

# Delivering Innovative Approaches to Housing for Young People

Qualitative Learning from Around the World

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Visual Executive Summary: [Link to Infographic](#)

### Aims

This report details the findings from Adam Melia's travelling Fellowship 2016. The trip aimed to discover innovative ways being practiced to house and support young people, specifically the two different approaches of Housing First and Foyers.

### Journey

The travelling part of the Fellowship was in two parts. Firstly to Canada and the USA to learn about how Housing First was widely adopted in many cities, and discover whether it was being recommended or used for 16-25 year olds. Secondly to Australia to see how a well-funded and fully formed Foyer model works in practice.

### Findings

- Staffing – In both Australia, Canada and the USA, the most successful projects are being run by diverse staff teams from non-traditional housing backgrounds. Both approaches see homelessness as part of the bigger picture for the people they work with, and surround these people with expertise fitting this big picture.
- Expertise – The idea that new approaches have to replace the older models lock stock and barrel is discredited, actually the expertise of people on the ground is vital to ensure the right people are being prioritised for each service. The alternative method to this is using computerised indexing which identifies the most vulnerable people and prioritises their housing. This was found to be quite contentious.
- Choice – Although there are distinct differences to each ethos, the element of choice is key to allow people to feel a sense of ownership over their living space.
- Empirical Data – There is a growing evidence base to show Housing First is successful if done right, in the USA, Canada and mainland Europe. Foyers do not have the same rigour and universality in their evidence base, although anecdotally they are very highly regarded wherever they exist.

- Costs – Housing First is a cost effective way of supporting a large number of people, as it utilises existing buildings rather than requiring a new build or converted property. In places where Foyers or other large housing schemes already exist, it is cost effective to continue to use these.
- One Size Fits All – Neither ethos examined within the report is ideal for everyone as a blanket approach. Housing First was designed for people who have experienced sustained periods of homelessness along with various other complex issues, and it holds that it has been the most successful for this group. Foyers are a mixed community but were designed for young people who have an interest in an education programme as well as a housing need, and it holds that Foyers are most successful for this group.
- Length of Tenancy – A key aspect of Housing First is that the tenancies should be open ended, essentially life tenancies. This can become a sticking point for certain landlords, and seems in particular to be a really difficult aspect for young people specific projects.
- Support Style – The style, and conditionality of support on offer was one of the main differences experienced. Coaching, mentoring, and non-abstinence based support are discussed. Housing First has one of its key elements that someone’s housing should not be conditional on their engagement with a support programme.
- Education – For Foyers in Australia, the importance of learning is embedded before a young person moves in. The partnerships with local colleges are strong, with college staff working within the foyer and vice versa. Young people are referred to as students.
- Shared Space – Physical barriers between staff and young people being broken down is viewed as a positive thing in the Foyers visited. There is a greater sense of trust and responsibility.
- Reciprocal – Something for something deals being in place mean that young people within Foyers have a stake in the community, they are a needed part rather than something to be branded with negative stigma.
- Transitions – There is work to be done around what happens when tenancies end, both in Foyers, and if open ended tenancies are not on offer, in Housing First also.

## Conclusion

- Each of the services visited expressed that they were only successful as one of a range of options in each community.
- Larger cities seem to have more varied housing options.
- Both Housing First and Foyers seem portable, there does not seem any obvious cultural barriers to their success in the UK.

## Next Steps

- Further work into the portability aspect is necessary.
- More detailed cost analysis of Foyers especially, both Chelsea foyer and Australia.
- Several local authorities in the Your Housing Group region are looking at Housing First, this report can be a useful tool for future work.
- A list of recommendations is available at the end of this report, along with the infographic.

During this process, I blogged about my research, including photographs and documentation from meetings, as well as links to websites. <https://housingtravel.wordpress.com/>



Myself in New York City, recording my thoughts after meeting Sam Tsemberis.  
Taken from my Blog.

# INTRODUCTION

In February 2016, I was informed that I had been successful in my application with the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust to go and compare two different approaches to tackling homelessness. The WCMT funds UK citizens to investigate inspiring practice in other countries, and return with innovative ideas for the benefit of people across the UK. My project aimed to examine the Housing First model pioneered in the US and Canada, and to compare and contrast it with the Foyer model practised for young people in Australia.

The reason I was particularly interested in this project is that for the last seven years I have worked in foyers - supported housing programmes for 16-25 year olds - in Chester and Warrington. In 2013, following budget cuts within the local authority of Cheshire West and Chester, the foyer I was managing was facing drastic changes, if not closure.

This was an attempt by Cheshire West and Chester at a more innovative approach to dealing with the issue of youth homelessness within the authority. The feeling was that support could be offered to young people wherever they lived, and that the support provider should not also be the housing provider. One of the things that was cited as inspiration for this shift was the success of the American Housing First approach.

This was the first time I had heard about Housing First, and it intrigued me into doing some research into this radical approach, specifically with a focus on whether it had been attempted with the teenage – early twenties client group I was experienced in working with. From what I could see there was a growing research bank showing the success of housing first, from Canada, from Finland, from certain places in the UK, and from the USA especially.

I couldn't see any evidence however that it had been successful for young people. Were any of these programmes offering tenancies for life with no strings attached for 16 year olds, or even 21 year olds who had experienced homelessness? I was doubtful. I decided to explore the realities of Housing First programmes, to drill down the truths of whether there was anything within it for young people, and to compare it to the foyer model in its most innovative form.

At around the same time as British foyers started to become threatened, several of Australia's federal governments decided to launch their own pilot into foyers, based on the British model. In 2008 I can remember the Australian delegation from Victoria coming to visit the foyer I was working in, to pick up best practice. Since then they have become leaders in terms of fully realising the original foyer model, with a

specific focus on the learning offer for each foyer resident. I felt that part of the reason British foyers were under threat is that they have moved away from this original ethos, under pressure from funders, and become something else altogether. It seemed as though there was a lot to be learned from comparing the two disparate approaches, and that to be able to do this it would be best to experience both in their purest forms.

The locations I chose for the report were Toronto and surrounding areas, Detroit, Chicago and New York City for the Housing First aspect, and Melbourne, Ballarat, Shepparton and Glen Waverley, all in Victoria Australia for the Foyer Programme element. Toronto, and wider Ontario had recently completed a 3 year pilot into Housing First called At Home/Che Soi, which seemed to be an extremely rigorous and thoughtful piece of work. Detroit seemed a perfect example of a city which was dealing with its own extreme budgetary issues in innovative ways, through its grass roots. Chicago officially adopted Housing First as its approach to homelessness in a city wide exercise, and there seemed to be a good combination of youth specific programmes and Housing First practice. New York had every possible option tested within its five boroughs, and is also home to Sam Tsemberis, the founder of the movement and first company to practice it, Pathways to Housing First.

