

Public Service Reform Board

Date	6 September 2018
Report title	Housing First: Background, Principles, Governance and Delivery
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Report has been considered by	

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Public Service Reform Board is recommended to:

- (1) Note that WMCA has been awarded £9.6m for the delivery of Housing First for the period 2018-21.
- (2) Note that Birmingham City Council has received £1.44m to cover the first year of the pilot.
- (3) Note that the Constituent Members have agreed to deliver 225 housing units per year, for three years, in order to conduct the pilot.
- (4) Endorse the principles of taking a Housing First approach to supporting people who are sleeping rough into secure accommodation.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This report outlines proposals to deliver a Housing First pilot across all seven Constituent Authority areas of the WMCA. The process, which has been tested in many cities around the world, is designed to prevent and relieve the homelessness of rough sleepers with the most complex needs.

2.0 Background

2.1 Housing First is an approach to meeting the housing and subsequent support issues of some of the most vulnerable and excluded people in society. Housing First has substantial history in New York, and other areas of the US, Norway, the Netherlands, and at a relatively small scale in various locations around the UK.

2.2 Housing First has seven key principles i) People have a right to a home; ii) Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed; iii) Housing and support are separated; iv) Individuals have choice and control; v) An active engagement approach is used; vi) The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations; vii) A harm reduction approach is used. (Housing First England, Homeless Link). These principles are strongly advocated for.

2.3 In Summer 2017, Birmingham City Council produced and submitted a speculative Housing First bid to MHCLG, in consultation with other local authorities within the WMCA. Subsequently, the then-Secretary of State Sajid Javid invited WMCA to submit a bid for Housing First for the region. This bid – with a total value of £10.8m – was developed by Birmingham City Council in consultation with the Homelessness Taskforce and the other Constituent Members, and submitted by WMCA.

2.4 In October 2017 the Chancellor announced that Government would be investing £28m into three Housing First pilots, to be shared between Greater Manchester, Merseyside Region and WMCA. Following discussions, the WMCA has been awarded £9.6m, the largest allocation of the three. This is to deliver Housing First for the period 2018-21 with a further two years of legacy support. The profile of the funding is as follows:-

2018-19	£1.44m
2019-20	£3m
2020-21	£5.16m (support for 2021-23 should be included)

2.5 While a pilot, Housing First is intended to realise a significant reduction in the number of people sleeping rough on the streets, as well as improving the lives of the people who participate. Housing First also has potential to create savings in the Supported Housing sector, and this will be explored.

2.6 The WMCA bid is for 225 people supported in Housing First each year for three years, 675 people in total. The majority of the investment is to provide intensive support that wraps around the person, who will be housed in mainstream housing – this is not 'supported housing'. The rest of the investment will cover street outreach, nursing, substance support, accommodation access support, and crisis interventions.

2.7 Each local authority and the members of the Homelessness Taskforce contributed to the Housing First proposal. Following the notification of funding, each Local Authority has confirmed its commitment to delivering the following Housing First units, and each has agreed to the proposed allocation of the funding across the seven Local Authorities:

	Units p.a.	HF Support	Other Support	Total
Birmingham	100	£2,839,656	£1,191,150 *	£4,030,806
Coventry	40	£1,148,625	£525,100	£1,673,725
Dudley	5	£127,625	£127,650	£255,275
Sandwell	20	£574,313	£388,800	£963,113
Solihull	10	£287,156	£238,150	£525,306
Walsall	32	£893,375	£444,800	£1,338,175
Wolverhampton	18	£510,500	£303,100	£813,600

*includes project management and data management costs

2.8 Each Local Authority has responsibility to deliver the identified number of Housing First units each year. This must be done according to the principles of Housing First, in line with the Housing First evaluation requirements, and according to common identified requirements across the WMCA pilot – for example common role profiles, role costs and acceptance criteria (to be identified through the Task Group).

2.9 Birmingham City Council has created a Task Group for the mobilisation and delivery of Housing First. This group is Chaired and led by Birmingham City Council and includes membership from: each of the seven Constituent Members of the WMCA, the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce, the voluntary sector, Homeless Link (representing the principles of Housing First), and Coventry University (to assist with evaluation management and oversight). Linking into the Task Group will be other specialist resources, including mechanisms for the voice of those with lived experience.

2.10 Birmingham City Council has appointed BVSC to undertake project management of the mobilisation of the project.

2.11 Each Local Authority will undertake its own evaluation of need, procurement, commissioning and mobilisation of services within its contract requirements.

2.12 At this time each Local Authority is targeting delivery of 25% of the annual Housing First number of units by March 2019.

3 Financial implications

3.1 Funding for this pilot is provided by MHCLG directly to Birmingham City Council via a Section 31 grant agreement. The total funding over the three years of the pilot is £9.6m.

3.2 The funding already received for the first year of the pilot is £1.44m. This budget covers the period from delivery of funding until March 2019.

3.3 The second year tranche of funding will be released in April 2019, and the third year tranche in April 2020. The exact yearly allocations are subject to review.

3.4 Assurance is being sought from MHCLG that allocations in 2019 and 2020 will cover liabilities created in previous years i.e. support to homeless people who already being supported by Housing First will be honoured.

3.4 It will be the region's responsibility to provide assurance to the MHCLG that funding is accounted for and is only applied to pilot-based activity.

