

Housing First

Housing First is a proven approach that connects people experiencing homelessness with long-term housing **as quickly as possible and without preconditions.**

Housing First is guided by the belief that a safe home is a human right and a basic need that must be met before attending to personal issues. The model is based on evidence that people, even with long histories of homelessness, mental illness or addictions, can achieve housing stability in long-term housing if provided with the right supports.

Core Elements of Housing First



Assertive outreach to engage and offer housing to people with a mental illness who are homeless.



Immediate access to permanent housing. If, due to housing stock, the initial housing placement is short-term, the program commits to housing the person in long-term housing as fast as possible.



A harm minimisation approach that supports people to reduce the risks and harmful effects associated with substance use and addictive behaviours but does not require abstinence to access or keep housing.



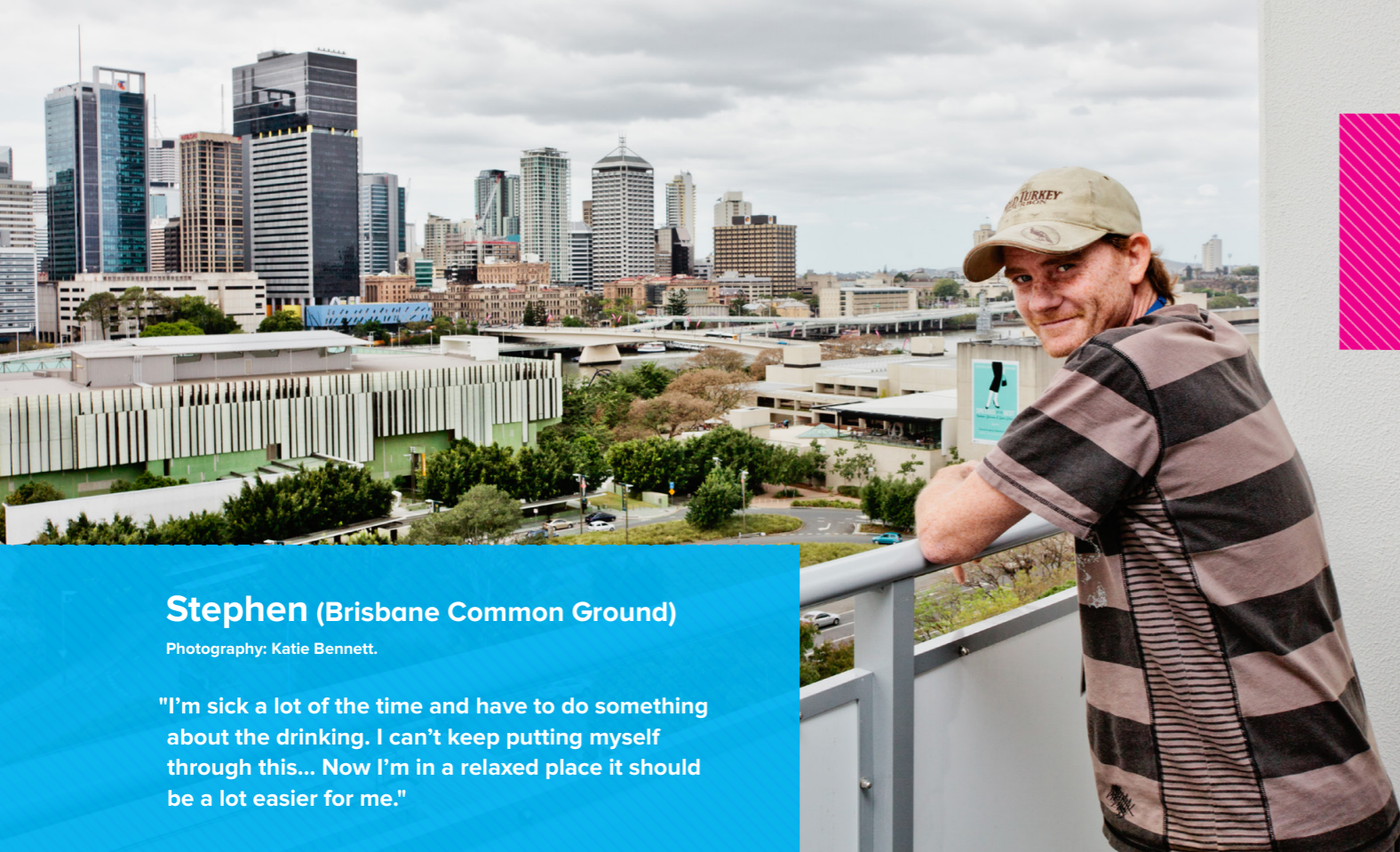
Individualised, recovery-oriented supports. Supports are readily available, however Housing First programs do not require participation to remain in housing. Support services are proactive in their efforts to engage tenants.