What attracted me to Victoria was firstly the memory of the Australian delegation's visit, and that one of the foyers had been set up by a former colleague. I was interested to see how portable the ethos was, and this seemed a perfect place for that. I also was impressed by the internet presence of the Education First foyers, who seemed to have been established with an extremely sound research base, and a very thoughtful approach to their physical space.

This report will focus on the main aspects of each approach which I feel could be adopted in part or wholesale for use in the UK, when any local authority in future is looking for innovative ways to tackle the ongoing issue of youth homelessness. In each place visited I saw things which were thought provoking, and often inspirational. These were approaches in ways of working with people, working with physical environment, working with private investment and voluntary sectors, and different ways of utilising staff. My main areas of focus for the Housing First element will be staffing, expertise vs indexing, support style, choice, life tenancy, one size fits all.

For the foyer element, my main areas of focus will be staffing model and diversity, education focus, coaching, something for something, two year tenancies, building and post foyer transition. Following these chapters I will conclude by looking at the range of options approach I could see as the best solution, how growable / shrinkable it would be, how portable it can be, some further work into financial detail, and the next steps to embed learning.

# HOUSING FIRST

Housing First was founded in 1999 by Dr Sam Tsemberis, in New York City. He had spent time as an outreach Doctor in Montreal, and he described how each night he would ride in the ambulance, picking up the same faces again and again, taking them to the hospital for assessments and treatment. He realised that what these people really needed was housing. It was the push back from these bosses, which was, 'we're a hospital, we don't do housing', that led to Dr Tsemberis to incorporate his company. He did this in America, because in those days getting things done in Canada involved a lot of red tape, and he needed to be able to hire a psychiatrist. In New York the authorities' attitude was - 'do you need any money? No? Go ahead then!' And Pathways to Housing First was born. Since then it has become famous worldwide with headlines about how it can solve homelessness.

The seven main elements of housing first are:

1. People have the right to a home
2. Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed
3. Housing and support are separate
4. Individuals have choice and control
5. An active engagement approach is used
6. The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations
7. A harm reduction approach is used

I spent some time with various services and with people who had accessed Housing First, across Canada and the USA, and was able to get a feel for which parts of the above are truly innovative, which parts are the most important, which are transferrable to the UK and which can be adapted to fit what we already have.

## Staffing Model

I spent several days within the ACT team at Cota, central Toronto. ACT (Assertive Community Treatment) teams were developed in the 1970's as a highly integrated multi-functional approach to large numbers of people being discharged from psychiatric hospitals and falling through the cracks into homelessness.

I was impressed straight away with the makeup of the team at Cota. It was a medically led team with a client group of around 90 people, mostly diagnosed with schizophrenia active. This had previously meant they would have mostly been bouncing between hostel accommodation and the streets. Cota have a psychiatrist at the top of the organisation. As Diane from Cota, and later Sam Tsemberis in New York explained, it was vital to have a psychiatrist on board to give the medical rubber stamp to their decisions on who would be most appropriate for the package they offered.

Along with Dr Hidvegi the psychiatrist at the head of the team was Diane the office manager and Oriana the housing manager. I attended two of the team's daily meetings, and was struck at first at how little the housing aspect was discussed, and that the housing manager was not present for either meeting. Diane explained that this was a deliberate move that has been in place since the formation of the team as part of the At Home / Che Soi pilot. The reason for it is that the housing is truly separate, nothing that happens in the conversations about treatment will impact on the person's tenancy. There were a couple of people on the list who were having tenancy or neighbour issues, and this was usually noted as something Oriana would discuss with the landlord, or for one particular client it was seen as a good idea for him to move to a different neighbourhood.

When I spoke to the housing manager, she said that keeping the housing matters separate from the treatment team worked very well, where they have 90 people on their caseload and have the benefit of not having to think about the housing side of things, she has 25+ landlords on her 'caseload', who sometimes require almost as much support. Oriana deals with these relationships, moving people around who have requested different neighbourhoods, a change from bachelor flat to a group communal setting or vice versa, making sure the guaranteed rent goes to the landlords, mediating and relationship managing between landlords, clients and neighbours.

The main treatment team was free then to focus on non-housing issues, and the makeup of the team reflected this. None of the team were from what I would describe as a traditional housing background, and the combination seemed to work fantastically well. Diane was the clinical manager and leader of the meeting, also in attendance were two nurses whose main role was to distribute medication and give people injections. Along with the nurses was a personal support worker, who could give physical support to nurses and also help people with hygiene, bathing etc. The other eight people at the meeting were case managers

who had different specialties, which were mental health, vocational support, peer support, legal and courts support.

I spent a morning each with Tim, one of the nurses and Ravi, the Peer Support specialist. In my time with Tim it became clear that the medication and housing are both solid bases, two roots for people to be able to grow from. Schizophrenia medication has become more advanced and now can be delivered every 2 weeks. This, along with the guaranteed provision of housing are the two main factors which Tim has seen massively improve the quality of life of his patients. Prior to Housing First and the new medication people would often miss their meds and then end up being evicted because of the behaviour which followed.

My time with Ravi was also very valuable. Ravi is in recovery from schizophrenia active, and was seen as being treatment resistant in his teen years. He described the joy and surprise of his own recovery as being equal to a lottery win. Ravi ran the drop in group sessions for the ACT patients. This being a Housing First programme, there was no compulsion for people to attend, but Ravi said there were certain people who enjoyed coming back and being within a group setting. This is a good partial solution to one key issue with Housing First, loneliness. Ravi described how the ACT team have been doing the same treatment work since long before Housing First pilot, and has been able to see the good and bad sides of its introduction. The main drawback is that it is a finite resource, with 72 tenancies available to the Cota team. On the positive side the service users love the new properties, and from his point of view it allows him to concentrate on the simplicity of the work rather than the complexity of the system.

It was striking to me that this programme I had come to learn about housing from was actually a health service led team. This was the case throughout Toronto. There is a floor of the central hospital dedicated to Urban Studies, and it is this team which commissions the pilots and continuous programmes into homelessness in Ontario.



Photo taken from my Blog <https://housingtravel.wordpress.com/page/2/>

Myself photographed with Diane and Ravi from COTA, Toronto.

## Use of Expertise vs Index to Select Clients

When I met with Sam Tsemberis in New York, I had heard from several services in the US that Housing First wasn't working for their clients. I challenged Sam with this, and he wasn't surprised, saying 'That's because they're not doing it right'. I asked him which parts are the most common for mistakes to be made, and he said the two main ones are a lack of a thoughtful, expertise led approach at the entry point, and a lack of choice for the person accessing it. We then spoke about the tool which many cities have chosen as the way to identify prospective clients, something called the Vulnerability Index.

