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# **Housing solutions to youth homelessness based on a Human Rights Approach**

**Report of the study session organised by  
FEANTSA Youth in Cooperation with the  
European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe**

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# Council of Europe – Study Session Report

## FEANTSA Youth

### *Housing solutions to youth homelessness based on a Human Rights Approach*

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# 1. Introduction to FEANTSA Youth

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## What is FEANTSA Youth?

FEANTSA Youth aims to prevent, reduce and end youth homelessness by advocating for housing rights, developing prevention strategies, raising public awareness, training professionals and building international collaboration between homeless service providers, social services, youth services, cities, ministries and other stakeholders.

Each year the network is expanding its membership, with an emphasis on empowering young professionals to advocate for the needs of young homeless people within their communities.

The network is comprised of over 100 people from more than 30 organisations from 20 European countries, working in a wide variety of fields including social work, youth work, academics, students, law, architecture, public policy (local and national civil services), NGOs and others.

Every person has a right to adequate housing and our mission is to enable access to this right for young people and end youth homelessness.

## FEANTSA Youth Mission & Commitments

In most European countries, young people between 18 and 29 years old represent 20 to 30% of all homeless people. In Denmark, the number of young homeless people has increased by 80% from 2009 to 2013. Among those, 51% had mental health problems, 58% were concerned by problematic drug or alcohol use, and 32% were concerned by both. Being homeless is not just sleeping rough or using a

shelter. It means not being able to access your basic rights for housing, security, private possession, education, employment, health and social protection.

The European Commission, through the Europe 2020 Strategy and its European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, identified homelessness as one of the most severe forms of poverty and deprivation and called for the development of appropriate and integrated responses in the framework of a wider EU social inclusion policy. But a growing number of European and local stakeholders, including FEANTSA and FEANTSA Youth, are asking for coordinated, cross-policy collaboration towards prevention of youth homelessness. This could be instigated at all levels of government, including within the European Commission, national, regional and local governments. Excellent models, like the Canadian A Way Home approach, could serve as inspiration.

In order to achieve this goal, we need to switch the paradigm from emergency response to the prevention of homelessness. We need to react as early as possible. Youth homelessness is distinct from adult homelessness: causes and conditions are different; therefore, responses and solutions must be different too. Since young homeless people often have complex needs and may find themselves in vulnerable positions, the longer they are stuck in homelessness, the more difficult they will find it to escape, the more likely they will be exposed to the risks of experiencing trauma, declining health and addictions, being a victim of exploitation, violence and human rights abuses. Consequently, reducing this worsening problem must be a priority in Europe, and not only by focusing on emergency services but also by putting more efforts into preventing youth from becoming homeless in the first place as well as assisting others to exit homelessness as quickly as possible through housing-led approaches.

FEANTSA Youth is committed to:



Engage in constant dialogue with the European Union institutions and national and regional governments to promote the development and implementation of effective measures to prevent homelessness and fight youth homelessness.

Conducting and disseminating research and data collection to promote better understanding of the nature, extent, causes of, and solutions to youth homelessness.

Promoting and facilitating the exchange of information, experience and good practices between FEANTSA youth members and relevant stakeholders with a view to improve policies and practices addressing homelessness.

Raising public awareness about youth homelessness and the concept of Housing First as a solution.

## FEANTSA Youth Study Sessions with the Council of Europe

The FEANTSA Youth Study Sessions closely align with the priorities of the Council of Europe, particularly under the Enter! Project - Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights and the focus on access to housing as an essential aspect of access to rights.

The focus on youth homelessness is further linked to Recommendation CM/Rec (2016)7, which highlights social exclusion and discrimination of young people including the right to housing, empowering youth and social workers and fostering intersectoral approaches to supporting vulnerable youth.

The Council of Europe's Youth Department has provided FEANTSA Youth with the expertise and

platform to grow over the past four years. Each study session has allowed young professionals from across Europe with the unique opportunity to spend 5 days conducting a "deep dive" into a different dimension of youth homelessness. Using non-formal education, the sessions have not only provided an insight into what is youth homelessness, but has created a respectful and safe space where participants feel comfortable sharing their perspective, which provides for a truly European perspective on this issue.

The network has grown from strength to strength each year. In 2014 the youth network focussed on "Preventing youth homelessness through access to social rights", 2015 focused on advocacy and how to build capacity to advocate for homeless youth and make better policy. The 2016 one was for the first-time part of a Special Project which helped to solidify the youth network, by setting short, medium and long-term goals and setting up working groups to continue the work of the network beyond the study session.

The participants of the youth network have always proven to be dynamic and open to new ideas. Therefore in 2017 we decided to focus on housing led solutions with human rights based approaches, specifically Housing First for Youth (HF4Y). This is an innovative model of service provision, it has been tested and piloted throughout Europe and North America in the context of adult homelessness. We have seen a lot of interest from the sector to learn about how the model can be adapted and tailored for the needs of young people. This study session provided an excellent opportunity to focus on this solution to youth homelessness, with leading experts from Europe and Canada, and feedback from both external experts and participants with experiences of HF4Y and how they managed to shift their organisations' emphasis from traditional services to HF4Y.

## 2. Study Session Outline

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The study session was held over five days. Each day took a particular focus on HF4Y, and over the course of the week participants had the opportunity to learn in more detail the various dimensions of how and why HF4Y works well.

The study session was facilitated by a prep team comprising:

1. Robbie Stakelum (Course Director) – Robbie leads FEANTSA's work on youth homelessness
2. Samara Jones – Samara is a former course director for FEANTSA Youth and is the program director for the Housing First Hub Europe.
3. Lisa O'Brien – Lisa is a former participant of FEANTSA youth study sessions, and from previous sessions, has grounded the service she works in with Focus Ireland in human rights and has moved towards a HF4Y model of service.
4. Marko Tomosevic – Marko is a participant of past FEANTSA Youth Study Sessions and is the Director of Klikaktiv - Centre for Development of Social Policies in Serbia.
5. Melanie Redman – Mel is the executive director of A Way Home Canada, and is the international pioneer of transforming traditional homeless services for youth into HF4Y.
6. Steve Gaetz – Steve is the Chair of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, and is the leading international researcher on HF4Y, who has given invaluable input into several organisations in Europe looking to switch into HF4Y. Steve also recently received the highest civilian honour in Canada, the Order of Canada, for his work on ending youth homelessness.

The first day grounded participants in human rights based approaches. With presentations about how the Council of Europe and the Youth

Department operate, along with team building exercises grounded in human rights law, participants learnt from one another about how human rights affect their daily lives. Over the course of the day, the learning narrowed towards applying human rights in the context of homelessness and housing for vulnerable youth. This also included a session dealing with the youth specific dimensions of homeless.

The second day dealt more specifically on what Housing First is and how to address the needs of vulnerable youth mentioned in day one. This resulted in a "deep-dive" on HF4Y, where the core principles of HF4Y were presented, and participants discussed each principle and how it could be applied in their local contexts. The afternoon session then took the "theoretical" learning of principles from the morning and applied them to real contexts and examples. The session was led by Allison Calder, and external expert, who from previous FEANTSA youth study sessions had developed a human right based youth homeless service in Scotland. Peer learning was an important component of this session as participants from 5 different countries presented how they would implement human rights based approaches to their youth services, in either housing first or housing led services. This session provided plenty of practical examples to participants on how to transform services.

The third day, having understood the needs of vulnerable youth, the principles of HF4Y along with examples of various degrees of implementation of the model, focussed on challenges. In small groups participants were invited to discuss what challenges they felt they faced in bringing about HF4Y. These discussions were based on geographic clusters. Following this discussion, participants then worked in groups, based on their professions, on how they could support the uptake of HF4Y as a social worker, youth worker, advocacy officer, city or government official or researcher.



