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Housing first in Norway – innovation or new wrapping?

*A discussion on the appropriateness of
implementing Housing first in Norway*

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Homelessness in Norway

The system for handling homelessness in Norway

Housing first in Norway

Discussion: what's different with Housing first?

Way forward



Definition of homelessness in Norway

A homeless person is defined as a person who does not own or rent a home, and is left with coincidental or temporary housing arrangements, who temporarily stay with close relatives, friends or acquaintances, or is under the care of the correctional services or an institution, due for release within two months and without a home. People without arranged accommodation for the next night are also considered homeless.

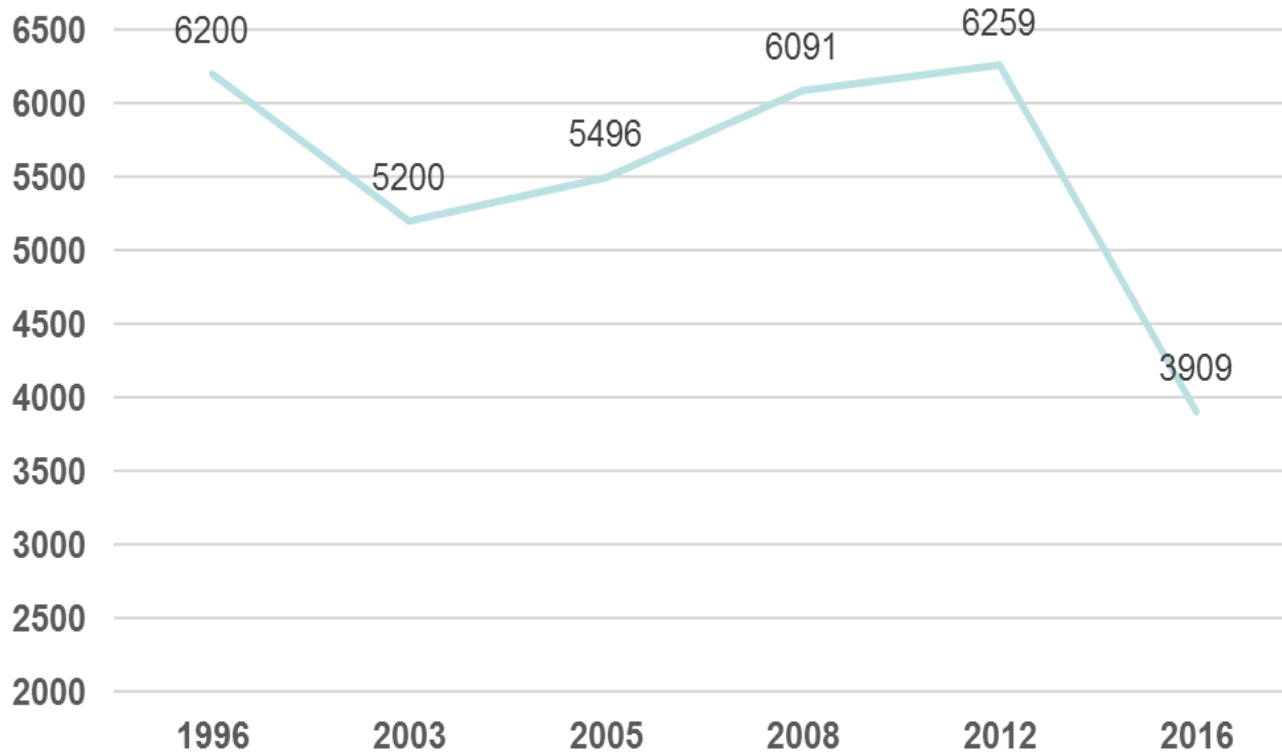
(Housing for welfare 2014:31)