Prior to talking to Sam, I had thought the Vulnerability Index was part and parcel of the Housing First programme as designed by him. This is not the case, and in fact Sam had nothing good to say about it at all. Housing First works by identifying the neediest people and housing them first. The Index is a tool designed to take the subjective side out of the process, assigning scores to different things, such as whether someone smokes, their age, drug and alcohol issues, chronic illnesses and so on. It was designed based on data from homeless people's autopsies, the idea of this being that the things most likely to kill a homeless person would be the things that put you at the top of the list for housing.

To take the point of view of a government or other funding body for a moment, why choose a model such as this? In Chicago, the 2015 census identified 82,212 homeless people, the majority of whom live in the overcrowded homes of others. Without some way of arranging and prioritising these numbers, assessing need and allocating housing to the most vulnerable seems like an almost impossible job. If one was to rely on street teams, local networks and local knowledge, many cities in America would simply not be able to. The street teams and local knowledge are there, the network is not. Working in silos seemed rife in every city except New York.

Whether Sam is right or not, use of the VI certainly seems to have had an impact on whether programmes have been successful or not. As Sam pointed out, 'where's the choice in a system based on dead people?' Neither the poor people who have passed away and had their data used, nor the people who are being allocated housing based on said data, have actually been consulted.

The VI has been adopted in Chicago, and unfortunately seems to have had the effect of taking the thoughtfulness and expertise out of the process of housing people. When you compare this to the full team approach in Toronto, it seems the extra cost is surely worthwhile. Simply to get people involved at each stage, from street outreach, where the worker will near enough know each person sleeping rough in their area, to the team involved in interviewing the person and making recommendations to Housing First teams, to the teams themselves knowing what resources they have and who would be best suited to each. Housing

First was started by Sam Tsemberis when he was an outreach doctor, riding around in an ambulance and becoming frustrated at seeing the same people each night and not being able to house them. Taking this local knowledge aspect away and turning it into a computer generated decision has had the effect of limiting it as an effective model. The value in the Vulnerability Index is a cost saving, which could then mean more specialised staff within the Housing First team. In practice it seemed to be indicative of cost and corner cutting at each stage, and a poorer knock on effect on results.

This is an example of the thinking which can lead to a one size fits all approach (about which more later). The logic behind it is clear - the persuasive nature of a magic bullet being offered, combined with people in the sector arguing for their solution. Add to this there only being so much resource (money, time, fixed) that can be put into a problem politically or economically, and you have a recipe for a dogmatic approach to a nuanced issue.

## Support Style

What is the support style of a Housing First team? To follow the key elements of the ethos correctly it needs to be non-judgemental, delivered without the threat of a tenancy being terminated due to lack of engagement, able to step up / step down at the service user's request, and not be abstinence based. It would be left to the person themselves to decide to abstain if they wanted to, and if they relapsed it would not affect their tenancy. Through the various agencies and services I shadowed I saw several examples of how this support style can be a great aid to the service user, but also a few examples of it being a tough adjustment for support workers.

At Project Renewal in New York, I spoke to Stephanie about the different teams she manages. Due to the size of the city and of Project Renewal, they can have programmes running on any number of different methodologies and funding streams. Stephanie noted that with their client group of mainly older people with alcohol or drug dependency, they have transformative coaching style programmes where engagement is necessary, and also housing first programmes where clients live in dispersed tenancies and engagement is optional. What Stephanie quickly learned was that it was very difficult for a support worker to move from the abstinence based treatment side over to the housing first side. Stephanie found it was better to hire a fresh new group of staff for this work, if they haven't been ensconced in the traditional abstinence based treatment world they will pick it up much quicker.



Myself and Stephanie from Project Renewal, New York City.

In Detroit I visited Vista Maria, a really interesting set of supported housing buildings all on one site. Vista Maria was originally gifted to a church group by Henry Ford, and it is still very close to the Detroit Headquarters and factory for Ford. They have transformational supported housing on site for females aged 18-24, specialised supported living for women with mental health issues, housing for women who had been trafficked in the sex trade, and young people who have been refugees. As well as this there is also included an elementary school on site. From speaking to the staff there I got an insight into which different approaches they use for each age and stage of their residents. The most interesting part of this was the use of mentoring for people who had moved on from these programmes into their own independent tenancies. The mentors were professionals from the local area who volunteered to assist with the transition into independence for ex residents. The benefit of mentoring at this stage, according to Karen at Vista Maria, is that it can go on for as long as the person wishes, and actually last forever. The residents find it really useful to have a non-staff member, who they have a contact number for, and can advise them on widely ranging issues.

The preference in both cases for the service users was for a non-judgemental, open ended approach that they could choose to engage with or not as it suited them. It seems based on this particular case that people prefer support without a time limit that they can pick up or leave as and when they require it.

## Choice

A key part of successful housing first models is allowing clients as much choice as possible. This choice tends to primarily be in where they live, which area and also type of accommodation. When I spoke to Sam Tsemberis I asked him firstly why he thought housing first was necessary in the first place, it was a story of a lack of choice. In his opinion it makes all sorts of sense from a governmental perspective to say you have x amount of homeless people, therefore a building holding x amount will fix this problem as long as support is in place, and we will let the providers decide what this looks like. It feels neat and tidy, they also have a shiny new building which they can officially open, wealthy people enjoy funding a shiny new building that they can point to, and so on. What this doesn't include at any stage is an element of choice for people, firstly choice about whether they would like to live in a particular neighbourhood - after all the building is only situated in one place, and secondly choice about whether this is the sort of setting they would like to live in. What this ends up with is a shiny new building, but one which may be filled with unhappy people because they haven't at any stage been asked whether that is the sort of place they would like to live.

It is important to note that choice is important in both ways, and that if you landed a housing first dictat on a city's homeless population, offering only dispersed tenancies in the community, you have again taken away a key choice element. This was the second aspect Sam Tsemberis identified as reasons housing first may fail, after the use of the Vulnerability Index detailed elsewhere. Some people are terrified by the idea of living completely alone, and prefer a group setting, at least in terms of a shared communal area. Some people will choose to move to a neighbourhood far from their social networks in order to start afresh, some people would rather stay close to their network and may be frightened of moving to an unknown neighbourhood. The practicalities of what is available may mean this isn't always an option, but a successful housing first programme will have flexibility built into it. In practice that means whoever is managing the e.g. 75 properties will liaise with the support team when somewhere becomes available, tapping into their knowledge of the client group to see whether someone has requested a move to that sort of tenancy in that area, or if it should be offered to a new person.

