

# Housing First: New Horizons Experience of the Threshold Housing First Service for Women (Manchester, England)

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# Structure of Presentation

- The context - women and homelessness
- The Threshold Housing First project for women offenders
- Outcomes of the pilot
- Key learning
- Learning into practice

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# Women's Homelessness in Context

- Lack of attention (policy and research)
- Gender-neutral services = gender-blind services = women avoid/exclude themselves
- Invisibility/hidden nature
- Domestic violence treated separately
- Judgement/'othering' of homeless women
- Lack of agency/infantilisation

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# Threshold Housing First Model

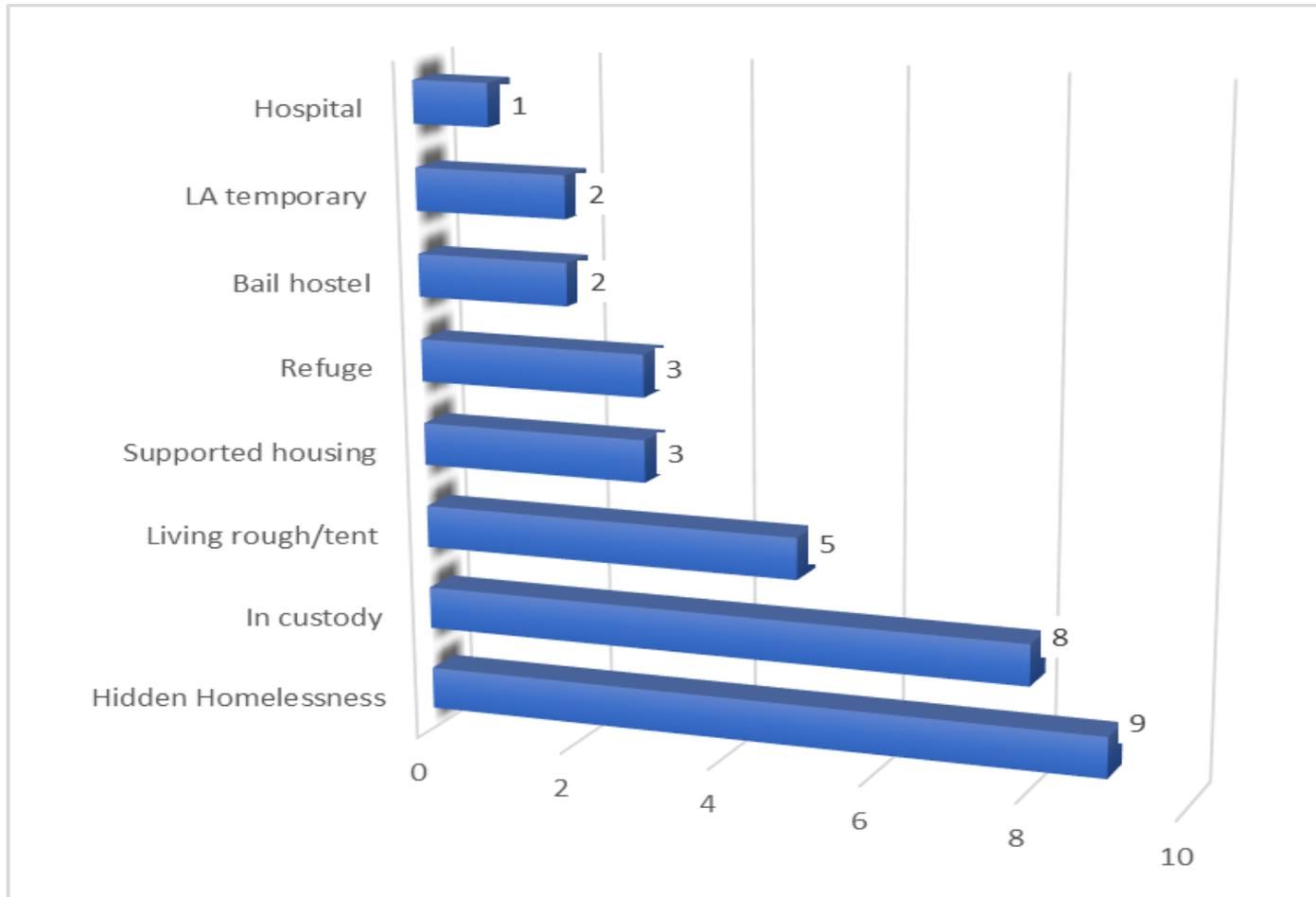
- High fidelity to HF key principles
- Intensive service for 12 women – 1:6 staff ratio
- Housing via social or PRS landlords
- Gender informed approach
- Two year pilot (report available); now extended for further 3 years