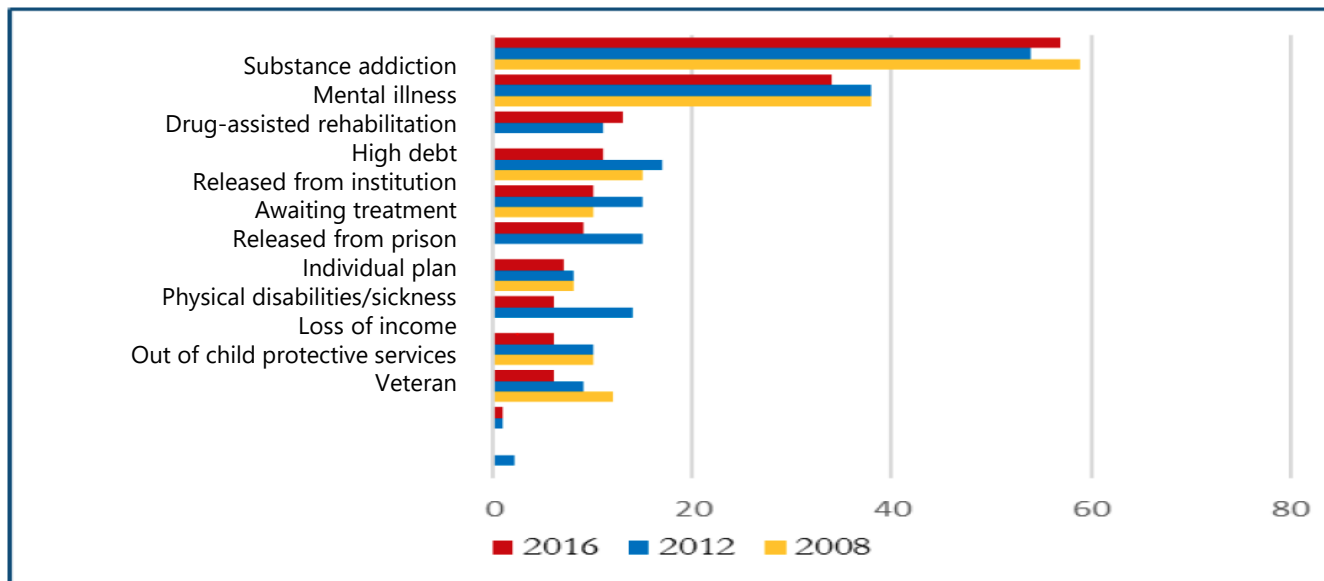


Number of homeless people in Norway

Dyb & Lie 2017

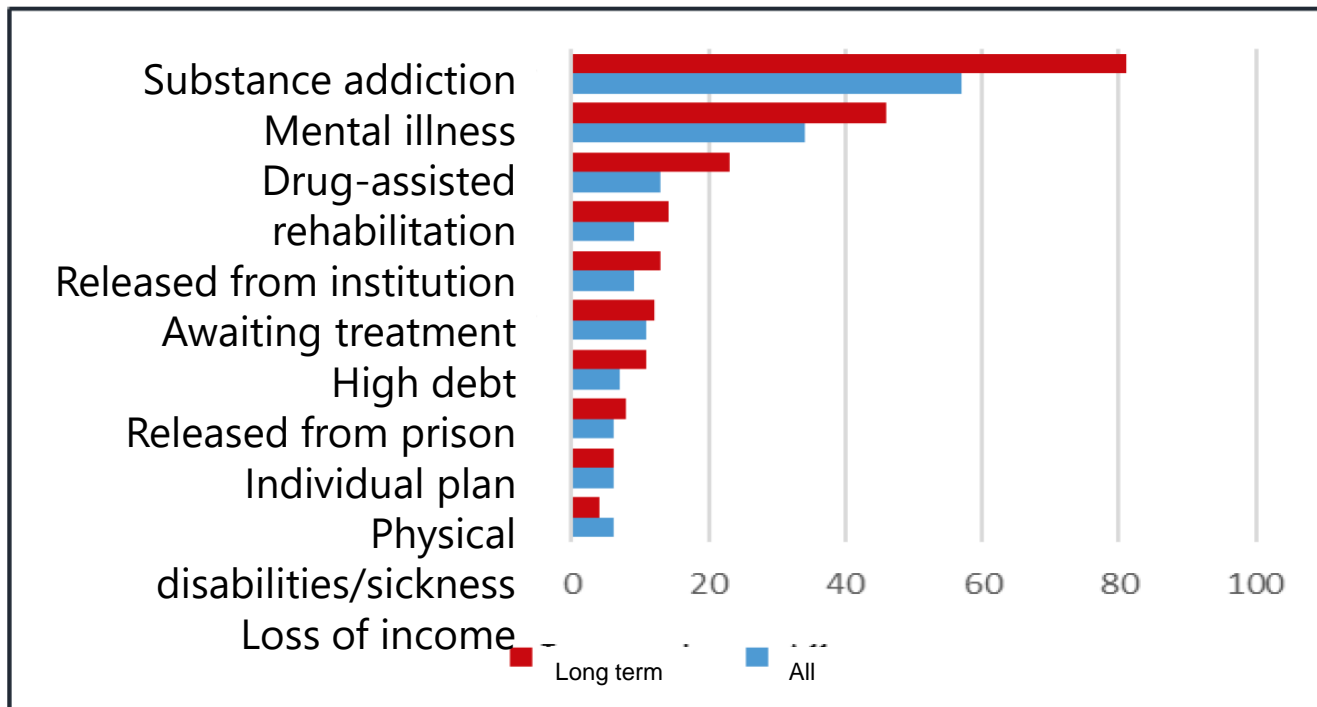


Development in problem situations among homeless people (percent) Dyb & Lie 2017





Personal state of affairs among long term homeless people (compared to all homeless people, 2016, percent) Dyb & Lie 2017