This was well illustrated in Toronto, where I visited both styles of housing with Tim, one of the nurses from Cota. Tim was delivering injections or tablets to people with schizophrenia in central Toronto. The first person we visited was a 27 year old who lived on his own within a normal apartment block, and we left after a brief conversation checking all was well. In the car afterwards Tim told me that this particular person had had an amazing turnaround under housing first, and was in fact lucky to be alive. He had previously not been managing his medication well due to being between hostel accommodation and the streets. This had led him to pretending to have a gun, attempting an armed robbery while not on his meds, and almost being

shot by police. Through a combination of guaranteed housing in a setting of his choosing and access to the correct medication he has completely turned himself around.

We also visited a group setting, which was a series of bachelor apartments with shared communal areas and a staff member on site. The people living in this style accommodation were for the most part people who had lived in hostel accommodation successfully prior to housing first. They had selected this style of living as it was something that they were used to, and felt was best for their health. Toronto seemed to have the right balance of housing choices. At the same time it was also the place with the most visible rough sleepers, which I will discuss further in the next section.

## Life Tenancy

The concept of a tenancy for life was the one which I had the most questions about with regards to housing first. I have been used to a certain amount of throughput being demanded in the world of supported housing, generally 2 years of support, building towards a move into independence for each person. I struggled to see how, once this was removed, housing first didn't inevitably become a closed shop. A city has for example, 75 housing first tenancies, once 75 people are housed, what happens then? I arrived in Canada for the start of my trip thinking that housing first must be a golden ticket, potentially miraculous for those who can access it, but closed to the majority. I was very keen to learn whether the life tenancy was actually that in practice, and what this meant for those involved.

At Project Renewal in New York, for their client group of people with severe drug and alcohol dependencies, the life tenancy aspect is a reality, as it is for Cota's client group of people with schizophrenia in central Toronto. The headline about this is that the closed shop aspect is partly true. Once the caseload for a particular housing first team is filled, there won't be any pressure on the tenants to move on. In practice however there is some throughput. Some people will decide that they would rather move out into complete independence, some people will abandon their tenancies and move out of area, unfortunately some will pass away.

I was persistent with the question about what happens when the caseloads are full. It was particularly pressing in Toronto I felt, where it is not much of an exaggeration to say there is someone sleeping rough on every corner downtown. The answer became clearer as time went on. Firstly, the programme has been piloted at this stage for a particular group of people who are homeless, those who are considered treatment resistant, whose homelessness is considered entrenched. Secondly, Housing First is still at pilot stage in most places, and has not been expanded beyond these particular groups in Toronto and New York. It would take

further commitment and investment from local government to expand it beyond this, and decide how many extra tenancies to fund for groups of people whose homelessness is considered slightly less chronic.

Despite this, the positives of a life tenancy can't be underplayed for those who have qualified for it. The solid base of a home for life, after a series of temporary and / or emergency accommodation types seems to have been the biggest factor for the people I spoke to. In Hamilton Ontario I spoke to a man in his 50's who placed a huge value on the permanent nature of his new tenancy. He compared the homeless experience to being 'a piece of trash in the wind', with nobody knowing where he was on any particular day, or seeming to care. His new home had given him somewhere that he could tell family where he was, the pride of an address, somewhere he could guarantee he would be at.

With the young people specific focus of my work, this seemed a key aspect which wasn't being offered, and a stumbling block overall for anyone hoping to implement a housing first programme within existing young people's services. The number of 16-25 year olds who fall into the entrenched homelessness category seems fairly low to start with, most people at that age haven't sufficient time on the streets to 'qualify'. Where this has been attempted, at Chelsea Foyer in New York and La Casa Norte in Chicago, it seems to be lip service, there are still 2 years of supported living being offered to young people, but since housing first the staff feel they can't encourage young people to move on as much as they used to.

## One Size Fits All

In Chicago, I came across a lot of services that seemed to have received Housing First in a very top down way, and there seemed a lack of understanding around who it was for. It led to an interesting question for me; Housing First is received with some hostility by existing supported housing services, can the ethos exist alongside these services? It seemed, to go further into the point, that in these places where Housing First had been adopted wholesale, the most resistance was being felt. I was interested in whether this was part of something Sam Tsemberis said to me, that there exists an industry around homelessness, and people in existing services don't like the perceived threat to their jobs. More than this though, I felt the issue was in the one size fits all approach that had somehow been adopted.

When city officials look at the expensive and complex problem of homelessness, it must be tempting to look at this thing that has been credited with 'curing homelessness' in places like Medicine Hat in Canada, as the one size fits all approach that will fix the entire issue in their city. Housing First, however, was not designed with this in mind. Rather, it was intended to be an alternative way to get chronically homeless people with

multiple diagnoses, who were termed treatment resistance, past the revolving door of homeless support services, and straight into independent tenancies.

Visiting La Casa Norte in Chicago I found that due to the funnelling of funding towards Housing First programmes, the services which had already been up and running, including a foyer style transformational living single site programme, were now adopting Housing First practices. Imagine a building and a staff team designed and recruited to deliver support around independent living, with a time limit of two years and a coaching approach encouraged where it was understood that engagement with the programme was necessary to remain in the programme. Then after a change in funding, and without any changes in the actual building or staff, the focus is shifted to say that tenancies can now last as long as the residents wish, and that engagement is now strictly optional.

What it had meant for La Casa Norte is that they found encouraging young people to move on was extremely hard. Chicago is an expensive place to live, and the foyer's nominal cost of rent had previously meant it was an ideal time to save up for the new apartment for residents. Now, without the pressure to move on this has become a difficult situation. La Casa Norte's founder Sol, said that they have had much more success with their 65 dispersed tenancies using Housing First. Sol also said that if they were starting from scratch it would be cheaper to have more and more dispersed tenancies than single site programmes like the foyer, however it is much harder to be ambitious for the young people in these dispersed tenancies. The transformative work is much tougher, and so although they feel ambitions beyond the basic for their residents, these ambitions are not always shared by the government who fund them.

Every style of working can have great successes, but the top down imposing of a new ethos without making the difficult changes necessary to promote it will always hit difficulties. In this case the decision seemed to have been made that one size would fit all types of homelessness, and that it could be delivered in each location in the blink of an eye.

In three separate locations across North America, I located what could be named Housing First programmes for young people. In Chicago with La Casa Norte, in Toronto at Covenant House, and in Hamilton Ontario. In each of these places I learned that many of the aspects of a successful housing first programme were being applied. In general, the tenancies were under the name of the young person, and open ended, with a package of support that was open for them to engage with or not, without impacting on the tenancy. In each case however, it tended to be the young people with the least need who were offered these tenancies. Generally, they would have already lived within a single site supported accommodation scheme. This was explained to me by Sol from La Casa Norte and Carol from Covenant House as being the most person centred

way to select which person has access to this opportunity, and also the method that their funders prefer. It brought up conversations about what is morally the right sort of supported housing for young people, tenancies can be offered without any transformational, coaching led support, but should they be?