The fourth day began with a skills workshop. Our second expert, Mike Allen, presented his experiences of advocating for changing a shelter based system towards housing first for youth. His presentation proved useful in providing tips, challenges, messaging tools and other supports for advocating for change. Later in the day participants would be placed into groups to conduct role plays to apply this learning, and role play convincing a city housing official, a wealthy philanthropist, a private landlord and a member of the medical profession, on why they should invest in HF4Y. The afternoon session of the day discussed collective impact. Having learned that different professions can bring a different skillset, our Canadian expert Melanie Redman, presented the collective impact strategy used in Canada to bring different actors from the youth sector, with different objectives,



together to work towards ending youth homelessness.

The fifth and final day of the session, provided participants with the opportunity to 'pitch' HF4Y to a group of 7 health and homeless experts. This was an excellent opportunity for participants to demonstrate their learning from the previous days and develop their communications skills. The participants also had plenty of opportunities to discuss the health needs of vulnerable youth with the health experts and learn more about the important intersection between healthcare and HF4Y. The afternoon sessions further provided opportunities for the participants to reflect on their week in Budapest, their learning and commit to how they want to work towards HF4Y in their local contexts.

### 3. What is Youth Homelessness

#### Youth Needs

Any discussion around youth homelessness and services for young people, necessitates a conversation about what are their specific needs. We know from research and practices that young people's service navigation differs from adults, and if we want to design and implement effective services to not only serve youth homelessness, but to have a real impact in reducing and ultimately ending youth homelessness, we need to think about their youth specific needs. It is not sufficient to take general services for adults, and apply them to young people.

Homeless youth services need to consider the adolescent development, age, experiences and dependency and supports of young people. Youth presenting to services are young and vulnerable, may not have knowledge of their rights or how to access them. They frequently lack a supportive community or family. Most importantly they are still cognitively developing as young adolescents. Youth services must bear these factors in mind.

#### Pathways into Homelessness for Youth

Not only do needs differ, but the pathway into homelessness for young people are also different. This is important, as causes of homelessness change, so do the solutions and how we tailor and deliver them. Youth homelessness is not a one-off event, it is a process and a series of overlapping causes outlined below:

**Individual and relational factors:** This generally relates to conflict in the family home, that results in a young person being made homeless. Such conflict can take the form of physical,

emotional or sexual abuse, either of the young person themselves or witnessing conflict/abuse of another member of the household. The young person, or a member of the family, may have poor mental health, which can often add to conflict. There is often an element of addiction, for alcohol or drugs. This can be the young person or a family member. These factors often result in the young person having to leave their home. This is important because it highlights the loss of a supportive and safe community, something which youth services must be aware of.

**Structural factors:** When we discuss youth homelessness we often focus on the individual factors, noted above. However often young people face obstacles towards accessing their rights to housing. For example, in many urban areas we see a low supply of housing in rental markets with a high demand, basic economics dictates that in this context rent prices will rise. Young people, particularly those at risk or experiencing homelessness, have lower educational outcomes, meaning they often have lower paid employment and therefore cannot compete in private rental markets where prices are soaring. Additionally, young people lack deposits for apartments that may be requested by landlords. They are also face discrimination; some landlords will not rent to young adults. Young people are also likely to suffer from racism, homophobia and transphobia. While data is lacking in Europe, and estimated 30% of the homeless population in Canada identifies as LGBTIQ, and suffer discrimination for their sexual orientation, often in accessing housing but also from homeless service providers. These structural factors are important because they inform us of the supports youth need while in homeless services to ensure a successful exit from services, such as employment and educational opportunities, accrue savings for a deposit and ensure the creation of safe spaces for those that have suffered from discrimination, racisms, homophobia or transphobia.

**System Failures:** Vulnerable youth are at particular risk of system failures during the period of adolescent development, compounded by a lack of a support network. This is evident in vulnerable youth transitioning from state care to adulthood, with no support services, which is one of the highest causes of youth homelessness. Other frequent system failures include being discharged from hospitals or the judicial system without a home, resulting in being discharged straight into homeless services.

## Responding to Youth Homelessness

Youth homelessness is not simply a state of being “houseless”. Moving between shelters, emergency shelters, couch surfing and rough sleeping, it is a traumatic experience. We know from research and studies that both physical and mental health worsens. Many young people are at increased risk of being exploited or physically abused. Substance misuse becomes very common, often being used as a coping mechanism.

These three ‘characteristics’ are important, cumulatively, they result in the young person developing a “fight or flight” mentality, where they are less likely to engage with services. To combat this we need to develop services that are based on Trauma Informed Care (TIC) thereby ensuring services are trauma aware, understand the behaviour of youth and create trusting and safe environments. In addressing

substance misuse, services should understand the complex situation of the youth and be developed in line with core principles of harm reduction models.

Most importantly homeless youth services should operate a principle of zero discharge into homelessness. This means that if a young person breaks a rule they are not discharged back into the streets and the service no longer works with them. This is not to say that there should not be

### What does Zero Discharge into Homelessness Mean?

Zero discharge means that no person should leave an institution and become homeless because of discharge from a child protection service, hospital, prison or mental health service. This also applies to HF4Y. If a person is forced to leave their housing unit, it should not mean their participation in the program ends. Rather the supports should follow them, and work to find another suitable housing alternative adhering to the principles of HF4Y as soon as possible.

consequences for their actions, but services should recognise that such youth have complex needs, and with their experiences of trauma and fight or flight mentality, the emphasis should be on engaging with the young person.

## 4. Housing First for Youth

### Why Housing First for Youth?

As discussed in Chapter 3, homeless youth have specific needs that require a tailored response. This also applies to housing first. It is not sufficient to implement “housing first junior” in using the same model for adult homelessness, and only changing the service users. Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) has been used for youth for several years in Canada. When it was first implemented for young people, service providers came together to analyse what did and did not work, and what changes needed to be made to make Housing First work for vulnerable youth. HF4Y is not just about sourcing sustainable housing for young people, at its core is supporting vulnerable in safe and supported housing and ensuring a healthy transition to adulthood. This means that while housing is important, service providers should also be mindful of social inclusion, overall

#### What is Trauma Informed Care (TIC)?

Trauma informed care is a strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment

*Hopper, Bassuk and Oliver*

wellness, health, employment and educational opportunities. This has led to the development

#### What is Housing First (for Adults)?

Housing First is a service model for people, generally adults, with chronic experiences of homelessness. Rather than imposing a staircase model which grants housing on the basis of meeting a series or “staircase” of mandated programs and expected behaviours, the service user receives the housing first, in addition to a suite of support needs.

Housing First is not a housing program, it is a support program that comes with housing. It is a human rights based approach that fundamentally views housing as a right. You don't qualify for housing it is a right.

of Housing First for Youth, the principles for which are being implemented in Europe.

### What is HF4Y?

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness has taken the lessons learnt from service providers in Canada and developed 5 core principles to assist services providers deliver a successful HF4Y service.

1. A right to housing, with no pre-conditions.
2. Youth choice, youth voice and self-determination.
3. Positive Youth development and wellness orientation
4. Individualised and client-driven supports
5. Social and community integration

Feedback from participants of the study session, who have worked in housing first, was that reflection and evaluation of the system is implemented is critical. A one size fits all approach doesn't work. Service providers needs to undergo frequent evaluation to assess if the service is working and there should be a degree

of flexibility to ensure the needs of homeless youth can be addressed.

In the following section an overview of each of the principles is provided, this is the result of a presentation given by Dr. Steve Gaetz, of York University and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, and adiscussions between participants of the FEANTSA Youth Study Session participants.

## Right to Housing with No Pre-Conditions:

Housing is fundamentally a right. As an individual we are housing ready, access to HF4Y is not granted on conditional access, such as sobriety or abstinence or participating in mandatory programs around life skills or training. The housing provided also needs to be safe, affordable and appropriate for the needs of developing adolescents and young adults.

### **European State of Play:**

Housing is not always viewed as a right, and comes with conditionality. Contexts such as Spain and Portugal, who use housing first, also use the staircase model, which places a set of conditionality's to be "housing ready", such as engaging in drug or alcohol addiction services.

