

Members' Library Service Request Form

Date of Document	26/05/21
Originator	Rebecca Pringle
Originator's Ref (if any)	
Document Title	Housing First for Women subjected to Domestic Abuse

Please indicate if access to the document is to be "unrestricted" or "restricted", with regard to the terms of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

Unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Restricted	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	-------------------------------------	------------	--------------------------

If the document is "restricted", please state on what grounds (click on grey area for drop-down menu):

For Publication

Additional information:

Authorised By	Wendy Mcguire
Designation	Head of Housing
Date	26/05/2021

For Office Use Only:	
Library Reference	58/21
Date Received	26/05/21
Bulletin	May21

REPORT TO: Members' Library Service

MEETING DATE: May 2021

BY: Executive Director of Place

SUBJECT: Housing First for Women

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To note the award of funding from the [Scottish Government's Third Sector Homelessness Fund](#) to Women's Aid East and Midlothian for the provision of Housing First for Women in East Lothian.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the award by the Scottish Government of £149,208 towards the implementation of Housing First for Women in East Lothian in partnership with East Lothian Council and East Lothian Housing Association.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Third Sector Homelessness Fund is a £3 million fund from the Scottish Government to support third sector organisations to innovate and transform the services they provide to people in line with the Scottish Government's updated Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan and Local Authorities Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs).
- 3.2 The funding has been allocated to Women's Aid East and Midlothian in partnership with East Lothian Council and East Lothian Housing Association. The fund is being delivered by the Corra Foundation and aims to;
- Support the programme of systematic transformational change set out in the Ending Homelessness Together High-Level Action Plan.
 - Support third sector organisations as they adapt to the transition that local authorities are undertaking to a rapid rehousing model.
 - Build cross sector collaboration between third sector organisations, local authorities and other statutory services.

- Trial different and innovative approaches to service delivery.
 - Ensure that programmes are well evaluated and that learning from successful approaches is shared amongst stakeholders in the homelessness sector.
- 3.3 Housing First provides ordinary, settled housing as the first response for people whose homelessness and housing insecurity is made harder by experiences such as trauma, addictions and mental health problems. There is a national program to 'scale up' the provision of Housing First in Scotland, with 483 individuals re-housed since 2019, no evictions to date and 90% tenancy sustainment. Housing First is backed by world-leading experts in the field of homelessness, human rights and housing. In the lead up to the Scottish Elections, Housing First earned cross-party support and is central to the Scottish Government's recent publication of [Housing to 2040](#) – a 20 year strategy which seeks to transform the housing and homelessness sector.
- 3.4 Domestic Abuse is a major cause of homelessness in East Lothian, and currently the second highest reason for presentations. WAEAML support women through refuge and outreach support in East Lothian. During April 2019-March 2020, 31 individuals were experiencing drug use, 39 problematic alcohol use and 205 complex mental ill health. During the same period, 97 families were unable to access refuge accommodation; 10% due to the presence of complex substance misuse and a further 3% due to complex mental ill health.
- 3.5 Housing First for Women will provide intensive support to women who have experienced domestic abuse and have mental ill health and/or use substances. WAEAML will recruit two specialist Support Workers to share a caseload of up to 12 women. They will be supported by the current Service Manager for East Lothian.
- 3.6 East Lothian Housing Association (ELHA) will provide four permanent tenancies for those receiving support, and will continue to manage these properties while WAEML provide support. These tenancies will be used for women who are experiencing homelessness due to domestic abuse and mental ill health/substance use.
- 3.7 The same intensive support will also be provided as a prevention measure to a further eight women who are recognised as being at risk of losing their tenancy and experiencing homelessness. These tenancies will either be existing East Lothian Council or East Lothian Housing Association tenancies.
- 3.8 The project will adopt the 7 core principles of Housing First and will also adopt additional principles to reflect the specific needs of women;
- 3.9 Flexible Financial Assistance through an 'Enable Fund'. This fund of up to £500 per household will allow women to receive assistance to aid them to be fully integrated back into the community. This reflects the fact that

women who have experienced domestic abuse are often left with financial debt or repair costs as a result of the abuse they have suffered.