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The Norwegian welfare state

- Statues and provisions
 - The public health act
 - The Health and Care services Act
 - The act relating to social services
- Housing marked
 - 80 % homeownership
 - Small scale municipally owned sector
- Local-regional-national
 - «The municipalities holds the key»
 - «The directorates will implement the central government policy»
 - «The ministries will ensure good framework conditions»

“ Non-governmental organizations are key players in Norwegian society and can contribute in several important areas of the social housing strategy





Developments in housing and services in Norway

- ❑ A housing led model since 2002
- ❑ Several national strategies to reduce homelessness
 - ❑ Housing for welfare. National strategy for Housing and support services (2014-2020)
- ❑ Coordination of services
 - ❑ The coordination reform- proper treatment - at the right place and right time
 - ACT, FACT
 - ❑ Escalation plan for the drug field (2016-2020)
- ❑ Increased focus on consumer choice
- ❑ Recovery orientation



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Housing first in Norway

- The first Housing first-projects in Norway was established in 2013
- Number of projects today: 23
- Number of persons with housing due to a Housing first project: 234
- Several evaluations of the Housing first projects have been conducted in recent years (Snertingdal (2014), Snertingdal og Bakkli (2015), Andvik (2015), Skog Hansen (2016))





The Norwegian Housing first-projects

- The projects target group
 - Homeless people, or people in great risk of becoming homeless
 - People struggling with substance abuse and/or psychiatric disabilities
- The projects goals
 - Reduced number of homeless people
 - Test Housing first as a method for coordinating services
 - Increased knowledge on how to efficiently provide housing and services for homeless people
 - Increased housing stability
 - Increased user choice
 - Increased quality of life
 - Decreased substance abuse and/or symptoms of psychiatric disabilities





Similarities and differences between the Norwegian Housing first-projects and Pathway to housing

- Housing choice and structure
 - Constricted housing choice
 - Ordinary housing in ordinary neighborhoods
- Separation of housing and services
 - No requirements for housing readiness, only agreeing on weekly meetings with the Housing first-team
 - Services located away from the apartments. Mobile services capable of meeting participants wherever needed
 - Standard tenant agreements
 - Commitment to rehousing and service continuation through housing loss
- Service philosophy
 - Consumer choice, and absence of coercion
 - No requirements for participation in treatment for substance abuse and/or psychiatric disabilities
 - Harm reduction approach
 - Assertive engagement
- Service array
 - Practical housing assistance
 - Different compositions of staff in the Housing first-teams (some are social workers, some are genitors, some are nurses etc)
 - No doctors, psychiatrist or psychologist in the teams, and no mentionable improvement in access to these types of services
 - Teams provide support with employment and social integration, but a high degree of loneliness and unemployment is reported among the participants

Program structure

- High number of employees per participant
 - Some teams have a social worker
- European Research Conference
CHANGING PROFILES OF HOMELESSNESS: IMI
BARCELONA, September 22



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Discussion: What's different with Housing first?

- Housing choice and structure
 - Similar to ordinary welfare services, limited units available, and there are waitinglists
- Separation of housing and services
 - Most municipals do not require housing readiness, they endeavors to offer housing to all
 - Many (most?) municipals offer colocated housing, in some cases with service on spot. This is in addition to the municipally disposed scattered housing, where there also are mobile services available
 - Standard tenant agreements is the norm
 - Individuals still have the right to services if they loose their housing
- Service philosophy
 - Limited consumer choice, but increasing
 - No requirements for participation in treatment for substance abuse and/or psychiatric disabilities
 - Harm reduction approach and assertive engagement
- Service array
 - Practical housing assistance
 - Some municipalities use (F)ACT teams
 - Ordinary access to health services
 - Few municipalities provide support with employment and social integration
- Service structure
 - High number of employees per participant
 - ~~Some municipalities have employed a peer specialist~~





Innovation or new rapping?

Innovation?

- ❑ Organization as a project gives more flexibility within the team
 - ❑ But - projects are time limited
- ❑ *Increased consumer choice*
- ❑ Increased use of scattered housing
- ❑ Increased level of cooperation within the municipality

New wrapping?

- ❑ Housing led model, and separation of housing and services already established as a norm in most municipalities
- ❑ The value of Housing first as a «brand»



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Way forward

- Integration of Housing first in ordinary services
- Report, *What is Housing first in Norway?*
 - Cooperation between The Directorate of Labour and welfare, Directorate of health and the Housing bank
 - Discussions with user organisations, NGOs etc.
 - Recommendations to policy- and praxis development
- Contribute to goals in the strategy *Housing for welfare, national strategy for housing and support services (2014-2020)*
 - Everyone should have a good place to live
 - Everyone with a need for services, will receive assistance in managing their living arrangement
 - Public efforts shall be comprehensive and effective
- Paper for European Journal of Homelessness