There is often no local or national recognition of the right to housing.

This is worsened by pre-conditions for social housing.

Service providers operating shelters and HF4Y programs who are in receipt of funding from the state often receive funding with pre-conditions they must set for clients they work with.

### **Experiences from the Ground:**

Right to housing with no pre-conditions means services are grounded in human rights based approaches.

It is ok the young person to fail, so long as the service continues to engage with them.

Services should maintain a policy of "Zero Discharge into Homelessness".

Ensuring housing is a right, and not a commodity, means increasing the stock of affordable housing.

### **Needs to Achieve no Pre-Conditions for Housing:**

Culture change among frontline services, staff do not always view housing as a right. The traditional staircase model reinforces the perception that people need to be housing ready to access housing, this perspective needs supports to change.

Young people need access to rent contributions or social benefits from the state. This is particularly needed where the stock of affordable housing is low. The cost of the housing shouldn't be more than 1/3 of their income.

Ending obstacles of young people to the rental market. Young people face discrimination, they face barriers around savings for deposits, or having proof of employment.

Housing, in addition to being affordable, needs to be safe and secure, a place the young person feels is theirs and can call home.

## Youth Choice, Youth Voice and Self-Determination

Choice means young people have a say in their housing and supports. Youth voice means young people with lived experience have an input in how services they use are designed, there should be adequate means to provide feedback. Self-determination means the young person is supported in setting their own goals, with timelines that are developmentally appropriate.

### European State of Play:

Choice can be blocked by pre-conditions.

Expectations of the young person, even reasonable expectations, may be difficult for the service provider to deliver, for example wanting to live in a city district close to friends or family but where that district lacks affordable housing.

Generally youth choice and self-determination is not always provided for.

### Experiences from the Ground:

The young person may not be used to making their own choices and may have a history of not being listened to, and feeling voiceless.

Choices need to be informed, with reasonable expectations as to what HF4Y and service providers can realistically offer.

Youth voice should be heard at all levels, and fed into the highest level to ensure inclusive policy making. But it can run the risk that it becomes tokenism.

### Needs to achieve Youth Choice, Youth Voice, Self-Determination:

Support for frontline service culture change. Accepting that the young person can say no to a suggestion.

Supports for the young person to make informed decisions.

Provide information outlining what can both the service provider and the young person expect. What are the supports available and what are the roles and responsibilities.

In making choices respect should be shown to other service providers and staff. The safety of everyone is important.

Agency can be limiting and a sensible approach should be taken, recognising that a one-size fits all approach does not work. The ability to make decisions should of course be made in consideration with age and development of the young person.

## Positive Youth Development and Wellness Orientation

HF4Y has a recovery orientation. Positive youth development places an emphasis on strengths, while accounting for the vulnerability of the young person, it reinforces their resilience and assets. This means building on their strengths, confidence and health. From this perspective HF4Y is not just about housing but about a broader healthy transition into adulthood, a support system that may be required for a number of years. All of this is greatly aided by TIC approach to case management and supports.

### European State of Play:

Services do not universally use TIC or PIE in the delivery of their services.

Many services do not have the resources themselves to provide the supports for both housing and a healthy transition to adulthood.

### Experiences from the Ground:

There is no single way or "right" way to transition into adulthood.

The young person must be given control of the transition, where mistakes can be made, accepted and learned from.

Each person needs to define their own goals

Basic life skills are important, cooking, cleaning and managing on a budget.

Key areas which should be addressed i) fiscal management, ii) mental health, iii) physical health, iv) engagement v) alcohol and drug management and vi) social skills.

### **Needs to achieve Positive Youth Development and Wellness Orientation:**

Staff need appropriate resources and supports to aid the transition to adulthood. This can be a difficult period in a young person's life, made more complex by being homeless, it can be difficult for staff to remain positive.

Peer support channels or platforms should be established, they're important in the transition

Young people are unique, and so are their needs. HF4Y services should realise that young people's needs evolve and develop over time. How we support them will therefore change and needs to

## Individualised and Client Driven Supports

Young people are unique, and so are their needs. HF4Y services should realise that young people's needs evolve and develop over time. How we support them will therefore change and needs to be flexible. Supporting vulnerable youth in the transition to adulthood requires time to build a trusting relationship, and acceptance from the support worker that what the young person may want is not what they themselves would want.

### **European State of Play:**

Time limits, targets and deadlines for results are unfortunately the reality which many service

providers face in accessing funding or are set by legislation.

### **Experiences from the Ground:**

Setting time limits should be considered carefully, they can be arbitrary and cause unneeded stress and anxiety.

Changing lifestyles and routines for a young person should not be imposed. After building up a trusting relationship and once they have time and space they will begin to change.

Young people will show that they are ready to engage with service providers, in their behaviour, how they speak and their positivity.

It's ok for service users not to know what they want, and it's also ok for them to know what they don't want.

### **Needs to achieve Individualised and Client Driven Supports:**

Time limits should not be imposed in a "one size fits all" approach, they are not individualised and can undermine the young person.

Support staff need to be given the flexibility not to impose tight and pressurised deadlines, and the tools to create safe and trusting spaces to engage with the young person.

## Social Inclusion and Community Engagement

An underlying principle of HF4Y is to promote the social inclusion of the young person, who by the time they have become homeless have generally been failed by several state services. It's important to focus on their integration back into the community through education and employment. This often requires i) housing not labelled with stigma, ii) opportunities for social and cultural engagement, iii) building natural supports, such as reconnection with family and iv) engagement in meaningful activities.

### **European State of Play:**

Practical obstacles and challenges to providing employment and education opportunities exist, for example where different agencies are tasked with those competencies.

Limited resources mean service providers may only be able to focus on providing housing.

#### **Experiences from the Ground:**

Peer support is incredibly important for a young person to share their experiences, and learn from others.

In scattered housing, the service users should be encouraged to get to know and build a relationship with their neighbours.

A form of information should be provided to the young people to let them know of social, sports or other clubs that are in the area, or activities that are linked to their interest.

Encouraged to be active in the community, attend local community meetings.

Training and education provide excellent opportunities for the young person to create social ties.

#### **Needs to achieve Social Inclusion and Community Engagement:**

Housing options should not be provided in ghettos. Scattered and mixed housing is successful in combatting stigma.

Service providers should be given the flexibility to support the young person's interaction with the wider community. Additional HF4Y Supports

HF4Y is a holistic approach. It looks at the young person as more than just a young person in need of housing. It's a rights based approach which provides an integrated approach to ensure the wider needs of the young person. The following are a list of valuable services to ensure the success of HF4Y:

1. Housing Supports: HF4Y service providers should provide young people with

assistance in obtaining and retaining the housing such as helping to manage the tenancy. Housing supports should also include assistance with accessing housing benefits.

2. Health and Well-Being Supports: HF4Y service providers should take a Trauma Informed Care approach to how their services are tailored. It's important for services to be able to provide mental health and substance and addictions services. Such

#### What are Harm Reduction Models?

Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.

services should be embedded in a harm reduction model.

3. Income and Education Supports: Housing needs to be sustainable. Ensuring that the young person has access to training, education or employment is critical to ensure the long-term success of the service.
4. Complimentary Supports: Young people are generally undergoing adolescent and cognitive developments. In addition to some of the supports outlined above, they need mentoring, life skills, advocacy and advice on how to access their rights and navigate services, legal supports and a facilitated peer support system.
5. Social Inclusion: Vulnerable youth can often feel excluded and are left without a supportive community.

## 5. HF4Y Case Studies

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This section provides an overview of case studies generated during the Study Session that demonstrates how HF4Y and housing led solutions focussed on vulnerable youth work in practice.

### Rock Trust

**Who:** Rock Trust is an organisation based in Scotland committed to ending youth homelessness. The range of services they offer include housing, education and employment supports. Rock Trust have been involved in FEANTSA Youth Study sessions for 4 years. Their participation in the study sessions has helped facilitate a transition from the staircase model of service provision towards implementing housing first for youth.