# FOYER PROGRAMME

The history of foyers, originally a French idea, starts in Britain in 1992. In a bid to tackle rising youth unemployment and homelessness, and end the 'no home, no job, no home' cycle, foyers were devised as places of living and learning.

The foyer movement grew larger during 2003-10, whilst the Supporting People fund from central government was ring fenced. At this time many local authorities decided to build foyers, either from scratch or by converting other buildings, hostels or offices. At the peak of the movement there were more than 100 foyer federation accredited foyers in Britain and Ireland. This figure has dropped below the 100 mark at last count by the Federation.

Foyers are supported housing schemes for 16-25 year olds, places in which to live and learn, train, work and become more independent. Young people who move in will usually have a housing need and a support need, typically but not exclusively they may have spent some time sofa surfing, had a family or relationship breakdown, or have come through the care system. For a foyer to be accredited it must pass the 3 tests of 'foynerness', taken below from the Foyer Federation's website:

1. The focus meets the development needs and goals of young people in transition
2. The approach makes a positive 'offer' of integrated skills, resources and opportunities accessible for young people
3. The relationship is based on a formal commitment – or deal – between the young person, the service, and the community, which is a condition of continued engagement

I visited Australia to see what fresh perspective the newest members of the foyer family could offer. Since 2010 and the loss of the ring fenced Supporting People fund, British foyers have moved away from the original ethos as an attempt to move with the times and to where different governments are allocating funds now. Australia on the other hand has cross party support for a pilot of the foyer model, and have invested a lot into passing the tests of foynerness in their own way. The Launch Housing foyers which I will be focussing on designed their programme based on two separate Foyer Federation models, the Open Talent programme and the Learning Power Award. The combination of these 2 models in consultation with Colin Falconer of the Foyer Federation helped them construct a single programme which was ideal for their needs.

## Staffing, Model and Diversity

In Launch Housing's Broadmeadows project, I attended the weekly team meeting to discuss each student, prospective students, neighbourhood and building issues and any upcoming events. I was struck, as I was when visiting Cota in Toronto, by how few of the staff were from a housing background. The focus of the meeting, and the team in general, is weighted heavily towards support and away from housing management. There are twelve full time equivalent members of staff (two are on a job share), these are the manager and team leader, five youth development workers, two night staff, a learning facilitator and a housekeeper. The youth development workers each have different specialisms, two are from educational backgrounds and seem almost like teachers, which I could see would be a great way to engage a certain type of young person. One is a qualified counsellor, and a little older than the rest, I could imagine many young people responding to this caring, maternal figure. Two others are young, from arty backgrounds in music videos and photography which was obviously really engaging for some students, the group sessions led by them sounded really imaginative. The management team both had social work qualifications. Bolstering the full time staff team were a team of casual workers, who covered shifts when someone is off or whenever necessary. This had been the route into the foyer for quite a few of the staff and seemed a really good way of ensuring you get the right staff blend.

I was struck by what staff there weren't, namely housing management type roles, rent officers, even secretarial roles, and that there was not as much of a focus on building issues, health and safety as I have been used to. The focus of the staff team, partly by the makeup of the personalities within it, and partly as directed by the management team, was fully on the support of the young people and the community as a whole. In conversation with Adrian the manager, I asked him about the structure, he said to me that it was kept lean on purpose so that it could be rolled out nationwide and replicated inexpensively. The housing management functions were picked up for the most part by the management team, but secretarial tasks - answering phones, door, dealing with contractors - were basically picked up by the nearest staff member. Rent was taken directly from the young people's benefits, not something I've been in favour of in the past, but it certainly seemed to make sense in Australia, which for young people is almost a cashless society from my impressions.

I would recommend aspects of this formulation in any future foyer model. It is clear that the staff education and past experience levels are generally higher than a British foyer model, and although this will be partly due to the higher pay in Australia, this level and mixture of staff is something that can be aimed at, and at least in terms of mixture can be replicated. When building a culture, the blend of people is key, and if you

have a lot of housing management roles you will have a housing management influenced culture. For this aspect at least it makes sense to separate support and landlord function.

## Education Focus

The Launch Housing foyers have a superb learning programme, and a fantastically well embedded learning culture. Learning is the main thing which sets foyer apart from other homeless housing. When describing foyers people use terms like 'a place for living and learning' or 'somewhere for young people who have experienced homelessness to learn how to live independently.' Without a strong learning offer the concept of foyerness becomes rather nebulous. It is also one thing which causes friction at times between funders, especially local governments, and foyers in the UK. The issues tend to be around what happens when a young person doesn't take ownership of their learning experience, doesn't take the learning side seriously, and instead sees the foyer merely as a roof over their head. It is a constant effort to establish the learning offer's importance to prospective residents, and to maintain it as a live concern once these young people become foyer residents. The key things that need to be achieved for this to succeed are; an offer which speaks to them and their experience. Secondly an offer which is seen as a non-refundable pact that is taken equally seriously by both sides, staff and resident. Thirdly a front loading of the offer, meaning it is the main focus for each new resident's first few weeks and months. All these things feed into the fourth and most important, overall it should be a normal part of the foyer's culture, just something that everyone does.

I was part of a training day for each Youth Development Worker, delivered by the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) College's worker. During this session I could clearly see how these things are achieved. The first thing that was an obvious and easy 'win' when establishing an educational atmosphere, the young people who live at the Education First foyers are referred to by staff as students. This is not just a trick of language, each young person who is successful in applying for the foyer is enrolled at the TAFE for at least the first three months of their tenancy, while they complete their certificate in Developing Independence (DI).

I could see that this established not only the importance of the learning, but also was a source of pride for some of the less academic young people, who had fallen through the gaps of the formal education system before moving to the foyer. The other striking thing that seems eminently portable and useful was that the learning programme is started before the young person has even visited the foyer. The application process is started off-site with the TAFE worker, the prospective student will assess what their skills and support needs are, fill in their own initial assessment form, and then have an introduction into what will be expected

of them if successful. It is worth thinking about this a little more. The single thing which every foyer will tell you about why the approach fails for certain young people, they will tell you that it is the young people who didn't want to be there in the first place who tend to end up being issued notice. This approach of meeting the young person off site and giving them the responsibility of completing their own assessment - with support as required - means that this lack of ownership once they become residents of the foyer is far less likely.