4 Legal implications

4.1 Based upon the work already undertaken by Birmingham City Council and capacity requirements, the WMCA and Birmingham City Council agreed that BCC would be the accountable body for the receipt and expenditure of these funds. As the accountable body, Birmingham City Council will be directly accountable to MHCLG for the funds, programme and outcomes. In agreeing to Birmingham City Council acting as the accountable body, the WMCA will maintain oversight and scrutiny of the Housing First programme.

4.2 Michael Brookes (Policy Advisor, Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness, Homelessness Division, MHCLG) has confirmed that the funds will be paid direct to BCC as a Section 31 Grant.

4.3 A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) underpins the relationship between WMCA and MHCLG. A first draft of this MoU has been produced by MHCLG, and covers a) Funding Composition and Payment Mechanism; b) Role of the pilot region covering Fidelity – adherence to the Housing First principles to inform evaluation and Housing Supply – ensuring that accommodation is available to accommodate the cohort of the regional pilot. c) Governance and Reporting – content and frequency of returns, agreed outputs – number of units, milestones and governance structures; d) Evaluation – the activity necessary for engagement with the pilot and its study; e) Data Protection - adherence to data protection arrangements, drawn up with MHCLG.

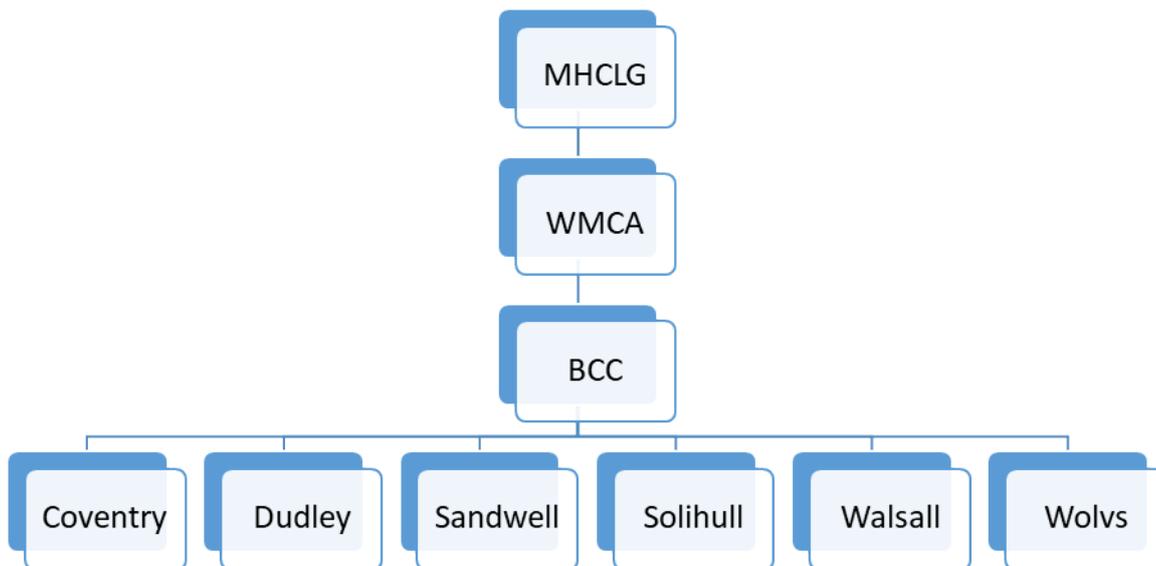
4.4 It is intended that a MoU will be in place between WMCA and BCC based upon the content of the MoU between MHCLG and WMCA.

4.5 Oversight and scrutiny of the programme by the WMCA will be undertaken through the Homelessness Task Force. A report will be provided by Birmingham City Council on a quarterly basis. This report will include programme status – services commissioned, units filled, outcomes achieved, risks to programme and opportunities.

4.6 Heriot Watt University have secured the contract with MHCLG, along with expertise from Homeless Link, to undertake the evaluation of the Housing First Pilot.

4.7 A Partnership Agreement has been drafted between Birmingham City Council and each of the six other Constituent Members. This will specify the service to be delivered and the outcomes sought. It is expected that the service requirements, including Housing First principles, evaluation requirement and outcomes will be reflected in any commissioning undertaken by Local Authorities.

4.8 The chart below sets out the management structure for Housing First in the West Midlands.



5 Equalities implications

5.1 Housing First is a programme designed to engage and include some of the most excluded and disadvantaged people in society. In the first instance, the people who will be supported will be those who are entrenched rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs, including poor mental health, substance misuse, offending behaviour, and financial exclusion. There will also be a preventative element to Housing First, identifying those at greatest risk of becoming entrenched rough sleepers and determining the means to support them into secure accommodation.

5.2 As part of the evaluation, the pilot will review the profile of those people who are accommodated and supported. The pilot will also look at the implications of value for money and alternative approaches to housing and support.

6 Other implications

6.1 Housing First sits within the work of the Homelessness Taskforce, and is a specific answer to an important but targeted group of people. The Taskforce is keen to ensure that Housing First is not viewed as a global answer and that it does not distract from the broader commitment to 'designing out' homelessness through prevention work.

6.2 Important parts of 'designing out' homelessness are contained within the asks of the Homelessness Taskforce of the mainstream strategies of the WMCA.

6.2 The Government's Rough Sleeper Strategy cites the Housing First Pilots as work being undertaken. The Rough Sleeper Strategy may provide further opportunities to expand the work supported by the WMCA around homelessness in the region.

7 Schedule of background papers

Draft MoU with MHCLG