**Why HF4Y:** In the Scottish context Rock Trust noted that the staircase model worked for most young people, but not everyone. The Homelessness Scotland Act 2002 had created statutory duties to house. HF4Y provided a human rights based approach to provide integrated services for vulnerable youth.

**Obstacles:** There were many obstacles to overcome in transitioning towards housing first for youth.

**Housing:** Rock Trust owned its own accommodation that was appropriate for the staircase model. The Rock Trust chose a scattered housing approach to HF4Y, to ensure the project met the principle on permanency of tenure. This meant establishing additional housing for the HF4Y pilot. A housing association approached the Trust to discuss how they could offer support. As well as offering accommodation for young people moving out of supported accommodation they also offered

nomination rights to flats for HF4Y, which meant that the young people could remain in the tenancy for as long as they wanted.

**Culture Changes:** With a history in delivering services in the staircase model, a shift to HF4Y requires a culture change. In all organisations, change can be seen as a threat. Moving to HF4Y does not mean that the staircase model is wrong, and that staff haven't been providing a good service. The shift needs to be pitched as a means to build on progress and further improve services. Time also needs to be taken to advocate for HF4Y to senior management and your board of directors, about why the transition is important. The arguments made to frontline staff and to a board of directors differs. It is important to think about how you advocate to different people at different levels. For the Rock Trust the argument to the Chief Executive was around delivering the best quality of services for young people, whereas for the Board of Directors it was about being the first organisation to deliver it and making the organisation more robust in the sector.

**Funding:** An underlying principle of housing first is continued support for as long as is needed. This is a principle that is difficult to put into practice due to funding restrictions. Rock Trust has acquired funding for the HF4Y program for 2 years. This creates issues around honesty and expectations with service users. Rock Trust has taken the decision to tell service users that they only have funding for this program for 2 years, but continue to fight for additional resources to enjoy the long-term sustainability of the program.

### Service delivery:

Generally there are 5 young people for every 1.5 workers. In delivering HF4Y Rock Trust has prioritised young people exiting care, who

generally don't have a history of insecure housing with multiple moves. HF4Y provides them with security of tenure, which is otherwise difficult to achieve in the private rental market. Rock Trust has partnered with Almond Housing Association in providing housing units for their HF4Y service.

## Focus Ireland

**Who:** Focus Ireland is one of the Republic of Ireland's leading homeless and housing NGOs, providing a range of services to people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. As part of a range of services for young people, Focus Ireland provides a Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) service in Waterford, a housing led service linked closely to the core principles of HF4Y in Limerick and have recently commenced a HF4Y service in Dublin.

### **Why HF4Y:**

Waterford is a city in the South East of Ireland with a population of over 50,000 where Focus Ireland has been running a wide range of services for almost 20 years. Focus Ireland provides aftercare services for young care leavers through short term residential programs and a support service in Waterford following successful models in Dublin. However, Focus Ireland noticed a large gap in services for young people in Waterford, and noted that many young people with complex needs who did not qualify for aftercare services or who had left an aftercare service were at particular risk of becoming homeless.

These young people have generally had negative experiences of mainstream social services and can be difficult to engage with. The lack of opportunity afforded to them to gain a period of stability means that they struggle to develop positive aspects to their lives such as education, employment or a sense of community. This can result in drug dependency, involvement in criminal behaviour or mental health difficulties.

For these vulnerable youth, traditional homeless services were not yielding positive results.

A HF4Y project allows us to provide that stability and, through its principles, build trusting relationships with hard to reach young people. Since its commencement in 2016 the service has worked with 23 young people some of whom are young people with young children. 21 of these young people have remained out of homelessness and in accommodation. The service does not provide perfect results and often young people have set backs and make mistakes. However in a HF4Y project we see these mistakes as learning opportunities for young people and staff supports them through it.

It is for these reasons that a HF4Y project was required for Waterford. It was a perfect fit to fill the gap in services. It is for these reasons that a HF4Y project was required for Waterford. It was a perfect fit to fill the gap in services.

### **Obstacles:**

Housing: There are two main challenges to housing.

Access - Access to housing in general in Ireland is at crisis point. The economic circumstances of our young people, coupled with prejudice in a competitive market make access to private rented housing virtually impossible. Therefore the group, as with many vulnerable groups, are dependent on social housing. Within the Social Housing system waiting lists are extremely long and weighted e.g. families get prioritised over single people. This makes another avenue of housing very difficult to access for young homeless/vulnerable people.

Flexible Secure Tenancy – In order to meet the changing needs (developmental, social, life stages) of the young people we work with we need to provide flexible tenancies. However, we also need to provide housing security to allow for positive growth and learning.

Social Inclusion and Community Integration: The available housing for this HF4Y project are scattered across a city. A key challenge has been objections by neighbours to housing vulnerable youth. Tenants experience prejudice and blame for any anti-social behaviour that occurs in the area. These are vulnerable young people, who make mistakes, if they engage in anti-social behaviours like a house party, the neighbours are not patient while the tenants learn to live in a community setting, often for the first time.

Timeframes and Expectations: HF4Y in this project has worked to keep vulnerable youth out of homelessness. But it takes time for the young people to trust the model. Service users and staff need to be patient to see changes in the clients lifestyle and making positive choices, for some behaviour can become more chaotic in the initial phases of the project.

#### **Service Delivery:**

This HF4Y has been running in Waterford for 1.5 years. The caseload for each staff member is generally 10-15 young people.

The HF4Y service in Waterford focuses on young people who have high support and often complex needs. This is a group of young people who have been failed by other social services. The service also targets young people who are exiting aftercare programs with high needs. Both these groups are vulnerable young adults, where there are no other services for them, a unique selling point which can be used in accessing funding.

Harm reduction is an important cornerstone of the service. This is broader than interventions for substance misuse, but also includes reducing activities and behaviour which can lead to losing a tenancy. For example, encouraging the young person to have a friend or two over to visit them, instead of inviting 20+ people for a party. This also related to developing relationships with neighbours, and addressing the challenge of community integration.

HF4Y services have a rich partnership with the local municipalities, Child Protection system and statutory health services. This includes co-locating some of their staff to better engage with young people.

The service in Waterford uses a rolling housing model, which is based on their needs at the time the young person presents to the service. This means that all programs have the option to be delivered without physically moving to a new house e.g. transitional program may become long term housing. In some instances, the housing may change, and the young people may be required to move home, in this instance supports will follow the young person, and if another long-term tenancy cannot be attained, then a short-term will be sought in the meantime.

The service provider, Focus Ireland, is an approved Housing Body sanctioned by the local municipality. This allows the organisation to purchase property specifically for vulnerable youth. As the owner of the properties the service provider also has the flexibility to move tenancies between their stock as needed by the young people.

## Kaizen and Cachet

**Who:** Kaizen is an organisation based in Bonheiden near Mechelen in Belgium. It offers 3 kind of housing solutions to young people between 17 and 25 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. They have 10 apartments in the city of Mechelen and 12 places in a community housing system. They also offer complimentary supports to assist personal growth of service users. At an organisational level Kaizen are moving towards a HF4Y model.

Cachet is an organisation of young people with experiences in youth care. Cachet advocates on behalf of young people in state care and exiting institutions. Their mission is to create a better life for those who leave state care.

**Why HF4Y:** Kaizen has seen the success of the Housing First model which has been implemented in many cities in Belgium, and want to adapt the model to the needs of young people.

Vulnerable youth are often forgotten by policy makers and Cachet believes the HF4Y model has the capacity to deliver a lasting positive change for young people with varying needs. Additionally HF4Y service brings together different actors from the youth, social, health and housing sectors to care holistically for the needs of young people.

**Obstacles:**

Housing: The lack of affordable housing stock for young people is a major obstacle towards the transition to HF4Y. At present Kaizen rents housing units from a social housing company who then rents them out to young people, which contravenes principles of Housing First as the young people are not the tenants.

