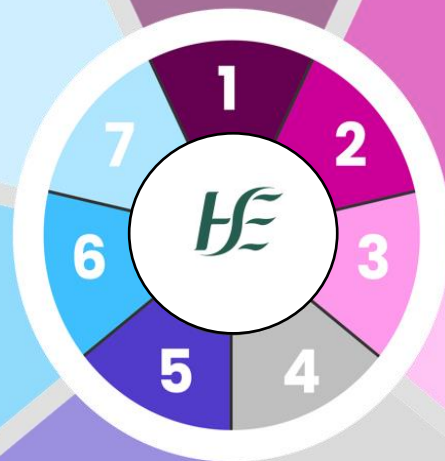


# A guide to Housing First for mental health professionals

This briefing is an introduction to Housing First for mental health professionals, including CPNs, Mental Health teams, GPs, psychologists, counsellors, psychiatrists and those who work in hospital and community-based services. For local information, please contact the Housing First service in your area (see below).



## 1. What Housing First is

Unconditional access to permanent housing with wraparound health supports. Housing First adheres to seven key [principles](#), [watch video here to learn more](#).

Housing First is housing those with histories of long term homelessness and complex health needs, including mental health.

## 2. Context

Housing First residents have very high levels of anxiety and depression and almost two-thirds (65%) reported having at least one significant mental health problem. [The most frequently reported were psychotic disorders and unipolar depression](#).

Housing First is successfully housing individuals with complex health needs who have spent significant portions of their lives homeless on society's margins.

## 3. Who it is for

People facing multiple exclusion and disadvantage who experience a combination of issues. For many, their current circumstances are shaped by long-term experience of poverty, deprivation, trauma and neglect.

These structural inequalities intersect in different ways, manifesting in a combination of experiences including homelessness, substance use and mental ill health.

## 4. Housing First and your role

Mental health teams have a vital role in supporting Housing First residents at different points in their journey. Key activities may include:

- Facilitating a referral for a mental health assessment and taking a flexible approach to the assessment and appointments
- Supporting residents to access counselling and medication, taking into account [dual diagnosis](#) and working alongside your local Drug and Alcohol service
- Working closely with the Housing First team, sharing information and attending multi-agency meetings
- Providing MH outreach

## 5. Your local Housing First Service

TO BE COMPLETED BY HOUSING FIRST SERVICE

Name of service: \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Referral information (if relevant): \_\_\_\_\_

Any other information: \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Next steps

Housing First can support the mental health sector.

- Talk to colleagues about Housing First
- Look at Housing First resources
- Connect with your local Housing First team
- Build partnerships and joint working protocols with Housing First teams

## 6. Supporting the approaches

Housing First uses three key approaches:

1. Trauma informed care (access training on HSELand ["Becoming Trauma Aware – An Introduction to Psychological Trauma"](#))
2. [Strengths based practice](#)
3. [Harm reduction](#)

You can read the above resources and seek training to ensure consistency in support.