- 3.10 Support Officers will promote empowerment and control through regular safety planning, through adopting a key principle of the Safe and Together Model, regardless if children are present in the household. This model states that is the perpetrators behaviour, not the relationship or living arrangements, which is the source of domestic abuse.
- 3.11 Gender Based Approach – Housing First for men often work on the basis that men will have experienced intense long term isolation and an absence from relationships. In contrast, a gendered approach recognises that women will have experienced negative and fractured relationships with former partners who were abusive as well as broken or weak relationships with children who no longer live with them.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The project reflects the [Scottish Government's Prevention Review Group's Recommendations](#) that “social landlords should put in place protocols to address housing issues relating to domestic abuse”.
- 4.2 Housing First for Women reflects a commitment in East Lothian Council Local Housing Strategy 2018-23 to implement Housing First, and review housing procedures to ensure more efficient and effective response to women experiencing domestic violence; including women who have co-occurring mental ill health and substance use, and those with accompanying children. It forms part of the wider work with Women's Aid to prepare an Equally Safe Housing Policy. It also reflects East Lothian's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan priority outcomes;
 - 4.2.1 Homelessness is prevented as far as possible;
 - 4.2.2 Access to support is improved for homeless people with complex needs, where appropriate; and
 - 4.2.3 Supply of new permanent/settled housing is increased across all tenures.
- 4.3 The Policy reflects the East Lothian Plan 2017-27 which focuses on “reducing inequalities...and prevention and early intervention”.
- 4.4 Housing First for Women is supported by East and Mid Lothian's Public Protection Improvement Plan which reports to the East Lothian and Mid Lothian's Public Protection Committee (EMPPC). The EMPPC is the key strategic group dealing with public protection matters across East Lothian and Midlothian and includes representatives from key partners.
- 4.5 Children's Services will be a core member of the project team, supporting the project to implement a Safe and Together approach. East Lothian Council's Children's Services Team began to implement the Safe and Together approach in September 2017. This is in relation to social work

practice where domestic abuse is an identified risk. The Safe and Together model takes a child centered, perpetrator focused and survivor strengths based approach to assessment and intervention. It emphasises the importance of looking beyond the gender based expectations of parenting and holding fathers who abuse to the same high standards of parenting as the non-abusing parent, usually mothers. This promotes the position that the perpetrators' behaviour, not the relationship or living arrangements, is the source of the domestic abuse. It is also important to recognise that those without children's situation is not automatically resolved by ending the relationship or a change in the living arrangements. Children's Services continue to embed the Safe and Together model within their service delivery, changing culture and processes.

5 INTERGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 Attached

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial - In a context of reduced public spending and working collaboratively, the commitment to this project is anticipated to create significant savings, providing 8 current households with intensive support will prevent evictions, presentations with the Housing Options Teams and potential void properties.

6.2 Personnel - Staff time will be required to develop and monitor the service.

6.3 Other - none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Integrated Impact Assessment

AUTHOR'S NAME	Wendy McGuire
DESIGNATION	Head of Housing
CONTACT INFO	Rebecca Pringle Senior Strategy Officer – Housing Strategy Contact ext. 7913 / rpringle@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	01/06/2021

Supporting Good Decisions

Promoting Equality & Human Rights, Reducing Inequality and Protecting the Environment

Integrated Impact Assessment Form

Integrated Impact Assessment Form

Promoting Equality, Human Rights and Sustainability

Title of Policy/ Proposal	Housing First for Women
Timescale for Implementation	May –June 2020
IIA Completion Date	14/04/2021
Completed by	Rebecca Pringle
Lead officer	Rebecca Pringle

Section 1: Screening

1.1 Briefly describe the policy/proposal/activity you are assessing.

Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the policy/ proposal/ activity being developed or reviewed (e.g. objectives, aims) including the context within which it will operate.