Tenancies: The tenancies offered by Kaizen last 12 months, however in transitioning to HF4Y tenancies need to last for as long as the tenant needs the housing and the supports. Offering tenancies longer than 12 months requires further financial support from government agencies.

Collaboration: Working with vulnerable young people as they transition to adulthood involves better communication and collaboration

between child and adult sectors. Bringing these services together has proved to be a challenge.

**Service delivery:**

Kaizen started in January 2014 until now we supported almost 60 young people and gave them a stable housing solution when our support stopped.

The service works with i) young people with intellectual disabilities, ii) who have suffered from child abuse, iii) drug and alcohol abuse and iv) experience psychiatric problems.

The service is grounded in the harm reduction principles to ensure young people make 'good'

Question for Reflection:

Where the service providing a model of housing first rents housing units from a social housing company, and subsequently sublets the unit to young people, is that an obstacle towards achieving housing first? Or is it a pragmatic solution towards implementing HF4Y, where young people face such discrimination and obstacles in the rental market?

friends, create a broader social network, reduce their drug abuse and reduce criminal behaviour.

Kaizen and Cachet are working together to transition to a HF4Y service.

## 6. Challenges

The experiences shared during the study session clearly pointed towards a positive experience of housing led and housing first, in general. The international evidence clearly points to success in housing adults with chronic needs. From the case studies and shared experiences, it was also clear that, in the limited instances where it had been used, housing first for youth had been a successful intervention for young people. Why then has HF4Y not taken off? Participants discussed the challenges to mainstreaming HF4Y in terms of their geographic and professional backgrounds.

The challenges identified in this section will inform the work of the Youth Network in planning for future activities and study sessions.

### National Level Challenges

The challenges which were identified by the participants have been included in the infographic in Annex 1. Participants were split into several groups and encouraged to discuss the challenges they faced in their contexts. The exercise demonstrated that the challenges they all face were quite similar. This is not to say that all countries were on an equal playing field, but it helped many participants to no longer feel that their context was the “worst” performing and that they had more in common with other participants than they first thought. Key challenges identified include:

**Policy shifts** – Most European contexts are still embedded in the staircase model. Housing first, even in the context of adults, have not gained traction among policy makers. Convincing policy makers of the values of Housing First and HF4Y is the first key challenge which needs to be addressed.

**Inadequate affordable housing stock** – this refers to both public/social housing and the private rental market. The lack of housing for young

people is a significant practical obstacle towards the implementation of HF4Y.

**Discrimination and stigmatisation:** Homelessness is seen as an underserving problem and suffer discrimination. During the recent recession, homeless services faced cuts from central governments, this has resulted in homeless services operating with fewer resources but often with greater demand. Unsurprisingly this makes it more difficult for services to expand into operating new services.

**Youth specific cutbacks** – In many countries the economic recession resulted in specific cuts to youth housing or social benefits. This puts young people at a distinct disadvantaged in accessing private housing, particularly in markets where there is a lack of affordable housing.

**General misunderstanding of youth issues** – there is a general lack of understanding among policy makers about youth homelessness, how it differs, why it differs and how services should be tailored towards youth specific needs.

The similarity of these challenges across Europe has reinforced the value of engaging with the FEANTSA Youth network and the need to share problems and collaborate towards solutions.

### Professional Backgrounds

Following the identification of challenges across various national contexts, the participants were divided based on their professional backgrounds, frontline service providers, advocacy professionals, public sector (cities/national ministries) and researchers. The exercise was a collaborative effort to identify the skills each sector require, but also how they can support other professionals. This support can apply to their local contexts, but also aims to enhance collaboration across the youth network, and increasing participants understanding of how they can both contribute and use the youth network in their day-to-day work.



The exercise demonstrated that each profession is open to closer and more effective collaboration, and that through working

together that can bridge the skills gap. The difficulty that arises is providing these partners with a pathway towards working together.

Frontline Workers	
Skills and Supports We Need	Skills We Give
<p>Facilitate information and dialogue exchange between frontline services and management. This can help share best practice and policy innovations and provide feedback/insights from the ground.</p> <p>Supports in identifying people with the expertise and experiences to feed into research, bringing frontline experiences into research.</p> <p>Identifying opportunities to exchange with other professionals and services, nationally and internationally.</p>	<p>Advocacy and Policy – provide clear information to feed into policy, highlight the most pressing issues.</p> <p>Public Sector – provide expertise on how services should be delivered, in line with best practices.</p>
Advocacy Professionals	
Skills and Supports We Need	Skills We Give
<p>Better and more effective communication channels with frontline service providers to better understand how services are being delivered, are needs being met and how should services be improved are key questions needed drive policy and advocacy towards effective and concrete asks from policy makers.</p> <p>Convincing policy makers to change policies and devote more funds to tackling youth homelessness needs research and data from academia.</p>	<p>Frontline Services - Develop and provide frontline service providers with a range of supports such as toolkits based on best practices and share innovations and templates for gathering better data.</p> <p>Researchers – translate their work, findings and conclusions into asks of local and national government, and practical policy changes. Help identify areas for research.</p> <p>Public Sector – provide practical solutions, networking and partnership opportunities.</p>
Public Sector	
Skills and Supports We Need	Skills We Give
<p>Build capacity to respond quicker and more effectively to emergencies</p> <p>Build more collaborative partnerships with service providers and researchers</p> <p>A willingness to invest in social innovation, and take calculated risks, not viewing things as a failure but looking at it as a chance to learn more and change their approach.</p> <p>Be more ambitious in their approach to youth homelessness.</p>	<p>Service Providers – financial resources to fund most services on the ground. Provide funding for skills development and accreditation. Provide for inspections to ensure quality services.</p> <p>Research – Provide resources and funding for research to be conducted. Create a platform to raise issues.</p> <p>Advocacy and Policy – provide a platform for knowledge and sharing. The city can involve them in the development, monitoring policy implementation and feedback.</p>
Researchers	
Skills and Supports We Need	Skills We Give
<p>Need stronger relationships with other sectors</p> <p>Build productive networks to share knowledge and best practices</p> <p>Need a better understanding of the context frontline workers operate in and the structures of NGOs</p> <p>Engage with people with lived experiences of homelessness</p> <p>Learn how to better communicate research results to non-researchers and translate them into policies and decisions.</p>	<p>Provide evidence based practices of programs</p> <p>Training for organisations</p> <p>Guidance and factsheets</p> <p>Identify solutions to problems, conceptual basis for the shift to innovative methods.</p>

## 7. Collective Impact

When we consider the core principles of HF4Y and the complimentary supports, discussed in Section 4, required to meet the needs of vulnerable young adults it's clear that we cannot expect one organisation to deliver on all the elements of HF4Y. In section 6, we provided an overview of the skills possessed and the skills shortage by various professions needed for HF4Y. The key take away is the importance of working together across the systems that drive young people into homelessness, but that can also be part of the solutions. The difficulty is finding a means to work together in a positive environment. For this Collective Impact provides a pathway.

Working together and collaborating towards reducing and ending youth homelessness is easy to say, but more difficult to put into action. Collaboration is an activity seen a lot in the social sector, but can often be given a lot of lip service with less follow through and few results. Collective impact is a means to ensure organisations work together in a meaningful way, and in this context in the fight to end youth homelessness.

In the following section an overview of Collective Impact is provided, this is the result of a presentation given by Melanie Redman, Executive Director of "A Way Home Canada". It is complemented by examples identified by participants of the FEANTSA Youth Study Session along with a step-by-step guide of how "A Way Home Canada" updated the Collective Impact model for HF4Y.