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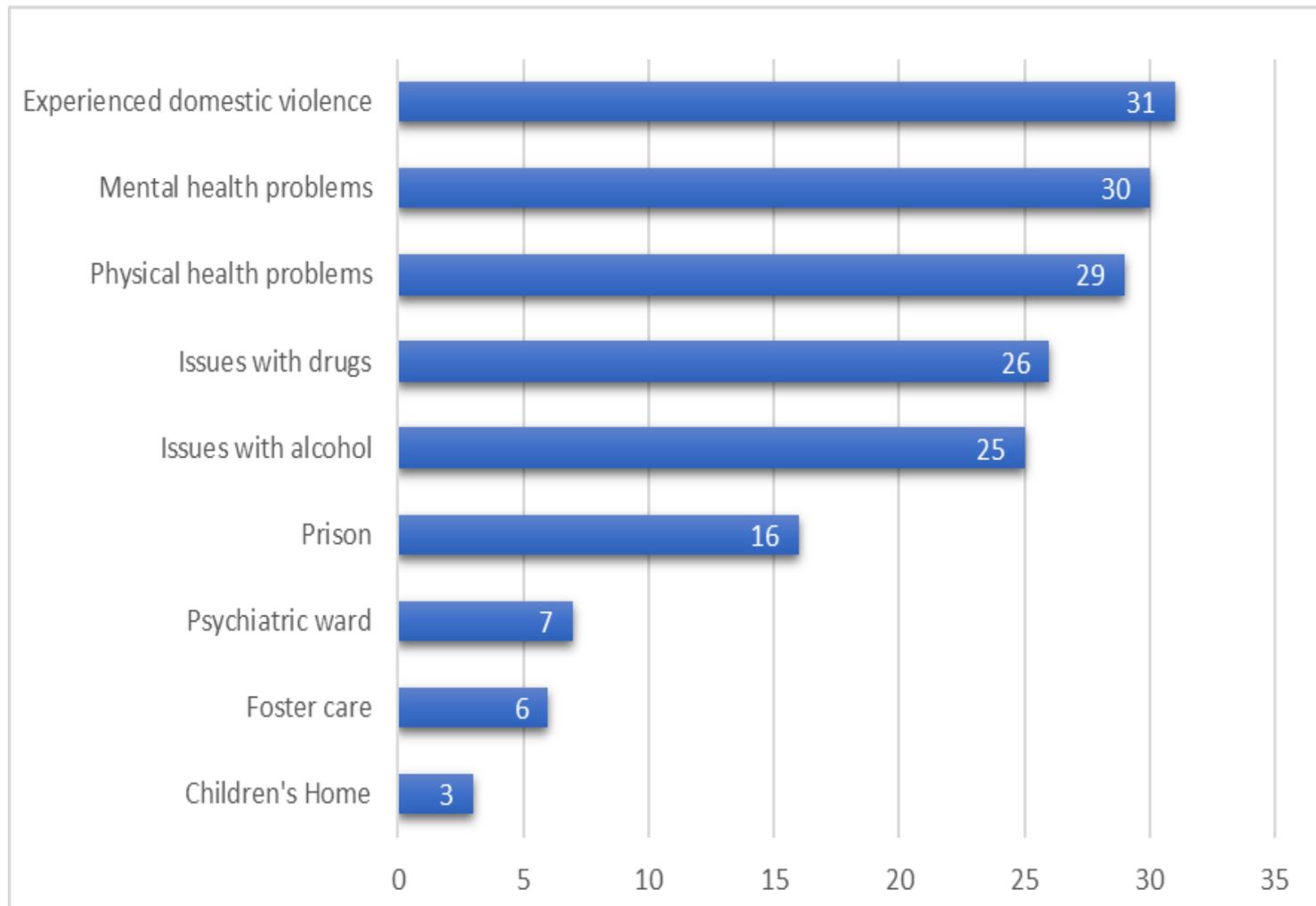
# Referrals

- High demand (criminal justice providers main referral source)
- Thirty-three women used service over 2 years
  - Average age of 32 (18-52)
  - All British citizens; 97% White
  - 79% of women had children, but not living with them
  - 82% single at referral
- 58% homeless; 33% in custody; 9% risk of h/l
- 58% had been homeless more than twice (19/33)
- Complex needs assessment showed high level of self-reported experiences

# Housing Situation at Referral



# Self-reported Adverse Experiences



# Key Outcomes from the Project

- Twenty women in own housing (18 housed; 2 supported in existing tenancies). By June 2017, of 20 in tenancies:
  - 80% tenancy sustainment rate
- Major impact on reducing recidivism
- Little change to ETE but more positive outlook
- Removing women from abusive situations and helping move on with lives/accessing women's centres
- Supporting women with re-establishing contact with children and family members but need for greater support with this

# Threshold Housing First



# Outcomes and Impact

- Women typically housed within 4 weeks of referral
- Currently 70:30 social to private rented lets
- 90% tenancies sustained
- Zero rent arrears – all accounts in payment
- Minor ASB issues (mostly linked to returning violent partners)
- Zero reoffending
- Average length of stay in service 42 weeks @ 5 hours support per week

# Women's Views

*There's not one thing that I've asked for help with and they've not helped me, there is nothing that they've said no to or I can't do that, absolutely everything, they are brilliant.*

*I have phone contact every day, even at weekends – welfare checks, I love those welfare checks... because who phones at the weekend to see if you are alright? Nobody.*

Godsend

*I've got my own home*

*I feel safe...*

*massive weight off my shoulders*

*she is really good because she has took the time out for me and no-one ever does that for me*

B  
HE  
SAFE

# Why does it work?

- Permanent housing
- Flexible by design
- Person Centred
- Choice and Control
- Trauma informed
- At their own pace
- Not time limited

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# Key Learning

- Women react to homelessness in different ways to men.
- Identified links between complex needs, offending and domestic violence
- New understanding about who homeless people with complex needs are
- A case for Housing First specifically focused on homeless women with complex needs
- A case for integration into strategic responses to homelessness.

# Recommendations

- Adhering to Housing First principles delivers consistent results.
- A way of working rather than isolated pilots.
- This model can be tailored without moving away from the principles.
- A responsibility to identify the people who can benefit from this model.
- Adequate time spent defining the new culture and language needed to make this work at scale.