The final breakthrough?

Experimenting with Housing First as a system approach in the Netherlands

15 september 2023

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HOGESCHOOL UTRECHT

HIER KOMT ALLES SAMEN

Introducing ourselves

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Homelessness in The Netherlands

- Dominant approach: staircase model of provision

- 2006: First HF program started in the Netherlands
  2023: 47 Housing First programs

- Housing First only for long term homeless people with complex and multiple problems

- Over the past 10 years the number of homeless people almost doubled. Latest (disputed) estimate: 36.000 homeless people in 2020

- Growing consensus: a structurally different approach to tackling homelessness is required

23 augustus 2023

Policy context: new National Action Plan

- **Ambition**: by 2030, everyone has a home

- Paradigm shift: the foundation of every support pathway must be a **home of your own** (different types of housing)

- Housing First as a **system approach**: direct access to housing for *all* homeless people

- Homelessness approached in an **integrated** way: focus on financial security and sufficient and affordable housing

- **Point of concern**: municipalities have (an excessive amount of) freedom to translate the plan to the local level

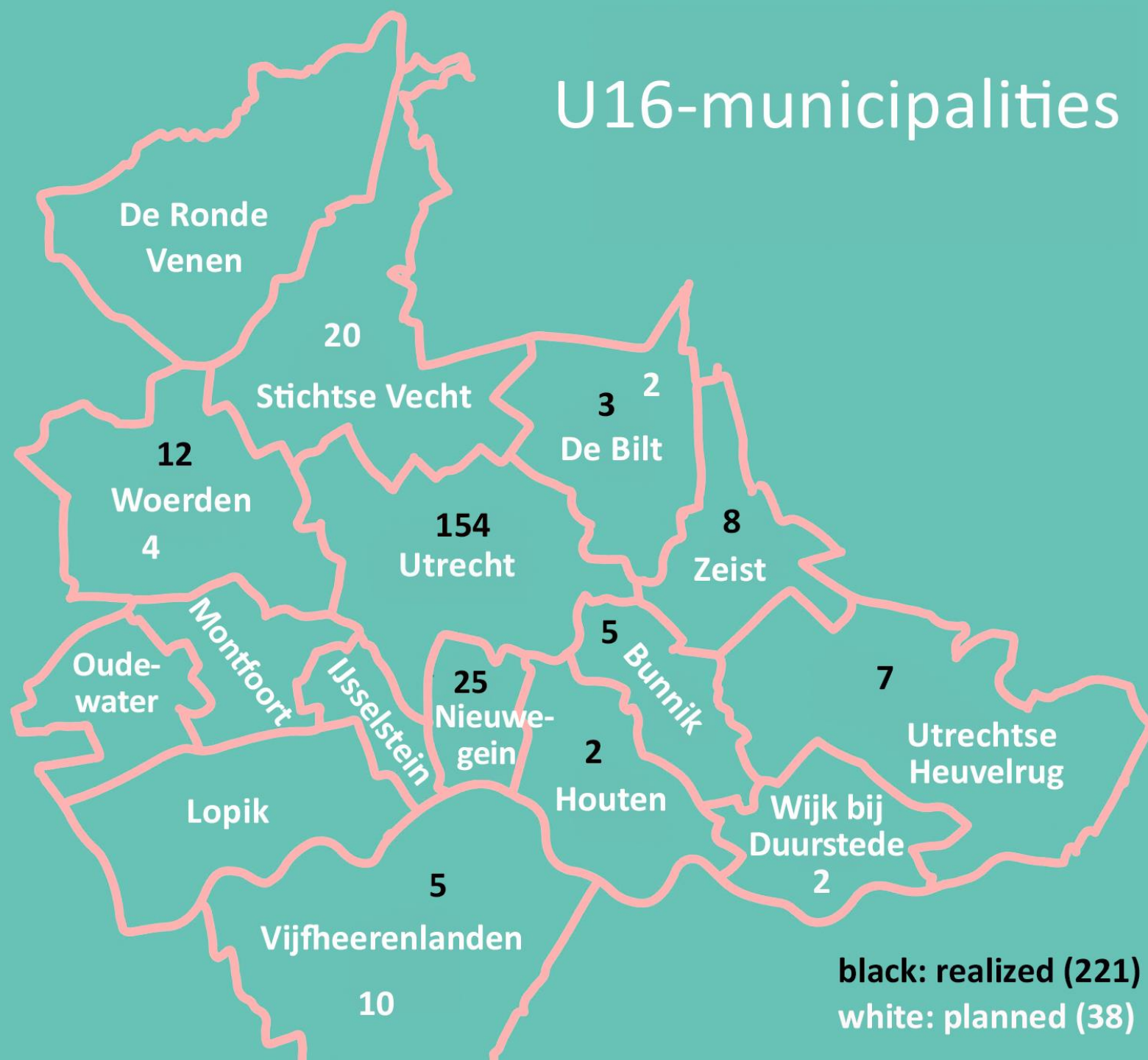Dutch National Action Plan on Homelessness: Housing First

