

“A place to call home is simply the difference between a chance to turn your life around or not”

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Hannah Gousy spent nine months on secondment from Crisis to the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) think tank to help them design policy recommendations to tackle homelessness and end rough sleeping in England. She blogs on her findings:

“Over the last seven years, the number of people experiencing homelessness has risen significantly. At the sharpest end, rough sleeping has increased by over 130% since 2010 to over 4,000 on any given night. Numbers are highest in London.

The Centre for Social Justice has presented an ambitious plan address this problem. A national Housing First programme features as the key component of this strategy.

In contrast to the ‘housing ready’ or ‘treatment first’ approach of the UK hostel system, Housing First is based on the simple idea that the best way to solve homelessness is to provide people with their own home. Housing First prioritises rapid access to a stable home for those with high support needs, but that is [only the start](#). Once rehoused, people are offered the necessary services to address the reasons why they may have become homeless to start with.

Housing First has been widely adopted in North America and Western Europe, including the U.S., Belgium and Spain, and has formed a central component of national strategies in Canada, Denmark, Finland and France to reduce and stem rising homelessness.

Of course there are people who have concerns that Housing First would mean that people get to ‘queue jump’, citing the issue of those who have had to wait many years on the social housing queue and a perceived unfairness of fast-tracking accommodation for rough sleepers and others with support needs.

Hostel providers have also raised concerns that the current environment of funding reductions for supported housing may be compounded if Housing First is somehow seen as a panacea or justification for further cuts to existing provision.

But the arguments for adopting this approach as national policy in the UK are now too compelling to ignore. Wherever Housing First has been adopted at scale it has provided successful results, with high tenancy sustainment rates and improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

As part of our work, the CSJ calculated that a national Housing First programme would cost £110 million per year. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has estimated that after two years of implementing Housing First for 46,000 people the Government would save £200 million per year, making this programme cost neutral over the course of a parliament.

If the Government adopt a national Housing First programme, this would represent a significant mind-shift in the way homeless people are seen and our shared aspirations for their future. Yes, we still need to address the political choices that create homelessness in the first place (welfare cuts, lack of affordable housing, etc.), and the CSJ report also address these issues, but the case for Housing First as part of the solution to homelessness is now undeniable.

Having a stable place to call home is fundamental to the life chances of us all, and Housing First offers that opportunity to those who need it most.”

To read the full report go to <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/housing-first-housing-led-solutions-rough-sleeping-homelessness>