## What is Collective Impact?

Collective Impact involves a group of relevant actors from different sectors working together to address a major challenge by developing and working towards a common goal that fundamentally changes the outcome for a population, it should be distinguished from collaboration. There are four pre-conditions for collective impact to occur:

1. **Influential Leaders** – there must be an organisation who can make a difference willing to participate.
2. **A Sense of Urgency** – to bring actors together there must be a 'rallying cry', a sense that they cannot be seen not to act and should participate in the collective impact.
3. **Building Trust** – collective impact is about the positive change, it is not about an organisation profiling itself or taking credit for change. For collective impact to work successfully all the organisations at the table must be able to build trust between them.
4. **Adequate Resources** – like all actions, coming together is one thing but needs more than lip service. There needs to be some resources devoted to the cause to ensure a positive outcome is reached.

These four pre-conditions are essential. In the context of youth homelessness and HF4Y, this means:

There must be multiple actors who can influence change on the issue from their sector. These can come from NGO's, universities, the education system, the child protection systems, landlords, police, government, etc.

There should be sufficient awareness on the topic of youth homelessness, their needs, their vulnerability, the lack of services and lack of effective interventions that create a sense of urgency to act now. Perhaps youth homelessness is at an unprecedented level and reaching crisis point. It would not be possible for organisations to turn away and say no to a collective impact campaign around Housing First For Youth.

HF4Y needs the support of a range of services from homeless services, youth and child services, housing providers, health, training, education and employment services. There needs to be trust among these partners to ensure they work together in a positive environment. This can be more difficult to achieve than you may think, for example service providers can often be competing against one another for the same funding, or due to cut backs relationships between the city or its local agencies and the service providers may be threatened.

For collective impact around HF4Y to be a success it needs to have resources underpinning it. This does not necessarily mean that there must be an available housing stock, but at least that there is a person in one of the organisation who is committed to lobbying for the funding and supports. It also means that there is a person driving the collective impact, to bring all the partners together and share updates.

## The 5 Key Conditions for Collective Impact

The pre-conditions set out above are 4 necessary things that need to be done in advance of the collective impact, the conditions listed here on the other hand refer to 5 conditions that the partners should create.

### Common Agenda

Every partner needs to be on the same page. Its imperative that everyone shares the same

understanding of the problem and shares the same vision for the change. This is important, we've seen that the causes of youth homelessness are complex and differ from adult homelessness, and we've seen that the core principles that undermine HF4Y differ from the general adult Housing First. For collective impact it means that all partners recognise these differences. Everyone has to be agreed on what the change is, for example for a shelter it may be to get someone housed or for the state it might be to ensure that young people leaving state care are given supports. These are certainly elements of the change that should be welcomed, but each partner should share the overarching picture of what the change is, for example in ensuring all young vulnerable people are provided with both housing and the social, health and education supports for as long as they need, to ensure the young person achieves sustainable and stable housing and a successful transition into adulthood.

### Shared Measurement

In line with a shared vision for what the solution should be, it will be important for partners to share how they measure progress and success. This means collecting data and measuring their results. For this to be successful all partners need to be equally invested and accountable for the results. In a HF4Y context this can mean looking at the number of young people moved into supported housing, and analysing the stability and sustainability of the tenancy. For example, if a young person falls out of the program, the partners should ask why. It is not about blaming a partner, but amending the program so that the young person has the supports they need, such as tenancy supports, the suitability of the housing or access to health services. Approaches to work cannot be about what solely works on paper, the work needs to adaptive to the young person and the context they are in. Just as accountability is shared so is

success. Sharing credit is more important than taking credit.

## Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Partner organisations and individuals bring together an array of skills and experiences. This means that partners are contributing in different ways to the solution. What is important is that everyone works together towards their shared vision. A joint plan of action is important. This is the best way to ensure a holistic approach is achieved. While a homeless youth service is working with a housing association to identify suitable housing, a social worker may be working with the young person to coach them in life skills, another service provider may be developing services on training, education or employment while another partner is assessing the health needs of the young person. Remember there is no silver bullet for youth homelessness, it's about creating a platform for all these overlapping actions to come together.

## Continuous Communication

Building trust and reinforcing the common agenda and shared vision requires consistent and regular communication. Effective communication builds relationships, the relational is as important as the rational, in building trust. Collective impact is about a collaborative effort, not an individualistic effort. There must be effective communication channels to allow partners to share updates, flag problems and work together towards a shared solution. HF4Y involves social workers, youth workers, medical professionals and housing providers caring for a young person's various needs, to ensure there is clear picture of each person's progress within HF4Y communication is key.

## Backbone Support

All of the above conditions cannot be achieved in a vacuum. Collective impact necessitates a separate organisation, which can be shared by all partners, with the staff resources, authority

and skills to coordinate the collective impact. In the context of HF4Y this means having one organisation that can bring all the relevant actors from youth, housing, health, social and educational/training services together. In the absence of structured backbone support, the best laid strategies run a risk of never reaching an implementation phase.

## Collective Impact and HF4Y – A Canadian Case Study

In Canada a Way Home has used this model to prioritise HF4Y in combatting and ending youth homelessness. Here is an outline of how the process worked.

**Identify a Solution:** A Way Home Canada wanted to have a lasting impact in the fight to end youth homelessness. This required a departure from policies that had not delivered on ending youth homelessness. HF4Y was identified as a solution to youth homelessness because:

- It's a solution grounded in human rights
- It takes the needs and desires of vulnerable youth into account in delivering the service.
- HF4Y was gaining momentum, not only in Canada but internationally, with several countries introducing pilots.

**Scaling:** HF4Y has been piloted, with many successes, but in order for it become a cornerstone of the fight to end homelessness however it needed more research and more resources to become a mainstreamed policy. A Way Home Canada set out to:

- Scale Up: Changing institutions at the level of policy, rules and laws, getting the funding and policy framework to foster HF4Y and raising awareness of its successes.
- Scale Out: Replication and dissemination of successful HF4Y projects, increasing the number of people and communities impacted by HF4Y.

- c. Scale Deep: Changing relationships, cultural values and beliefs, effectively winning the “hearts and minds” that the staircase model can be successfully replaced by HF4Y to assist young vulnerable adults.

**Identifying and combatting challenges:** HF4Y is not easy to scale because:

- a. Youth homelessness is not a priority for the Canadian government
- b. Youth homelessness is seen as a distraction from tackling adult homelessness
- c. Housing First has a strong evidence based, HF4Y does not however

Scaling Up, Out and Deep on HF4Y therefore requires working with policy makers and slowly

moving the concept of HF4Y to pilots, which can develop research and results, and then with these results argue for investments and funding to move from pilot to a broader implementation.

**Building the Evidence Base:** A series of demonstration projects were set-up in Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton, targeting the needs of different vulnerable homeless youth, for example indigenous youth or those leaving care. With the support of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness to conduct rigorous evaluation and research, these projects are beginning to yield results and data, which not only show the success of the projects in meeting the needs of young people, but also methods to improve the delivery of services, to further increase the results.

## 8. Key Components of Advocacy Strategy for HF4Y:

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During the study session participants met with Mike Allen, the Director for Advocacy with Focus Ireland, who presented on his approach to advocacy. The following tips are the result of an interactive session between participants and Mike Allen.

**Advocacy is not a once off event, meeting or report.** It is a long-term process. It's important to have a series of tools at your disposal that you can tailor to your audience.

**Create a reaction.** The message you have should evoke a reaction from your audience. You should not present your personal position on youth homelessness, rather the facts, statistics and data you present, should illicit a response from the audience. They should be upset, frustrated or passionate about the picture which you create.

**Know your audience.** The message should be tailored to the general public, local policy makers, housing association, actors in the homeless sector, researchers or national policy makers. They have different competencies and roles in the fight to end youth homelessness.

**Always have an ask.** Why are you communicating a message? Highlighting the extent of youth homelessness and raising an awareness of the problem should not be the end goal, rather it is identifying the problem. Yes, raising the issue is important, but it won't solve it, you as a practitioner must have a solution to propose, in this instance HF4Y.