Social and community inclusion is an intentional part of Housing First program design. Housing is non-stigmatising, and support services provide opportunities for engagement in education, hobbies, culture and employment.



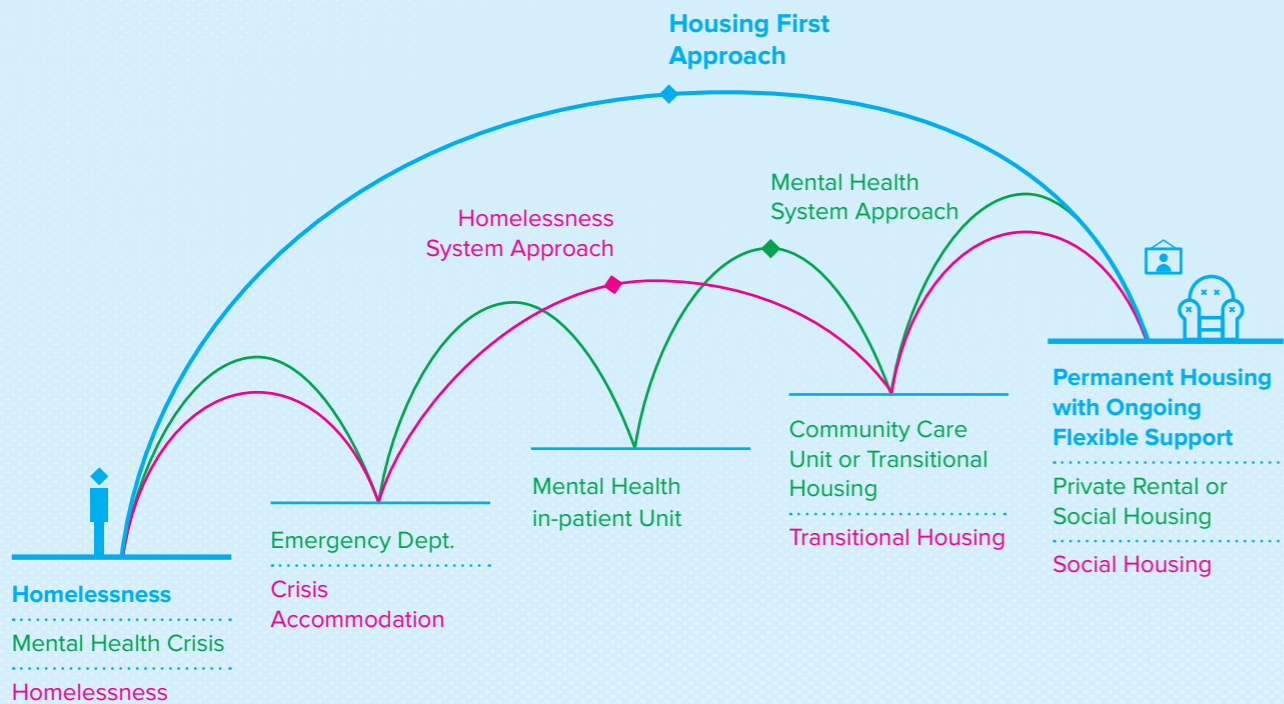
Breaking the cycle of homelessness. As well as focusing on tenancy sustainment, Housing First programs also ensure there is no exit to homelessness and that people who leave for short periods (e.g. due to hospitalisation) can return.



Stephen (Brisbane Common Ground)

Photography: Katie Bennett.

"I'm sick a lot of the time and have to do something about the drinking. I can't keep putting myself through this... Now I'm in a relaxed place it should be a lot easier for me."



The Housing First Difference

A housing first approach is different to traditional 'treatment first' approaches, where people progress through a series of programs with expectations that they have addressed any substance use, living and social skills, or mental health issues before accessing long-term housing.

Supportive Housing

Supportive housing involves the intentional and long-term connection of secure and affordable housing with support. It is an innovative and proven model which follows the Housing First approach. Supportive housing is effective for people who need safe housing that is closely integrated with support services—typically, people who have been chronically homeless and/or people with complex or high support needs, including people with mental illness.