The actual Developing Independence learning programme is an excellently realised document, modern, adaptable and appropriate for a wide range of young people. It is not a precisely timetabled course, but will tend to last for the first three months of a student's foyer tenancy, depending on how busy they are with other things. Some young people will be attending a different college or university to the local TAFE, whereas others will go into full time TAFE education at the same time as their tenancy starts. The completion of the DI is a requirement for all students, whether in college, university or part time work. It is delivered with an Open Talent mind-set by the staff, aiming to focus on skills rather than drawbacks, and unlock these skills into practical talents, and has six separate sections which guide this process. It goes from recognising skills, inspiring and motivating, coaching and guiding, finding opportunities internally then externally, and finally celebrating achievements. It is delivered by a combination of staff, some parts led by the TAFE worker, some led by particular Youth Development Workers at the foyer depending on their specialism. The design and delivery of this programme are a big part of the collegiate culture which has been established in the first three years of Launch Housing's foyer life.

## Coaching

What is the support style of Launch Housing Foyers? After attending staff training I have an understanding about how Launch Housing embed a coaching style for their Youth Development Workers. I've lifted the following from their training manual: coaching is focused on a clear set of objectives and goals. Once these are achieved the relationship/agreement between the coach and the person being coached may come to a natural ending. Coaching is task oriented and it is the coach's role to;

- recognise and improve skills, abilities and/or knowledge
- have expectations, and make demands, of young people
- motivate
- facilitate further opportunities for young person to develop skills.

Staff, particularly Youth Development Workers, will work as coaches with the students. The YDW will work as a coach to enable the student to reach agreed benchmarks towards the objectives identified in a student's Learning Plan.

The differences between a coaching style on offer for young people to the optional style with Housing First is mainly that there are expectations and demands for young people within the foyers, and that there is an end point. Coaching has very good success rates and is popular way to work, particularly with young people because it unlocks their own motivation and talents. From speaking to organisations like La Casa Norte in Chicago that have moved from coaching to housing first methods of support for young people, they say that coaching feels more ambitious. Having expectations set is very motivating for young people, and the lack of them under non-judgmental practice can feel as though that ambition isn't there, little is expected of the young person, and the results will reflect that.

The coaching approach is carried out with personal planning sessions and group work, delivered by the Youth Development Workers. It is bolstered by peer delivered sessions as detailed elsewhere, a buddy system and external mentors. By being able to offer each style of coaching the Launch Housing foyers are able to offer a really tailor made support service to each young person, which is vital when working with young people of diverse ages, stages, backgrounds and abilities. This variety of coaching styles enables each resident to find their own way within the framework.

In contrast to the housing first model, there is no option for the young person to opt out of engagement altogether. From speaking to each provider of support for young people, it is fairly universally felt that this is the more effective and ambitious approach when working with young people, who are constantly taking on influences and learning all the time. The Australian Foyers have a really varied and enthusiastic method of delivery, and this is the real key in achieving success for any model. The residents can see from the attitudes of the staff that there is a real belief in the model, they know when staff knock on their doors and describe what's happening that it has been designed with them in mind. The staff team have a universal way of delivering a diverse message.

## **Something for Something**

The something for something deal is something often discussed in foyers. To define it briefly in this context, the idea is to embed a realisation for young people that along with the things they should expect from the foyer staff, there are things they are expected to do also. A typical something for something deal would be that in return for the provision of travel passes for a young person to get to an interview, the resident will

help set out and tidy away the food for breakfast club. It is seen as one of the harder things to establish within your culture, but it is a brilliant thing to achieve. Being able to offer real opportunities for young people to start earning responsibilities and benefits can really raise self-esteem.

The Launch foyers have a large part of their budget set aside to assist young people with their school fees. Further education is not free in Australia, and the ability to share the cost, or cover the entire cost of a college course is a huge draw for the foyer. The foyers use this as part of their something for something deal, and also as a way to introduce leadership skills into tenancies. The other side of the deal is that the student must lead a group session. While I was at the foyer I witnessed two residents sharing this duty and leading the cooking of a group meal. The great concept, which was called Snack Hacks, was that the meal made could be replicated in each student's apartment, made in large quantities and frozen in their personal freezers for times during the month when money was short.



Poster advertising Snack Hacks, Broadmeadows Foyer, Australia

Other sessions which were being led on by students were ones which focussed on Invasion Day, which is what everyone at the foyer referred to as Australia Day. The session around this was being led by one of the native Australian students, and consisted of films and discussion about the historical and ongoing implications of the colonisation of Australia. This was a very sensitive and emotional issue for quite a few at the foyer, and it was heartening to see how the community respected and promoted this in such a tangible way.

The young people at the Launch foyers seemed very close to the staff team, and I suspect the delivery of this reciprocal deal is a large part of this reason. As well as building self-esteem and understanding for the work the staff are doing, it also removes the likelihood of any questions about house rules being answered

with 'because I said so' or similar. Each person knows what is expected and realises that they will also have a turn, so they should respect and engage with their peers.

## Tenancies

Length of tenancy within the foyer world is a hot potato. Traditionally within the British foyer model the length of stay has always been a maximum of 2 years. The reasons for this were various; young people could move in once they reached 16, so it would be 2 years until they were 18 and able to get a tenancy under their own name. Also foyers were linked closely to colleges, and further education courses tended to be 2 years in length. Part of the reason for my trip was that the length of stay at the foyer I managed was reduced by the local authority from 2 years to 6 months maximum stay, and I had seen the impact this had started to have. Along with this, and in contrast to it, was the experience of housing first programmes' guaranteed life tenancies, as previously detailed. Having some time away from my normal context to see how other foyers managed length of tenancy was a very valuable part of the experience for me.

What I found was that 2 years is still the worldwide standard for young people, and in fact in some schemes it seemed as though it was more a 2 year minimum than a 2 year maximum. Certainly in America, with the foyer style programmes in La Casa Norte Chicago and Chelsea Foyer New York. Sticking rigidly to 2 years goes against what I've generally explained to people as the foyer mountain theory, where a tenancy for a young person is a journey upwards. The staff and programme loads each young person with equipment to climb their own personal mountain, which takes each person a different amount of time. When they reach the top they are celebrated by everyone, and at this point they should move on, as what comes next is the journey down. The journey down can tend to be a bit negative for them and those around them, the rules and procedures of a supported housing scheme have started to feel oppressive to them, they are ready for independence.

In Australia the Launch foyers have a clever way of treating tenancies. Each young person has a maximum of 2 years, and this tends to be used by all of them. The time is almost incentivised though, by the manager and staff team talking to each young person about how long they have left and how to use it best. If a young person is not doing so well with their tenancy or their education, a conversation will be had with the team about whether it might be best for them to move out for a time, either into a tenancy of their own or back to where they were before. This conversation emphasises the value of foyer time, and that if it's being wasted, better to bank it and come back in future, spending it when the person is better prepared.

