HF4Y projects up and running, all funded through the Welsh Government's Innovation Fund, encompassing both rural and urban local authorities.

Implementation

Kirsty Pringle, Youth Homelessness Coordinator and Housing First Manager in Powys, has put the below together, highlighting what's needed when implementing a HF4Y project.

Partners' buy-in – can take time to develop

Ethos shift – committing to each person maintaining a home, allowing for 'mistakes'.

Multi-agency group for each person – regular meetings/email threads; quick collaborative action when challenges arise

Mental Health input – plus 'go tos' for consultation

Assertive, 'stickable' support – onus of engagement is on us

Good understanding of young people – developmental and additional needs

Skills' development – doing with where necessary, anticipating need for repetition

Support for staff – it can be demanding

Reflection space – supportive colleagues from outside of the project can be useful

Adaptation – if things aren't working, particularly in line with any guidance from Mental Health

Separate housing / support – including not being 'the messenger'; this can fracture the support relationship

Keep linked to the network – provides invaluable advice, guidance and support

Hold strong to the principles – check back in regularly

Keep the faith – despite challenges, this approach is providing invaluable support some of our most vulnerable

Results

In regards to tenancy sustainment, Housing First figures internationally show a success rate of around 80%. There have been fewer HF4Y evaluations undertaken comparatively, however both Focus Ireland's

and Scotland's The Rock Trust HF4Y scheme have both shown tenancy sustainment rates of over 90%.

In addition to tenancy sustainment, the recent Rock Trust evaluation noted:

Relationships

Young people valued the 'stickability' of support from their HF4Y workers, recognizing that the relationship was not time-limited nor attached to where they lived.

Health and Well-being

86% of young people said that their mental health and satisfaction with life had improved, a third were eating healthier and exercising more, and a quarter reported that drugs and alcohol were causing less problems in their lives. The others reported that it was the same.

Meaningful Activity

HF4Y workers support young people to get involved in activities tailored to their needs and interests which promote social integration as well as improved mood. 38% of young people stated that they had begun to access or education or training since being involved with the HF4Y scheme.

The above findings are supported by the views of one young person, currently being supported by one of the HF4Y projects in Wales;

What would you say to other young people about the project?

"Do it! Look how far I've come, it's all coming along nicely after 2 years of being homeless. [The workers] try to help you understand as much as you can. It's nice to be understood and good to get your opinion across. It was difficult to start with....having our own responsibilities and becoming parents. You learn and grow, you bond with your workers and how you understand each other."

“ You're learning to be an adult, you don't learn this at school. It's a life lesson. ”

More Information

At EYHC, we will offer any help or support for Local Authorities to understand more about HF4Y. If you'd like to get in touch please contact:

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Similarly, you can get in contact with:

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