

Housing First for Women with Complex Needs: Results from the Threshold Housing First Pilot Project in Manchester, England

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Background to the study

- Housing First – considerable success in USA and increasingly different parts of Europe
- England – pilot / developed schemes in England; approach championed by national homelessness organisations; *nearly* government ‘policy’
- Most small-scale, focused on people with complex needs
- Generally, very little focus on women’s homelessness in UK, or women with complex needs – presumption that same needs
- Emerging work on Psychologically Informed Environments and Trauma-Focused work provides opportunities to highlight needs of women

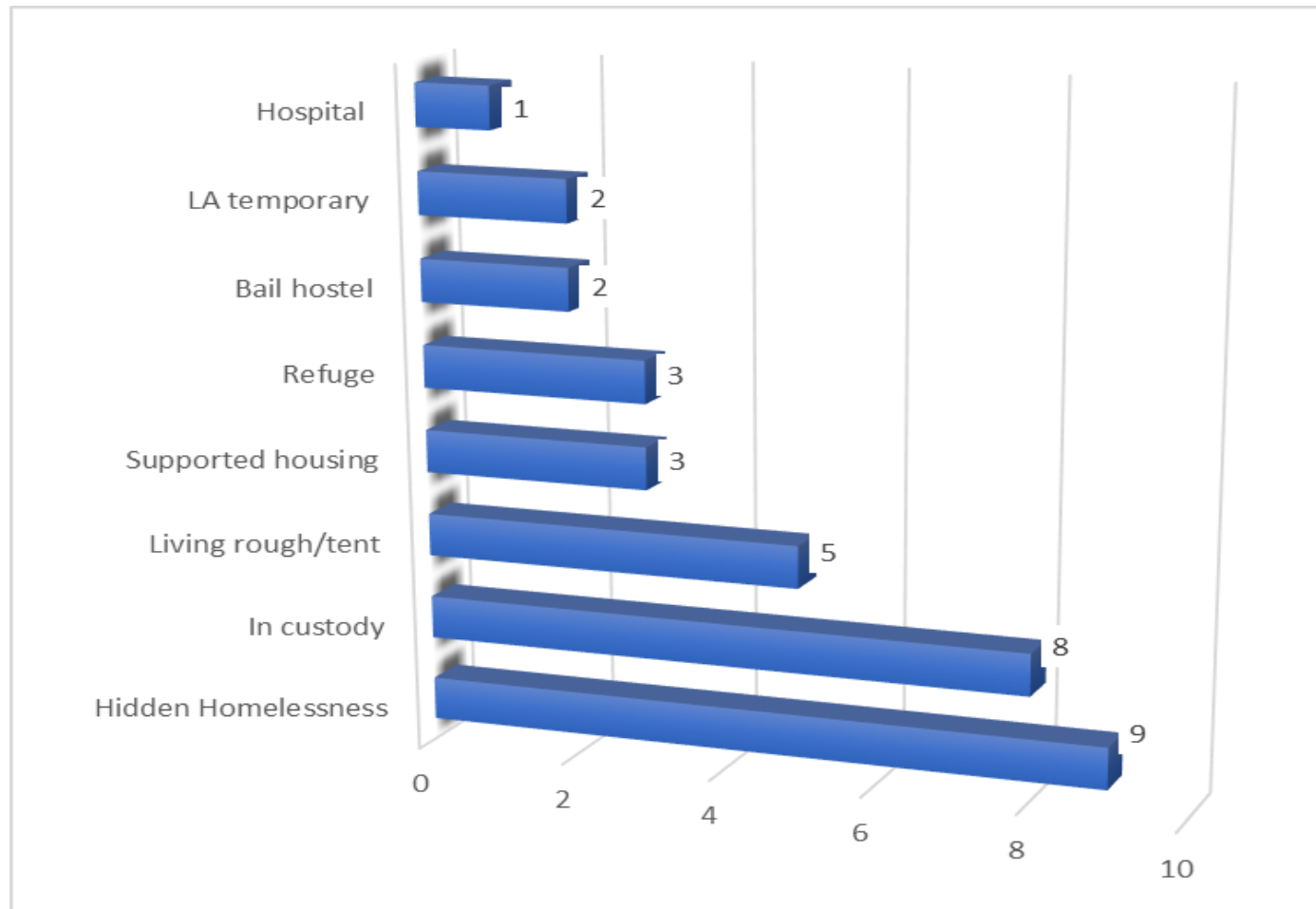
Threshold Housing First Model

- First known Housing First project focused on women with complex needs/ offending issues
- Developed by housing provider (Threshold) working with statutory Probation agency – drivers were addressing ‘revolving door’ issue and following visit to Canada
- Operational in 3 local authorities: Tameside, Stockport, Oldham
- Up to 12 women at one time
- Staff: 2 workers and part-time manager
- Framework of interagency working; working closely with Women’s Centres in Manchester