Housing First for Women is a new service set up as a joint partnership between Women’s Aid East and Midlothian (WAEAML), East Lothian Council and East Lothian Housing Association (ELHA).

WAEAML will provide intensive wrap-around support to 12 female households who have been subjected to domestic abuse and have mental ill health and/or use substances. Of the 12 women, 4 will be currently homeless – and ELHA will provide fully furnished tenancies and housing management. Intensive Housing First support will be provided to an additional 8 households who are currently at risk of losing their tenancy, these will be allocated on a needs/risk basis and will either be East Lothian Council or ELHA tenancies.

This project will enable WAEML, ELC and ELHA to:

- build upon partnerships with local authority projects and specialist services to ensure good interagency arrangements are established to meet the specific needs of survivors experiencing domestic abuse with co-occurring substance misuse or mental ill health;
- secure additional tenancies and increase our ability to support women into safe accommodation;
- increase our capacity to support women to sustain tenancies; and
- better meet the support needs of women and therefore secure greater engagement with women with complex needs.

Through close partnership working, there will be a number of outcomes met for East Lothian Council and ELHA, and while these at first may be contained to the subject of domestic abuse, as learning and development continues it will provide a strong platform to increase understanding and awareness of areas which will benefit all tenants e.g. trauma informed approach, prevention, assessing and managing risk, and partnership working. More specific outcomes will cover;

- Housing staff report an increased understanding of the systematic disadvantages faced by women and children subjected to domestic abuse
- Where it is appropriate, women are supported to avoid homelessness, with a corresponding reduction in homelessness presentations.
- Learning from the project is used to develop further preventative solutions for other particular needs groups including, care experienced young people and people leaving prison.
- A trauma-informed approach is embedded within all interactions, policies and protocols with women and children who have experienced domestic abuse.

The project will adopt the 7 core principles of Housing First and will also adopt additional principles to reflect the specific needs of women;

- Flexible Financial Assistance through an 'Enable Fund'. This fund of up to £500 per household will allow women to receive assistance to aid them to be fully integrated back into the community. This reflects the fact that women who have experienced domestic abuse are often left with financial debt or repair costs as a result of the abuse they have suffered.
- Support Officers will promote empowerment and control through regular safety planning, through adopting a key principle of the Safe and Together Model, regardless if children are present in the household. This model states that is the perpetrators behaviour, not the relationship or living arrangements, which is the source of domestic abuse.
- Gender Based Approach – Housing First for men often work on the basis that men will have experienced intense long term isolation and an absence from relationships. In contrast, a gendered approach recognises that women will have experienced negative and fractured relationships with former partners who were abusive as well as broken or weak relationships with children who no longer live with them.

1.2 What will change as a result of this policy?

Domestic Abuse is a major cause of homelessness in East Lothian, the second highest reason for presentations. Of women supported by WAEML April 2019-March 2020, the following numbers also noted co-occurring drug use (31), problematic alcohol use (39), and complex mental ill health (205). During the same period, 97 families were unable to access accommodation; 10% due to the presence of complex substance misuse and a further 3% due to complex mental health.

The current refuge model in East Lothian only allows for one woman with complex needs. It is therefore likely that that workers do not record women on a waiting list where they present with complex substance misuse or mental ill health as they know they will not be able to access the service. Of the families able to access refuge, 7 evictions and 5 warnings were issued in relation to problematic substance misuse. With a Housing First model these families would be prevented from further trauma through eviction.

