Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) in Europe: Concept, Developments and Prospects

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Aims of session

- Detail aims of HF4Y Europe programme of work
- Outline proposed principles, and broader framework, of HF4Y
- Introduce Rock Trust (Scotland) pilot
- Case study of Focus Ireland (Ireland) project
- Outline other developments in Europe
- Consider the future for HF4Y
  - potential and challenges
- Conclusion
Why HF4Y?

How are youth different from the adult homelessness population?

- Age
- Adolescent development
- Experience
- Dependency and support
Aims of HF4Y Europe

- define the concept of HF4Y in Europe
- test HF4Y in several pilot projects:
  - Dublin, Ireland (Focus Ireland), Edinburgh, Scotland (Rock Trust) & possibly England, The Netherlands, France & Slovenia.
- identify and deliver staff training
- establish a community of practice
- develop an evaluation model and
- develop a knowledge mobilization strategy
Concept of HF4Y

- Canada leading development of a HF4Y framework – ‘A Safe and Decent Place to Live’ (Gaetz, 2017)

- 5 core principles:
  - A right to housing, with no preconditions
  - Youth choice, youth voice and self-determination
  - Positive youth development and wellness orientation
  - Individualised and client-drive supports with no time limits
  - Social inclusion and community integration
Youth housing model
Rock Trust, Scotland

- Priority on young people leaving care
- Fully furnished tenancies by Almond HA
- Intensive Case Management approach – 5 young people; f/t worker and p/t assistant; 24/7 cover with on-call systems
- Funding – guaranteed for 2 years, working to extend
- Adopted Housing First for England principles
- Evaluation and training
Focus Ireland Youth Housing

- Focus Ireland Strategic Plan 2017-2020
  - Prevention
  - Sustained exits
- Built on research and evidence base.
- Expanding HF4Y in Dublin

Objectives of Focus Ireland Youth Housing:
- Experience stable accommodation and create permanent connections.
- Provide a home with supports until young people are ready to move on to appropriate long-term secure accommodation.
- Personal development, attainment of independent living skills and the acquisition of social capital.
Limerick Youth Housing

- Commenced in May 2013 – housing and outreach service
- First young person housed in July 2013
- The service is funded jointly between Focus Ireland, Tusla, Limerick City/County Council & the JP Mc Manus Trust.
- Referral agents; Tusla Aftercare, Homeless Action Teams and HSE Disability service.
- Partnership approach to supporting young people.
Evaluation of Limerick Youth Housing

- Evaluator = Just Economics UK

- Research design:
  - 14 semi-structured interviews were conducted with young people at different stages of using the service
  - Before/after scales on key areas incorporated into interview.
  - Three workshops with Tusla, Focus Ireland and Limerick Council (total of 50 attendees)
  - Analysis of service level data

- Literature review focusing on determinants of exits from homelessness

- Basic cost-benefit analysis
Key findings (1)

Service level data:

- 60 young people have accessed the service

Outcomes:

- 85% have achieved some kind of housing stability, with over half showing some ability to manage own tenancy (e.g. tenancy agreement) (n=32)
- 85% of all customers (including outreach) have also accessed some kind of education/training or employment, although we do not know about how sustainable this outcome was over time (n=54)

Staff perspectives:

- Partnership approach key to success
- Regular meetings (allocations)
- Allows for creative thinking and forward planning
- Resolves inter-agency problems that may emerge
Key Findings (2)

- Before and after YH:
  - Before youth housing, **physical health** was below average; after in line with average for self-reported health for Ireland (82%) (Eurostat, 2015).
  - Scoring of **life satisfaction** saw a change in average ratings from 4.8/10 to 8/10. These scores move from being in the very low range to being above the national average (7.4/10)
  - 7/14 who answered the question had been in contact with the **criminal justice** system prior to engaging with the service but there were no reported contacts since joining the service
  - Improvement in average scores for satisfaction with **relationships** (4/10 to 7.6/10)
  - ½ of young people were in **education/training**.
  - **Areas of weakness** – mental health support and engagement in employment.

- A simple comparison between the cost of the service and the costs of emergency accommodation showed a ‘return on investment’ of **€1.60 is saved for every €1 invested**
Other developments

- England (following Homeless Link request for information)
  - 1625 Independent People; Bristol; care leavers
  - St Mungo’s HF; Brighton and Hove; 2 places on existing scheme
  - SHE project, Lancashire, looking at potential for young people with offending histories
  - Sheffield City Council looking at scheme for young people with high needs not doing well in hostels
  - The Y (Leicester), P3 and Derbyshire YMCA; large, existing scheme; 14:1 ratio
  - DePaul Trust; setting up large scheme, 100 plus young people, particular focus on young people in and leaving care
Other developments

- Denmark - Esbjerg municipality, local housing associations, Hjemløses Venner (NGO) / Copenhagen?
- Finland – part of wider HF approach - National Youth HA
- Belgium - Kaizen and Cachet – transitioning to HF
- Netherlands – Humanitas Onderdak
- Slovenia – Kings of the Street
- Others – perhaps some of you sitting here?
Future potential

- Likely to be many service providers working very closely to the model (for example, housing for care leavers); potential to harness and develop their experiences and grow network
- Possibly easier to gain consensus within youth homelessness sector than whole housing sector?
- Trans-Atlantic connection providing inspiration and potential structures
- Housing First Europe Hub’s mission to scale up HF – this is a key area to support research, training & practice
  - www.housingfirsteurope.eu
Challenges

A number of challenges to operationalising HF4Y were identified at the 2017 FEANTSA Youth Study Session, including:

- Often no local or national recognition of a right to housing; requires investment in affordable housing (in right locations to facilitate choice)
- Trauma Informed Care (TIC) and Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) are not widespread in services
- Time limits/deadlines for services are common throughout Europe; how to change this?
- Employment and education opportunities are constrained for young people across Europe
Other challenges

- Confusion and/or watering down of concept:
  - around separation of housing and support and where transitional services sit within framework;
  - intensity and length of support (re: housing led services)

- More generally, challenging and changing existing systems of youth homelessness support

- Also risk of switching completely leading to end of transitional housing? (Sunderland, England)

- How development fits into wider Housing First developments – how different/ niche should it be?

- Fighting general trend that (single) young people should stay at home/ share housing

- Resources!!!!
Conclusions

- Early days but moving relatively quickly/momentum building
- Potential for European and western world approach
- Existing systems (funding; cultures; housing) are key barriers
- Need to build in evaluation and monitoring to demonstrate if working
- Watch this space!!!!!