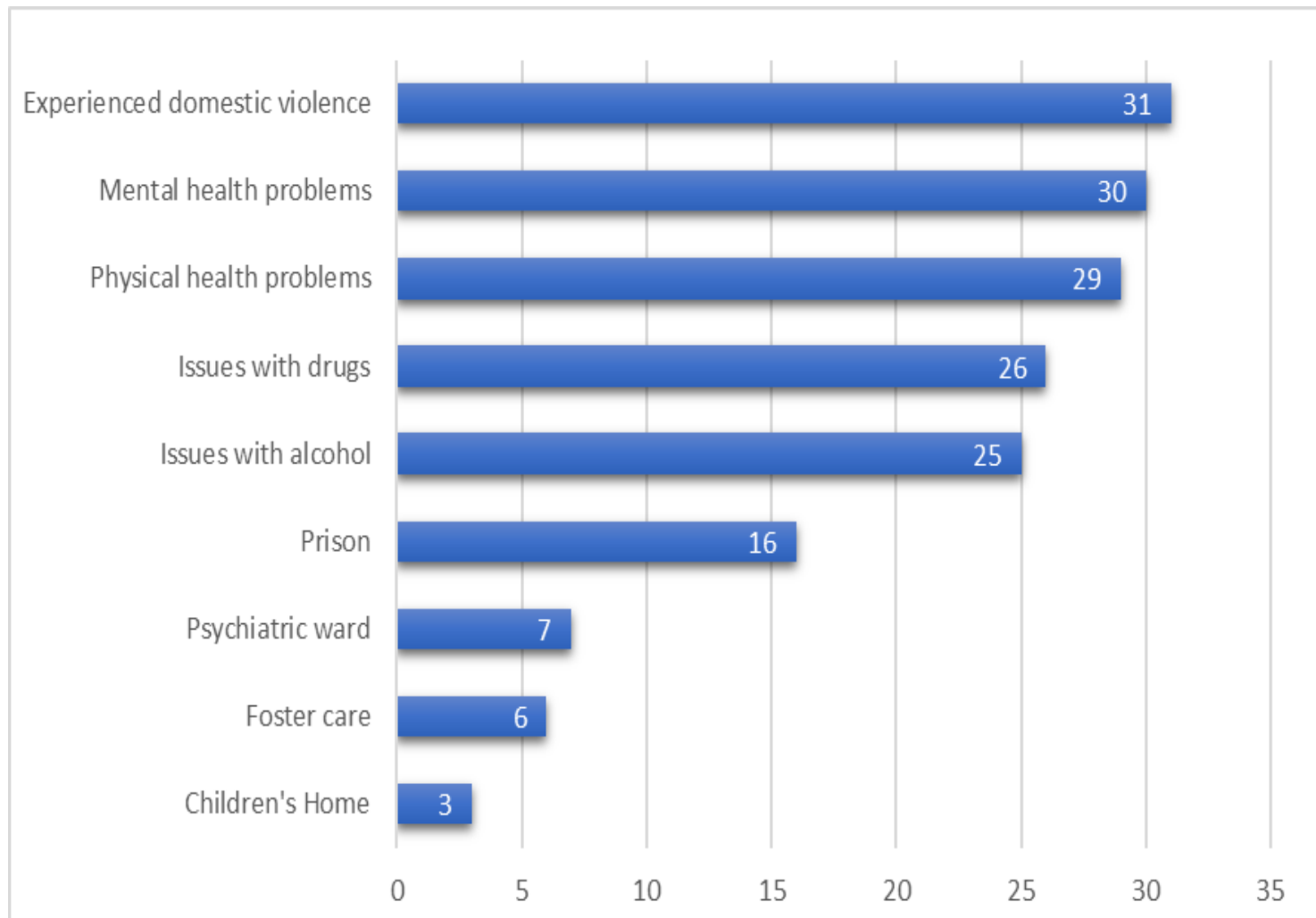
Referrals

- High demand (criminal justice providers main referral source)
- 33 women used service over 2 years
 - Average age of 32 (18-52)
 - All British citizens; 97% White
 - 79% of women had children, but not living with them
 - 82% single at referral
- 58% homeless; 33% in custody; 9% risk of h/l
- 58% had been homeless more than twice (19/33)
- Complex needs assessment undertaken (had to be reach threshold to get service); high level of self-reported experiences

