

London's Housing First Homeless Prevention System Approach

Homelessness begins in a home, in a neighbourhood, in our communities. The lasting or permanent solution to preventing and ending homelessness is housing with support. It has been the historical and often current practice, that individuals and families experiencing homelessness were expected to address the issues that led to their homelessness, such as addiction, trauma and mental illness, before they were housed.

The priority of a Housing First approach is to move individuals and families experiencing homelessness quickly into housing with support and then begin to work on the issues that contributed to their homelessness from the stability and safety of their own home.

Principles of Housing First

- Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements - This involves working with individuals and families to locate and secure permanent housing as rapidly as possible and assist them with moving in.
- Choice and self-determination – Individuals and families are provided choice in terms of housing options as well as the services they wish to access. Housing choice can be strengthened by offering flexible, permanent housing allowances as an investment in housing stability.
- Individual and family focused supports are provided in the home - The focus is on housing stability. From the security, stability and well being of home individuals and families can begin to address the reasons that led to their experience of homelessness.
- Acceptance of any services, including treatment, or sobriety, is not a requirement for accessing or maintaining housing.
- Harm reduction – Individuals are not required to maintain a level of sobriety to access housing or support services.
- Community integration – Using services and encouraging relationships that promote community belonging in the neighbourhood where individuals and families reside.

Key Messages

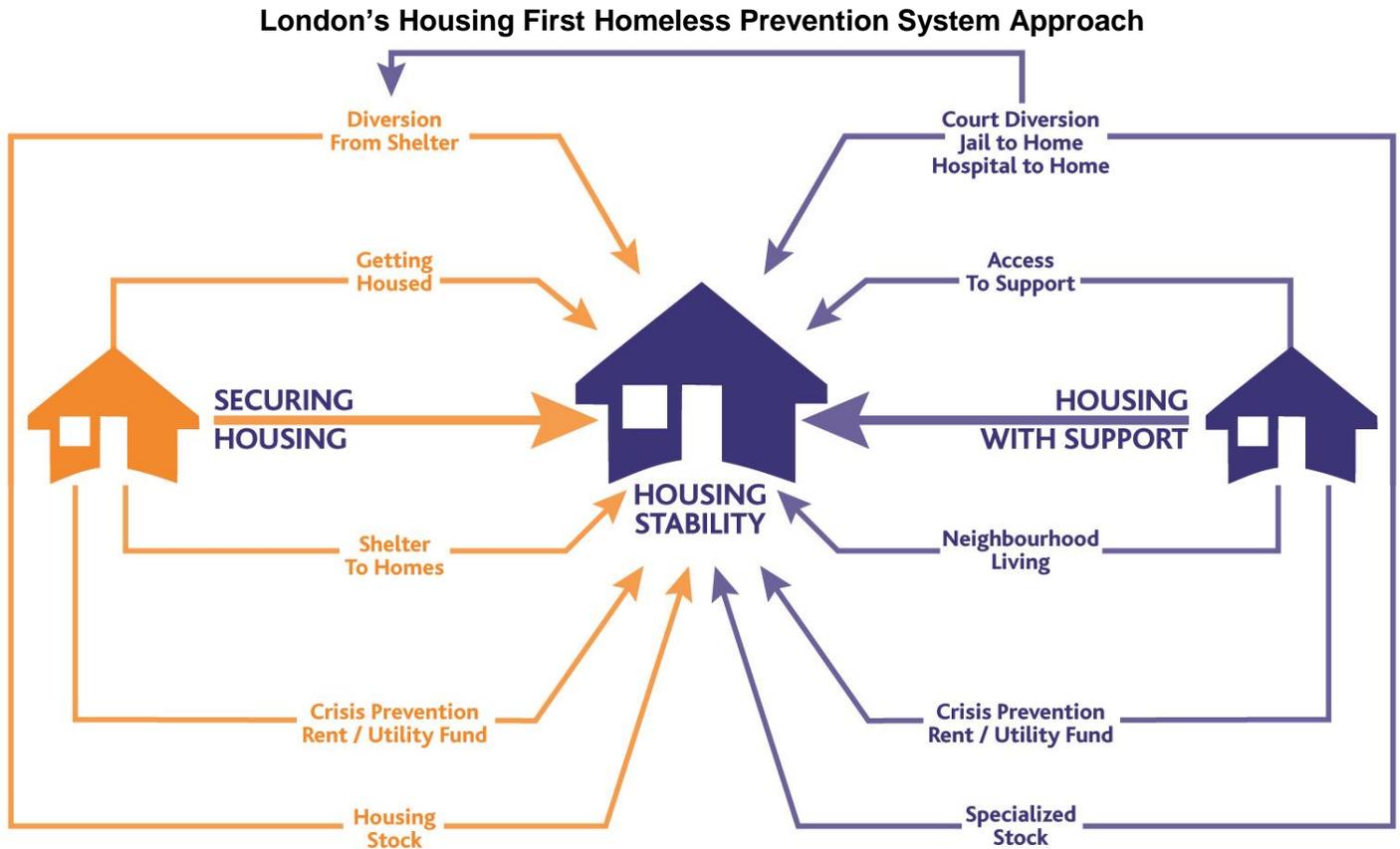
- Housing First has been recognized as an important philosophy and approach towards solving homelessness by the City of London, Province of Ontario and Government of Canada.
- Housing First has been proven to: increase housing stability; improve quality of life, and improve health and addiction outcomes; reduce involvement with police and the justice system; reduce costs associated with the justice system and health expenditures; and reduce hospitalization and emergency visits.

Examples of Housing First Program Activities

- Apply or use acuity assessment tools to support priority access to service and integrated case management.
- Securing permanent, attainable housing by working with landlords.
- Providing frequent (including multiple visits per day) in-home support services to anchor individuals and families into their housing.
- Building and maintaining relationships with landlords through monthly contact and ensuring rent is paid on time.
- Managing permanent, flexible housing allowances as an investment in housing stability.'

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- Assisting with money management/financial literacy including helping access solutions for rental/utility arrears or debt.
- Identifying and accessing neighbourhood activities and services to support community integration.



Sources

City of London Homeless Prevention Team – Homeless Prevention System Three Year Implementation Plan - <http://www.london.ca/residents/neighbourhoods/Pages/Homeless-Prevention-System.aspx>

Government of Canada Homelessness Partnering Strategy - http://www.edsc.gc.ca/eng/communities/homelessness/housing_first/index.shtml

Homeless Hub – Housing First Toolkit - <http://www.homelesshub.ca/housingfirstcanada>

Mental Health Commission of Canada - <http://www.housingfirsttoolkit.ca/overview#keymessages>

Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness - <http://www.caeh.ca/a-plan-not-a-dream/housing-first/>