In 2019, as a response to CIH campaign 'Make A Stand', ELC carried out a Strategic Needs Assessment on the housing experiences of women and children experiencing domestic abuse. In January 2020 ELC made a 24 month commitment to re-design key policies and practises across Council services. WAEML have been a key partner in facilitating the move towards East Lothian Council's Equally Safe Housing Policy, which covers all tenures of housing. The following changes to the provision of housing have been identified as a key priority;

- Deliver rapid access, permanent housing for women and children with complex needs, with intensive and flexible support.
- Promote trauma-informed responses through-out the County for women and children experiencing domestic abuse.
- Prevent women and children experiencing domestic abuse from homelessness by implementing Housing First as a preventative approach

1.3 Deciding if a full Impact Assessment is needed.

Please answer the following questions:

	Yes	No
1. The policy/ proposal has consequences for or affects people e.g. how they can access a service?	x	
2. The policy/proposal has potential to make a significant impact on equality?	x	
3. The policy/proposal is likely to have a significant environmental impact?		x
4. The policy/ proposal has implications for the storage/ collection of personal data?	x	

- If you have answered yes to questions 1 and 2 above, please proceed to complete the Integrated Impact Assessment. If you have answered No then an IIA does not need to be completed. Please keep a copy of the screening paperwork.
- If you have identified that your project will have a significant environmental impact, please proceed to complete the Integrated Impact Assessment. You will also need to consider whether you need to complete a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Please contact

- If you have answered yes to question 4, please seek further advice from the Data Protection Officer.
-

Section 2: Integrated Impact Assessment

2.1 Have those who are affected by the policy had the opportunity to comment on new proposals?

WAEML has an active Survivors Board (Listen Up) who create an action plan (linked to WAEML's strategic plan) to ensure that women with lived experience of domestic abuse (DA) are represented in local and national policy and practice development. During 2019 the group held 3 focus groups specifically reviewing "Housing Needs of DA Survivors". During these focus groups it was identified that:

- The needs of DA survivors has to be informed by the realities of lived experience and the way that society and institutions work.
- That living with DA is a violation of human rights that re-occurs when services do not respond appropriately.
- Women are more likely to be single parents or main carers of children and were on low or part-time income – this affects the housing needs.
- Survivors experience significant rates of drug use, mental health conditions. Many of these women described barriers to accessing suitable accommodation due to their co-occurring addiction.

Many women were not presenting themselves as homeless as accommodation did not meet their needs, they chose instead to "sofa surf" with friends/family and therefore they were "hidden homeless". There were also specific local practice issues highlighted in the focus groups around culture, training of frontline staff and procedures to access housing. The work of this group informed the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment undertaken by East Lothian Council. It has helped to shape work with the strategic housing function of East Lothian Council who are making significant policy and practice changes as a result of the evidence gathered.

2.2 What information/data have you used to inform the development of the policy to date?

The information collected is currently informing policy responses and was used to inform the application for funding. There will also be an individual with lived experience on the interview panel for the recruitment of 2 Support Workers for the project.

2.3 What does the evidence/ research suggest about the policy’s actual or likely impact on equality groups and those vulnerable/ or experiencing socio-economic disadvantage?

Evidence	Comment
Which groups are in in particular need of this service?	Women subjected to domestic abuse. Women who have experienced severe trauma as a result of domestic abuse, have mental ill health and/or use substances.
What level of service uptake/ access is there from protected and vulnerable groups?	This service will be for protected and vulnerable groups only.
Can you identify positive outcomes for service users	This is answered in response to question 1.1.
What is the service user experience of those from protected or vulnerable groups?	This is covered in response to question 2.1. The service has not commenced at this date.
What opportunity have those from protected groups had to co-produce or comment on the service/ plans?	This is covered in response to question 2.1