Housing situation at referral



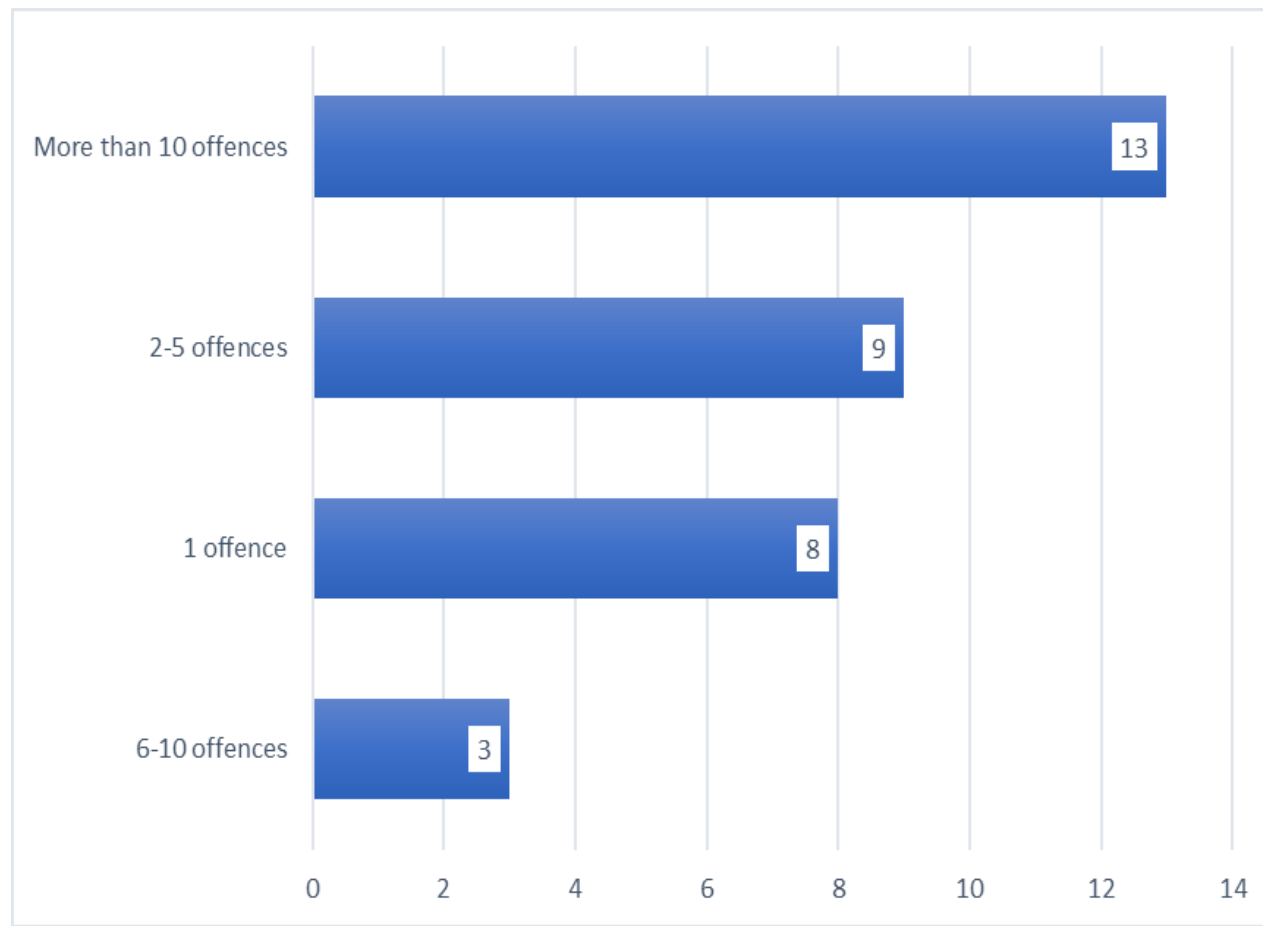
Self-reported adverse experiences



European Research Conference
CHANGING PROFILES OF HOMELESSNESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVICES.
BARCELONA, September 22nd, 2017