For some young people 2 years is too long, the foyer mountain has been scaled and the journey down the other side begun. However having seen what impact shortening this to 6 months can have I feel that a compromise is vital, and conversations between services and local governments need to be two sided. Services can operate at any length, from 6 months to life tenancies, but the shape and feel of the service will be altered by these changes. The impact 6 month stays had in Chester was that young people who wanted somewhere to live and study would choose to live elsewhere if they could, affecting the balance of community. Young people would also not have as much pride and ownership in their apartment or the communal areas.

Housing First's success has shown that taking the focus away from the tenancy itself can be really successful. Tenancies very quickly become defined by their length if it is prescribed at the outset. If it was avoidable it would be best to not have time limited tenancies, the support reaching its conclusion is a natural end to a foyer tenancy. If time limits are insisted upon by funders, maybe it would be more effective to take a leaf from the housing first approach and not make it a condition of support, minimising any references to time running out, tenancies concluding.

## Building

I was impressed by the impact the built environment seemed to have on the community and culture of Launch Housing's Broadmeadows, Shepparton and Kangan foyers. This was something that I heard from a lot of different staff across the region, the importance of whether a particular foyer was purpose built or not. Initially I had thought this was more a comment just made to differentiate between the different programmes, some purpose built and some adapted from other buildings, but I shortly learned that it was more than that.

Broadmeadows Foyer was the first place I visited in Australia, and it became my home base foyer for the two weeks of my visit. The first thing you notice on entry is the open plan design. It actually resembles British foyers, with a reception desk in front of you, with staff offices to the right and communal space for students to the left. The key difference is that this is all open, with no area off limits for the young people, other than the manager's office, which to all intents and purposes has an open door policy as well.

The large communal kitchen and dining area, outside space and communal lounge take up one side of the ground floor, and this is where most students are to be found, particularly the outside. Within the staff space

however there is a central comfortable seating area, which was also very popular with some students. Around this on all sides are computers, with standing as well as seated desks. These were available for the young people as well as being the main computers for staff to use. The real positive with this is that it constantly takes the staff back to the main aspect of their job, the contact with young people. A drawback would be that certain people may be more demanding of attention and it could be hard to get computer work done at times.

In terms of culture though the impact was bigger than that. This layout implicitly trusts young people. There was no shutter to bring down and end conversations, no physical barrier as a reminder of the power imbalance between staff and young person. It was palpable, and reminded me of the difference between school and college. When teenagers enter a world which for the first time tells them; this is the situation, this is the building, it would be best for all of us if we all respect each other and do what we're here to do, the difference in behaviour can be significant and instant. If this is then backed with a unified group of adults who can show in their actions that they also have this trust, the responsibility shown by many foyer young people seemed to make the place almost self-regulating. For each new student only a little input is necessary by the staff team to reinforce this after it has been initially established.

For many foyers already established this could seem a drastic step, knock down some walls and open your doors, but along with standing desks and seating areas for young people within the main staff areas, the difference seems worth the risk.

## **Post Foyer Transition**

One of the Youth Development Workers at each Launch Housing Foyer has a specialism in transitions. At Broadmeadows I spoke to Andrew, who takes on this role. I also heard about a great piece of enterprise which has meant the foyer is able to financially support its residents once they have moved on. Transition from foyer is the toughest thing to plan for, and it is vital to approach each case in a fairly tailor made way. There is the potential for any move on to be less positive than expected. Foyers, especially great looking newly built ones, are often nicer than the first place a young person will move to afterwards, both aesthetically and in terms of neighbourhood. This, along with the sudden appearance of utility bills, the lack of onsite support, and potentially less than great landlords, makes the first six months post foyer the hardest in the entire journey. Without post foyer support it is quite common for first tenancies to fail, and the young person to end up back where they started. Unfortunately the provision of a specialised post foyer resettlement worker is rare in the UK's local authority commissioned services.

In Broadmeadows, Andrew told me that the post foyer work starts around six months before students are due to move out. This could be at the eighteen month point, but some will approach him before this, at ten or twelve months, and say that they are ready to start the move on process. Andrew will then take them through their preferred areas, introduce them to landlords and assist with the process of actually acquiring a property. Australia doesn't have any social housing stock at all, so the vast majority of foyer move on's in Australia will be into private rented spaces. Melbourne is very expensive by Australian standards, so there is a bit of expectation management involved. Once the move on has happened, Andrew will continue to visit the ex-student of the foyer on an ad hoc basis when required.

While I was at the foyer they received some good news from a local charity who they have formed an alliance with. Crepes For Change are a social enterprise set up by a young Melbournian who wants to help tackle youth homelessness using the profits from his Crepe truck, staffed by a team of volunteers. They had just agreed a deal worth \$20,000AUS to support Broadmeadows students in their first year post foyer. The fund would share the cost of the rent over this first year, gradually decreasing as the months went on.



A group of young entrepreneurs, from Melbourne, in a meeting at Broadmeadows Foyer.

In the Post Foyer Transition aspect of the Launch Housing Foyer programme, I would say it was clear that it has not yet matured as much as the British model. The foyers I visited were only around three years old at the most, and still had some of their original cohort of students living with them. Although the process they have in place is sound, it may start to need more rigour applied as more and more students leave the foyer and require the post foyer support.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude a wide ranging report is to bring it back to the original aims. I suppose that initially I had thought there may be a single solution around the issue of youth homelessness, and that this would be found in one of the two contrasting models I travelled to examine. As it turned out the main message that kept coming through with each of the fabulous and successful services I spent time with was that they were only successful as one of a range of options.

From speaking to the founders of housing first, both in the US and back in Britain, the range of options message is one that is key for any government looking to address its homeless problems, both for young people and older people. You could say that in both cases, the foyer model and housing first are golden ticket solutions, closed shops for those who can access them. This is because they are intended as specific solutions to particular groups, foyers are intended to provide a base for young people who are ready to learn how to get themselves to the next stage of their lives. Housing first was designed for people who have been on the streets or within the homeless cycle for an extended period of time, who other services have maybe given up on, and who would like the choice to live in their own tenancy with the option of support. These two options don't describe the entire cohort of young homeless people, or homeless people of all ages.

What I did find was that in larger cities there tends to be a full range of options on offer. The largest place I visited was New York City, and as the last place on my first leg, certainly a lot of the questions that had been coming back to me time and again in the smaller cities seemed to be answered. There were Housing First tenancies, tenancies with abstinence based programmes, group and single tenancies, a young people's foyer, work being done for a specifically LGBTQ foyer, LGBTQ housing for older people, faith and non-faith sector services, the list could go on. There are enough services and enough tenancies available to provide the range of options, and it seemed to work. My question following the experience is - can this range of options available in New York be expanded or shrunk down to fit any city, town or community?