2.4 How does the policy meet the different needs of groups in the community?

<p>Equality Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people, people in the middle years • Children and young people children 	<p>The service will take a trauma informed approach, this means that the service can be adapted to work with the specific client group. We are partnering with the mental health and substance misuse</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women, men and transgender people (includes issues relating to pregnancy and maternity) • Disabled people (includes physical disability, learning disability, sensory impairment, long-term medical conditions, mental health problems) • Minority ethnic people (includes Gypsy/Travellers, migrant workers) • Refugees and asylum seekers • People with different religions or beliefs (includes people with no religion or belief) • Lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people • People who are unmarried, married or in a civil partnership 	<p>teams in ELH&SCP to ensure that those with mental ill health and substance misuse are adequately supported.</p> <p>The project supports anyone who identifies as female – including trans women.</p> <p>The project will use the principles of Safe and Together to work with women who have children, whether they are in their care or not. Children’s Services will be a key member of the project team, and all staff will be required to attend Adult and Child Protection Courses.</p>
<p>Those vulnerable to falling into poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed • People on benefits • Lone Parents • Care experienced children and young people • Carers (including young carers) • Homeless people • Those involved in the community justice system • People with low literacy/numeracy 	<p>Intensive support will be provided to all women in the project, allowing them to feel supported to secure benefits, seek employment or volunteering and fully integrate back into the community. An Enable Fund on £500 per household will allow each women to use funds to develop hobbies, attend interviews and/or provide for themselves a decent standard of living.</p> <p>The project will prevent up to 8 households from becoming homeless – and provide permanent, fully furnished tenancies for 4 women who are experiencing homelessness.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families with 3 or more children • Those with a child/ children under 1 	
<p>Geographical communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural/ semi rural communities • Urban Communities • Coastal communities • Those living in the most deprived communities (bottom 20% SIMD areas) 	<p>Intensive support will be allocated on a risk/needs basis – regardless of where they live in the County.</p>
<p>Communication Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaelic Language Speakers • BSL users • English as a Second Language • Other e.g. DeafBlind, Plain English, Large Print 	<p>WAEAML have staff who are proficient in other languages, and will meet all communication needs of individuals in the service.</p>

2.5 Are there any other factors which will affect the way this policy impacts on the community or staff groups?

no

2.6 Is any part of this policy/ service to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors?

If yes, how have you included equality and human rights considerations into the contract?

This service is a joint service between WAEAML, East Lothian Council and ELHA. WAEAML hold the funds for the development of intensive support. ELC and ELHA will continue to manage the tenancies as they normally would. A specific Housing First Tenancy

Management Guide will be produced, with equality and human rights as the central component.

2.7 Have you considered how you will communicate information about this policy or policy change to those affected e.g. to those with hearing loss, speech impairment or English as a second language?

Answered in response to 2.4.

2.8 Please consider how your policy will impact on each of the following?

Equality and Human rights

- Promotes / advances equality of opportunity e.g. improves access to and quality of services
- Promotes good relations within and between people with protected characteristics and tackles harassment
- Promotes participation, is inclusive and gives people control over decisions which affect them
- Preserves dignity and self-respect of individuals (does not lead to degrading treatment or stigma)
- Builds support networks, resilience, community capacity

Comments:

Housing First for Women has the above principles at its core – see response to questions above.

Reduces Poverty

- Maximises income and/or reduces income inequality
- Helps young people into positive destinations
- Aids those returning to and those progressing within the labour market
- Improves employability skills, including literacy and numeracy
- Reduces the costs of taking part in activities and opportunities
- Reduces the cost of living

Comments :

Housing First for Women has the above principles at its core – see response to questions above.

Protecting the Environment and Improving Sustainability:

- Reduces the need to travel or increases access to sustainable forms of transport
- Minimises waste / encourages resource efficiency / contributes to the circular economy
- Ensures goods / services are from ethical, responsible and sustainable sources
- Improves energy efficiency / uses low carbon energy sources
- Protects and/or enhances natural environments / habitats / biodiversity
- Promotes the transition to a low carbon economy
- Prepares and/or adapts communities for climate change impacts

Comments:

What, if any changes will be made to the proposal/ policy as a result of the assessment?

Changes to be made	Expected outcome of the change	Resources Required	Timeline	Responsible person

For consideration of the Head of Service

Can you identify any cumulative impacts on equality groups or vulnerable people arising from this policy, when considered alongside other changes across other services?

Sign off by Head of Service

Name

Date