Contact with criminal justice system

(Note: convicted offences)



Delivering the THF service

- Average support of 8 months, but huge variation
- High fidelity to Housing First England Guide
- Type of support
 - Housing related help and intensive case management
 - Daily phone welfare check (including weekends)
 - Motivational interviewing to deliver strength based approach
 - Comprehensive service – holistic, wrap-around support
- Type of delivery
 - Responsive / reliable service
 - High degree of customer choice and control
 - But also proactive - persistence a key feature of support
 - Working together with other agencies to deliver seamless service

Staff/ agency perspectives

- *That's what really stands out, what is the really positive thing that we do is: Persistence, persistence, persistence, we keep chipping away...We don't give up.*
(Staff member)
- *They've got people... but they are not there, no-one gives, no-one cares, no-one supports and it is that attitude, we are here for you* (Staff member)
- *It's an absolutely fantastic service... We do the things that needed to be done from a risk management perspective, they would also take on the women's perspective of what they want, it was very client led...*
(Agency representative)

Service user perspective

- *There's not one thing that I've asked for help with and they've not helped me, there is nothing that they've said no to or I can't do that, absolutely everything, they are brilliant.*
- *I have phone contact every day, even at weekends – welfare checks, I love those welfare checks... because who phones at the weekend to see if you are alright? Nobody. But they do... It made me feel good that somebody is actually worried about me... it's amazing... it gives me that little boost every day, I like it.*
- *...she took everything on board and that's what she has worked off and it has just been brilliant, her support and how much she has taken the time out for me really – she is really good because she has took the time out for me and no-one ever does that for me. (Service users)*

Housing outcomes

- NB: Provisional figures – please do not quote:
- **Of 33 women** (both open and closed cases):
 - 18 housed in mix of social and private tenancies
 - 2 supported in existing tenancies (prevention)
 - 2 helped into temporary accommodation
 - 11 not housed
 - 3 cases still open; 3 women in custody; 1 died; 1 living with partner; 1 living with friend; 1 in care home; 1 referred on
- **By June 2017, of 20 in tenancies:**
 - 16 still in tenancies (including moves) – 80% tenancy sustainment rate
 - 3 women supported to move in with family following difficulties with living independently (DV targets; neighbour complaints)
 - Only 1 tenancy abandoned

Housing outcomes

- Standard of properties usually good; couple of exceptions to this
- Impact massive for service users: *'first step'; 'Godsend'; 'massive weight off my shoulders'; 'I've got my own home'; 'I feel safe'...*
- However, key challenge of service was securing housing for users – project changed policy to support people prior to re-housing due to access issues
 - *Housing... that is the one problem with the service... they didn't seem to have access to actual properties... I could have referred all my caseload into them practically! (Agency representative)*

Criminal justice outcomes

- Only 4 women were returned to prison and/or committed offences over the 2 year period
- Staff considered this to be key achievement
- Other agencies considered service was impacting on re-offending by offering ‘protective factors’ and addressing ‘criminogenic’ factors related to offending (eg. addressing debt/ social networks)
- *...giving them a life back independently, gives them something to live for and stay out of trouble for... I genuinely believe that it reduces risk, risk of harm, to the women themselves, to the public, to reoffending (Agency representative)*

Health and well-being outcomes

- No monitoring on changes in well-being, however qualitative material suggests impacts in some areas
- Benefits to emotional health via support, reduction in anxiety, ability to let off steam, being accepted, health enhancing activities, improved confidence etc
- Examples of reductions in alcohol use
- Little change to ETE, though more positive outlook
- Removing women from abusive situations and helping move on with lives/ accessing women's centres
- Supporting women with re-establishing contact with children and family members
- Little change to neighbourhood level social integration

Learning from project

- High fidelity service – works for customers with high and complex needs
- Women have (some) different needs – relationships at centre – with ex-partners; children; family
- Experience of recent domestic violence near universal
- Huge impact on reducing recidivism by providing support for women
- Underlying untreated trauma – some women need ongoing support
- Real challenge to access properties – but high success rate when accessed
- Agencies report considerable benefits of the service