**Economic factors influence.** Certainly, there are moral and ethical reasons for intervening in homelessness, but cost savings will resonate

with politicians and civil servants. You should know how much money will HF4Y cost (consider acquiring housing, training for staff, competitive salaries to attract competent staff), what are the savings, how are the savings made, in what timeline are savings made, where are the savings (the cost may come from a social affairs department, but the savings could be made in ministries for health, justice or housing for example)

**Support with human rights.** Human rights are incredibly important, highlighting this dimension and the vulnerable position of youth, make the policy maker see not only the cost savings but also the legal imperative of acting on the issue of youth homelessness. Pivotal points in Canada and Finland around Housing First in general have come from politicians taking a stand on the moral imperative to combat homelessness, rather than the economic reasons.

**Give homelessness a face.** Tell the stories of people who are homeless. Sharing the experiences of people who have been in shelters or rough sleeping is a powerful tool to give policy makers an insight. Be careful not to stereotype people who are homeless and do not abuse their vulnerable position either, simply allow them to tell their stories.

**Link back to government policy.** Youth homelessness may not be on the government agenda. However increasing educational outcomes for young people may be, make the link between stable and safe housing and education and employment. The government may have a statutory duty to young people in state care, in this instance you can link HF4Y as an extension of aftercare services for vulnerable young adults. In the Canadian context, a conservative government was not focussed on homelessness, the pitch given to policy makers was focussed on youth, thereby removing the stigma surrounding homelessness.



**Support your ask with independent research.**  
Deploy research, perhaps international, which backs up HF4Y as a successful service model. This may not always be possible, for example HF4Y research is not common. Demonstrate the



success of local pilot projects nationally or internationally, evidence based practices are always an added benefit. Or amend your ask for a demonstration project with funding for evaluation.

## 9. Outcomes and Follow-Up

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FEANTSA Youth used the opportunity of the study session to reflect on future plans for the network. There was a strong consensus that the study session had been successful not only in learning about HF4Y but seeing the value of international collaboration, and learning from one another. The participants agreed to continue to work together through the working group structure and to apply for other funding, to support the network.

While there are a wide range of issues that FEANTSA Youth wishes to pursue, the consensus from the feedback indicated a desire to focus on:

- Strengthening the network and applying for projects
- Bringing a stronger focus on social and human rights in our work
- Using virtual communication tools to work together on projects/ideas;
- Using contacts in the network to cooperate on transnational issues, using the network members as resources for questions

The network has decided to work within the following working groups:

**Strategic Development:** A working group that will focus its attention on the development of FEANTSA Youth. The work will include drafting applications for funding projects and study session, in conjunction with the FEANTSA Youth Coordinator. This working group will also work on developing a definition for youth homelessness in a European context, something which has been missing to date.

**Coordinated Actions:** This working group, will build on the success of the study sessions in promoting awareness of youth homelessness within the sector. This working group will

develop innovative campaigns to promote youth homelessness among the public and the youth sector.

**Research:** This working group will bring together the academics within the network. Their activities will focus on bringing together the existing research on youth homelessness across Europe. Members of this network will promote research conferences and call for papers among the network, to ensure youth homelessness is visible within the homeless sector.

**Aftercare:** Young people leaving care are at a risk of becoming homeless. This working group will work with a team of pro-bono lawyers developing a legal analysis of aftercare services provided in law. The working group will provide and “on the ground” commentary outlining issues around implementation of legislation provisions. The pro-bono legal team are planning a training activity with the working group.

More broadly the Network will:

1. Participate in activities and trainings provided by the Housing First Europe Hub. This hub has a dedicated stream focusing on HF4Y. The Youth network, and the learning achieved during the study session, will provide the foundations for the Hub’s work on HF4Y.
2. Develop a series of case studies on HF4Y, leading with the examples published in this report. These case studies will be shared widely on social media ahead of the European Observatory Conference on Homelessness, which has a workshop on HF4Y.
3. Provide a mentoring system. During the study session the participants signed up to a Buddy System, where each participant signed a “buddy contract” where they commit to contacting their buddy each



month for an email and phone call, to share their problems and problem solve.

4. Posting the reflection letters. At the end of the week each participant wrote a letter to themselves, outlining the key learning and take-aways from the study session. The



letters will be posted to them in September, after the summer holidays to re-vitalise their endeavours in campaigning for HF4Y in their local contexts.

## 10. Feedback from Participants

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At the end of each day of the study session, participants were given time to reflect on the progress they were making, their capacity to digest and understand the content that was presented, how relevant the course was to their work and provide suggestions and comments for how the study session could be improved. In addition on the final day of the study session participants were provided with the opportunity to take a holistic review and evaluation of the week. The results of the feedback has been captured below.

Participants found non-formal education to be an innovative approach to learning that fostered a respectful environment where all participants were encouraged to share their viewpoints and

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*I felt more self-confident than usual, thanks to the atmosphere settled from the beginning by the prep team & the participants; usually I would not be confident enough to take the floor*

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perspectives.

Participants valued the opportunity to go beyond presentations and discussions of HF4Y and had the opportunity to understand how HF4Y is actually implemented and the challenges faced in transitioning to HF4Y.

While the learning was intense at times, with lots of new information, participants found the flow was logical and each day built on the learning of the previous day, with opportunities to practice and apply the learning.

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*There was a nice balance between practical examples and more theoretical sessions*

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Participants benefitted from making clearer human and social rights links to homelessness and housing first for youth. For many human rights is not in their background and is not considered on a day-to-day basis.

Smaller group exercises were a very efficient way to apply and check the learning. More than

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*I enjoyed every working group because I could better express myself and contribute to issues in those groups. I also learned more from other participants in group works because it was a good place to deepen conversations.*

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that they were a place where people felt more open and comfortable sharing.

The two most popular sessions from the evaluation were the presentations given by Steve and Mel on HF4Y and Mike Allen's workshop on advocacy. Participants felt that Steve and Mel offered a healthy balance between theory and practice and delivered a passionate and energetic overview of HF4Y, for the first time many participants could clearly understand what HF4Y is and is not. Mike's presentation on the other hand equipped participants with tools they felt they were

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*The prep team was amazing - smart, hard-working people doing important job and keeping their hearts and minds open. Oh, and they are also very patient, kind and funny.*

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missing in the daily work.

The Preparation team were flexible and adaptable to the needs of the participants.

Key learning for non-native English speakers, while we introduced re-caps and questions walls so they could participate to their fullest extent, would have enjoyed PowerPoints for every session to help them keep up. Participants

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*The new network is probably the best single thing what I got from the study session.*