Another question I was left with was around the portability of each programme. I was surprised at how much greener the grass was on the other side in each place I visited. I had selected locations because they are variously seen as the most innovative in different areas. Despite this, a lot of people I spoke to saw Britain as leading the way, with young people's homelessness, with universal health and housing benefit. These things made me realise that the UK is more advanced than a lot of places currently, and things that are seen as being very innovative to places in the USA for example, are innovative only compared to the rudimentary practice that existed there previously. There are some questions following this report about how portable certain things are, such as housing being paid for by investors in New York for residents of Chelsea Foyer, meaning the rent that the residents pay is actually put into savings for them when they move on. This would not be easy to get around with rules around housing benefit. In general, although no model is entirely

portable, there are a lot of aspects of each which could be built successfully into a model by any local government, support provider or landlord in Britain. The method of embedding learning in Australia, the diversity and multi-disciplinary expertise of the teams in Broadmeadows in Melbourne and Cota in Toronto, embracing different style of coaching within a single youth offer, careful thought about physical space and length of tenancies, realising that the impact of these things is huge.

Financially I was left with some questions that go along with the portability aspect. Both foyers and housing first are seen as 'expensive' models in the UK. However, service managers and chief executives of housing first models told me that housing first was attractive because it was cheaper. Foyers are seen as expensive because they involve the large capital investment of a building. In Canada I was told by Stephen Gaetz, in charge of housing first but a big fan of the foyer model, that once you have the building it was not a more expensive model, and because it is a preventative service for young people it will save primary and emergency services a lot of money in the long run. Housing First UK have this info about the costs of operating; assuming that someone using a Housing First service would otherwise be accommodated in high intensity supported housing, potential annual savings ranged between £4,794 and £3,048 per person in support costs. However there has been some caution drawn in terms of the comparing Housing First to linear or continuum models. Whilst studies suggest that Housing First is more effective than existing models this could be explained by underfunding and limited capacity of linear models to achieve what they set out to do.

I aim to embed the learning from this project in several ways. I would like to carry on working with foyers threatened with closure or drastic change by local authorities. It's important to note that foyers are seen as innovative in the very areas that local governments in the UK are looking for inspiration, such as Canada. With the work the Foyer Federation are doing to update their offer in the UK, and the results I have seen with a fully realised updated offer in Australia, I know it can be a model that can continue to inspire worldwide, as long as it can get through the challenges from government over the next 5 years. I will work with foyers, local authorities, housing associations, support providers looking to upgrade their foyer offer.

On the housing first side, I aim to work with my employers to explore the benefits to them of being part of housing first pilots in the areas they operate in. Wigan and Liverpool are currently examining the feasibility of such programmes. I would also like to work to introduce the UK's first housing first pilot for youth with any authority that was willing to be the innovators in this area. I am certain after working with providers in Canada and Australia, that it is possible for a youth housing first model to operate, and for the diverse team supporting them to be foyer based.

# LIST OF RECCOMENDATIONS

For housing providers, support providers, governments and stakeholders thinking about developing or redeveloping services for homeless people.

## Conditionality

- The decision around conditionality of support will be the biggest shaper of the service.
- Services which insist on engagement may improve outcomes for some people. It is predicated on your willingness to end tenancies if people do not engage.
- The success of housing first is largely due to a mind-set shift in this area. Staff will need to manage their expectations about what success looks like.

## Staffing

- Varied teams produce the best outcomes.
- The future of support and reducing homelessness lies in focussing on a person's entire life and not their housing situation.
- The most successful foyer and housing first teams allow the support staff to focus entirely on support, the housing aspect should be dealt with elsewhere and not linked in people's minds.

## Money

- Link in with local government's commissioners and assess the appetite for either a foyer or housing first programme. They may have a group of people who they are struggling to find a solution for.
- Access material from Homeless Link UK around housing first, and the Foyer Federation regarding foyers.
- Dispersed support such as housing first is less expensive than building foyers, however there may be empty buildings which could be converted.

## Length of stay

- Ideally services should be outcome focussed and not time focussed.
- Commissioning bodies and funders like time limits! If this is not avoidable, all efforts should be made to separate the time element from the support.
- Linking length of stay to support is not constructive as it leads to housing being on the agenda with support staff again.

## Data

- The UK is a world leader at collecting data through services such as St Andrews.
- Many local authorities are no longer requesting this data however.
- Local knowledge and data could have a mutually beneficial relationship, this would need focussed multi agency attention at the start of any project, and throughout.

## Support Style

- Distinct choices available, and usually linked to whether the support is conditional to the tenancy or not.
- The best services are able to use a combination of coaching, mentoring and non-judgemental approaches, depending on what suits each person and situation.
- Even if the tenancy is linked to the support, efforts should be made to avoid this being a regular conversation – ‘if you don’t do this then this will happen’. If these conversations are happening a lot then a new approach should be considered.
- There are many different options out there, keep trying!

## Choice

- Both housing and support work best for people when they feel a sense of ownership.
- Ensure that there is a consultative element to your application process, your support offer, and any tenant’s meetings or forums.
- Specifically when choosing locations of housing, allowing a person to live in an area or building they have stated they do not want to is a recipe for failure.

## Building

- Build your housing or drop in centres using optimistic designs.
- Open spaces, shared spaces, no glass panels, no shutters.
- If you would like staff to foster trusting relationships with people, and you would like the people you're supporting to feel welcomed and trusted, the building layouts you choose will show them that every day.
- Safety and security do not have to mean preventing freedom of movement, and it is still possible to have lockable secure areas in such spaces.

## The Long Term

- Breaking out of a timed mind-set is again vital. If you are setting up a dispersed housing first model, staff expectations need to be managed around the long term nature of the arrangement.
- In a foyer style model, you must strive to get as much continuity as possible for as long as possible. People, and young people especially benefit from support that follows them through various housing stages, as a parent would. New place to live shouldn't equal new support network.

## Local Knowledge

- There is a clear link between the most successful services and their multi agency approach.
- Services which work in silos provide limited opportunities for people and tend to have less longevity.
- Access local street outreach, college and benefits agencies, health services with people on the ground. You will all have the same customers, working together will make your lives easier and your work better.

## Series of Options

- Every city, town, village in the world will have a different make up of people with opportunities and challenges.

- It may not be possible to have a tailor made option for each group in terms of designated projects or buildings for each, but with creative use of housing and support options it can be possible for it to feel like that for the people being supported.

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