Approved Housing Bodies as Landlords to People Moving out of Homelessness

Exploring the Experience of Third-Party AHBs

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Background & Context

The success of Ireland's Housing First model is framed in the context of…

- A housing deficit of 255,000+ homes
- Total social housing need (incl. HAP recipients) of c. 115,000 households
- A four-fold increase in homelessness in 10 years

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Background & Context

AHBs as landlords has grown in recent years –

<u>Q2 2022</u>

1-in-3 supported households moved into an AHB home

<u>Q2 2024</u>

1-in-2 supported households moved into an AHB home

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Research Question & Approach

- Explore the experience of third-party AHBs as landlords to tenants in receipt of HF

  - Qualitative interviews with -
    - Seven third-party AHBs
    - Four local authorities
    - One NGO Housing First Service Provider

  - A SCOT analysis

  - Case studies

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What's working well…

- Recognise Housing First's effectiveness

- AHBs willing & eager to support HF tenants

- Success dependent on
  1. Communication & Information Sharing
  2. Allocation / Nomination Process
  3. Tenant Engagement & Community Impact

> *I do get [AHBs] concerns, and I think that's where it comes back to [stakeholders] having a good approach to this. If you can get the mix right, I think it can work.*

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Communication & Information Sharing

- Good relationship between LAs & NGO HF providers
- Issues when third-party AHBs are landlords
- Key challenges
  - GDPR
  - High caseloads; burnout; staff turnover

> *Getting that information helps me in my role in supporting that tenant… It helps in dealing with them when issues do arise... You're that little more patient [because] you want to help them stay in that property.*

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Housing Allocation Process

- LAs give consideration to
  - Tenant preference;
  - Location;
  - Proximity to supports;
  - Property suitability; etc.

- Third-party AHBs have expertise in matching properties with tenants needs

> *I can't tell the local authority what to do but I can try to inform their decision making... We have to be more thoughtful about where we're allocating. At the end of the day [with] Housing First, we want it to be sustainable.*

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Tenant Engagement & Community

- AHBs fall under remit of Residential Tenancies Board (RTB)
- Tenant disengagement and “cuckooing” can jeopardize tenancy security
- Perceived disconnect between AHB & NGO priorities

> *Our first port of call [when someone disengages] is to save the tenancy and salvage it where we can... It's better for the tenant and it's better for the organisation if we can put things right and salvage the situation.*

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Recommendations…

…overall

- AHBs should be considered a **partner in the programme** – with a shared commitment to a positive outcome of a sustained tenancy

…to all parties (LAs, Support NGOs, and Third-Party AHBs)

- Arrange “pre-tenancy” meeting
- Maximise information sharing
- Facilitate collaboration between all stakeholders

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Recommendations…

…to the National Housing First Office (NHFO)

- Develop a Partnership Charter
- Encourage LAs to include HF in Scheme of Lettings
- Engage with the RTB
- Engage with Dept of Housing

…to Local Authorities

- Consider proposals from third-party AHBs on allocations
- HF training for relevant staff

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Recommendations…

…to Third-Party AHBs

- HF training for all housing management
- Tenancy Sustainment Teams

…to Support NGOs

- Timely sharing of information with third-party AHBs
- Regular meetings with third-party AHBs

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Recommendations…

…in Public Policy

- Increase proportion of single occupancy units

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Concluding Remarks

- HF has had positive impact on long-term homelessness in Ireland
  - +1,000 people supported
  - 83% success rate

- Stakeholders acknowledge opportunities to strengthen AHBs ability to support high-needs, vulnerable tenants

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