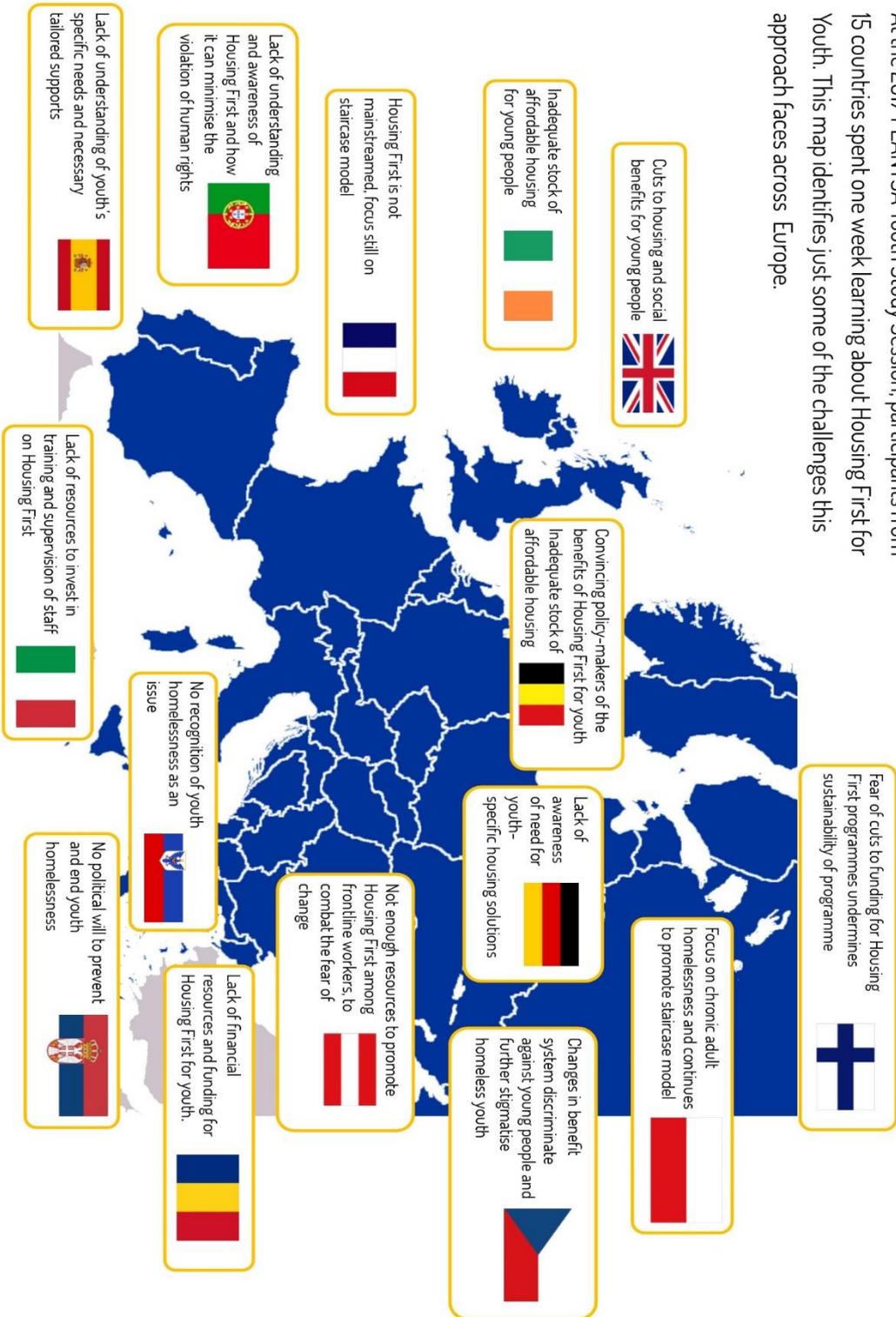
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valued the European network of experts on youth homeless with a shared vision for ending youth homelessness.

# Appendix One – Housing First for Youth – Challenges in

## Housing First for Youth - Challenges in Europe

At the 2017 FEANTSA Youth Study Session, participants from 15 countries spent one week learning about Housing First for Youth. This map identifies just some of the challenges this approach faces across Europe:



## Europe

# Appendix Two – Study Session Program

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**FEANTSA Youth – Housing First For Youth  
12-16 June 2017**

**Organised by FEANTSA Youth Network in co-operation with the European Youth Centre  
(Budapest)**

### **Day by day Programme**

#### ***Sunday, 11th June 2017***

Arrival of participants

19:00 Dinner

21:00 Welcome evening

#### ***Monday, 12th June 2017***

09:30 Opening with Introduction to Study Session, Intro of aims & objectives of the Study Session / Expectations & programme

- Robbie Stakelum, FEANTSA Youth Coordinator

11:00 Break

11:30 FEANTSA Youth – Who We Are and What We Do

- Laszlo Milutinovits, Council of Europe

o Presentation of the Council of Europe and the Youth Department

o Presentation of the Youth Foundation

o Presentation of the No Hate Speech Movement.

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Team Building Exercise

15:15 Understanding Youth Homelessness

16:00 Break

16:30 Defining Youth Homelessness and Building Solutions

18:00 Daily evaluation & Strategy reflection

19:00 Dinner

21:00 Intercultural evening

#### ***Tuesday, 13th June 2017***

09:30 Housing First for Youth – Deep Dive (Part I)

11:00 Break

11:30 Housing First for Youth – Deep Dive (Part II)

- Allison Calder, Rock Trust, Scotland

13:00 Lunch break

14:30 Housing First For Youth – Best Practices (Part II)

16:00 Break

16:30 Housing First For Youth – Best Practices (Part II)

18:00 Daily evaluation & Strategy Reflection

19:00 Dinner

21:00 Introduction to Mentoring System

***Wednesday, 14th June 2017***

09:30 Obstacles and Challenges to Housing First For Youth

11:00 Break

11:30 Skills Identification for Building Housing First For Youth

13:00 Lunch break

Free afternoon in the city

19:00 Organized dinner out in the city

***Thursday, 15th June 2017***

09:30 Skills Building (Part I)

- Mike Allen, Focus Ireland, Ireland.

11:00 Break

11:30 Skills Building (Part II)

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Developing Strategies and Partnerships

16:00 Break

16:30 Implementing Strategies and Partnerships.

18:00 Daily evaluation & Strategy Reflection

19:00 Dinner

20:00 Prep for Health Expert Meeting

***Friday, 16th June 2017***

09:30 Health Working Group Meeting (Part I)

11:00 Break

11:30 Health Working Group Meeting (Part II)

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Next Steps and Network Supports

16:00 Break

16:30 Conclusion/Evaluation Session

## Appendix Three: List of Participants

No.	Name	Surname	Country	Organisation
1	Cécile	Bénoliel	France	Comité Actions Logement
2	Irena	Bilčić	Croatia	Kings of the Street
3	Alison	Connolly	Ireland	Irish Council for Social Housing
4	Marta	Czapnik	Poland	The Salvation Army in Poland
5	Alexandra	Evaristo	Portugal	Crescer
6	Marta	Gaboardi	Italy	University of Padua
7	Steve	Gaetz	Canada	Canadian Observatory on Homelessness
8	Daniella	GATTA	Italy	SOC. COOP. SOL.CO
9	Johan	Grasshoff	Germany	Diakonisches Werk Hamburg
10	Carina	Hietikko	Finland	City of Espoo
11	Stephen	Horan	Ireland	Focus Ireland
12	Yara	Hummels	Netherlands	Humanitas Onder Dak
13	Samara	Jones	Canada	FEANTSA & Housing First Europe Hub
14	Sara	Autio	Finland	NAL Services
15	Samuli	Liuskari	Finland	The Finnish Youth Housing Association (NAL)
16	Alistair	MacDermid	United Kingdom	The Rock Trust
17	Carl	Makin	United Kingdom	Shelter/Citizens' Advice/ Manchester University
18	Marko	Tomasevic	Serbia	Klikaktiv - Center for Development of Social Policies
19	Marika	Mikkola	Finland	City of Helsinki and University of Helsinki
20	Jitka	Modlitbova	Czech Republic	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
21	Lisa	O'Brien	Ireland	Focus Ireland
22	Sergi	Ortego Blanco	Spain	St John of God
23	Mirela	Paraschiv	Romania	CICADIT, University of Bucharest
24	Gary	Paterson	United Kingdom	The Scottish Parliament
25	Caterina	Poidomani	Italia	Cooperativa Sociale Proxima
26	Doris	Rafajlovski	Serbia	Klikaktiv- Center for Development of Social Policies
27	Mel	Redman	Canada	A Way Home Canada
28	Ariadna	Rodriguez Gimeno	Spain	Fundaci3n Rais
29	Chloe	Serme-Morin	France	FEANTSA
30	Robbie	Stakelum	Ireland	FEANTSA
31	Milena	Stojkovic	Serbia	ADRA Serbia
32	Kathryn	Sutter	United Kingdom	Building and Social Housing Foundation (BSHF)
33	Eamonn	Tansey	Irish	The Simon Communities of Ireland National Office
34	Ramon	Rena	Andorra	Fem Consultors
35	Laurens	Troch	Belgium	Kaizen
36	Stefanie	Wutzl	Austria	Institut far Sozialdienste
37	Gregory	Ringoet	Belgium	Cachet
38	Oonagh	Hogan	Ireland	Limerick City
39	Virginia	Branco	Portugal	Lisboa City Council