Scattered Site

Units or houses spread through a neighbourhood or community that are designated for specific populations, with support provided through home visits. Offers people independence in their housing with support to stay housed, and connection to communities of choice.



Single Site

Housing developments in which units or the whole building are designated as supportive housing and support providers are based on-site. Offers people a community within their housing, close access to support and often increased safety due to on-site security personnel or security systems.

Pathways to Housing

One of the first and most researched models of supportive housing is Pathways to Housing. Operating since the 1990s in New York, and now implemented around the world, the model brings housing together with a recovery-oriented Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team for people who have experienced both mental illness and homelessness. ACT teams are multidisciplinary and are on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Pathways to Housing has achieved excellent housing retention outcomes. In a longitudinal study¹, 80% of the participants assigned to Pathways to Housing were in stable housing after 12 months, compared with 24% in the alternative continuum of care approach.

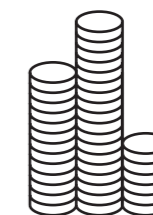
Brisbane Common Ground

Brisbane Common Ground is Queensland's first single site supportive housing initiative. The model is based on the successful New York City Common Ground with a mix of low income and formerly homeless tenants and closely coordinated support, tenancy management and security services. Although Brisbane Common Ground targets people who are chronically homeless, the majority of tenants also have a diagnosable mental illness.

An evaluation of the effectiveness of Brisbane Common Ground found that it has removed barriers for people with support needs experiencing chronic homelessness to access housing, and fostered the conditions for tenants to sustain housing².



80%
of Pathways to Housing participants in stable housing after 12 months¹



\$13,100

saved per tenant at Brisbane Common Ground²

Comparing service utilisation costs between when a person is homeless and when they are housed with support. Cost saving was calculated at a fixed point in time.

Housing First is Effective

Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI)

The Housing and Support Initiative (New South Wales) and Housing and Support Program (Queensland) are Australian programs implementing Housing First principles. These programs operate as partnerships between Housing, Health and Community organisations, providing long-term social housing with clinical and non-clinical support.

An evaluation of the NSW HASI³ reported:

There were 1000 mental health consumers supported each year, with schizophrenia the most common diagnosis (65%)

More than half of participants had a co-existing condition, such as alcohol or drug dependency, physical health condition or intellectual disability

The initiative saw a reduction in hospital admissions and mental health symptoms

There was an increase in housing stability and improvement in people's ability to participate in:

- community
- education
- employment activities

At Home / Chez Soi

'At Home/Chez Soi' was a four-year project in five cities across Canada that aimed to provide practical, meaningful support to Canadians experiencing homelessness and mental health problems.

The project offered housing with services to more than 1000 Canadians and has been the world's largest trial of Housing First, comparing the outcomes of the participants with a control group who were accessing services as usual in their communities.

At Home / Chez Soi⁴ found that Housing First:

Rapidly ends homelessness, delivering a large and significant impact on housing stability

Is a sound investment, with every \$10 invested resulting in an average savings of \$21.72

Creates shifts from people accessing crisis and institutional services to accessing community-based services, and people with previously unmet needs accessing support services

Delivers clear and immediate improvements to quality of life, including substance use and mental health symptoms

The Housing First Fact Sheet was produced by the Brisbane South PHN Partners in Recovery Consortium (Nov 2016)



1 Tsemberis, S., Gulcur, L. & Nakae, M. (2004). Housing first, consumer choice and harm reduction for homeless individuals with a dual diagnosis. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(4), 651-656.

2 Parsell, C., Petersen, M., Moutou, O., Culhane, D., Lucio, E. & Dick, A. (2016). *Brisbane Common Ground evaluation: Final report*. Brisbane, Australia: Department of Housing and Public Works.

3 Bruce, J., McDermott, S., Ramia, I., Bullen, J., & Fisher, K.R. (2012). Evaluation of the housing and accommodation support initiative (HASI). *Final report for NSW Health and Housing*. NSW Social Policy Research Centre ARTD Consultants. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales.

4 Goering, P., Veldhuizen, S., Watson, A., Adair, C., Kopp, B., Latimer, E., Nelson, G., MacNaughton, E., Streiner, D., & Aubry, T. (2014). *National at home/Chez soi final report*. Calgary, AB: Mental Health Commission of Canada.