2023-2030
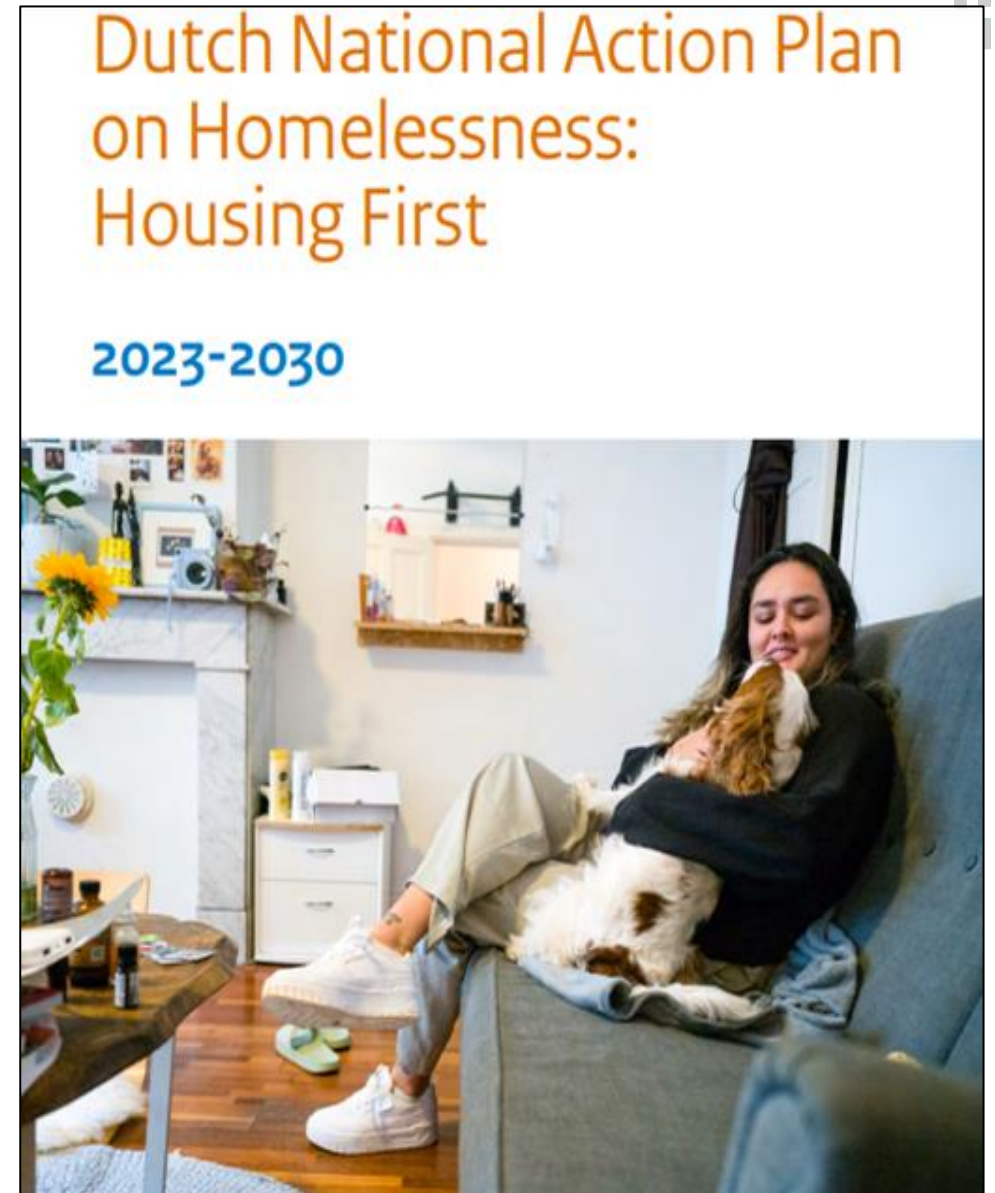
Living Lab 'First a Home'

- 2021 – 2023: a new home for 230+ homeless people in the Utrecht agglomeration

- Large-scale experiment to apply HF as a system approach

- Collaboration of 16 municipalities (highly urbanised ánd rural areas), various homeless organisations and housing associations

- Research: following service-users (UvA) and determining success- and failure factors (HU)

U16-municipalities

De Ronde Venen

20
Stichtse Vecht

3 De Bilt
2

12
Woerden
4

154
Utrecht

8
Zeist

Oude-water

Montfoort

IJsselstein

25
Nieuwe-gein

5
Bunnik

7
Utrechtse Heuvelrug

Lopik

2
Houten

Wijk bij Duurstede
2

5
Vijfheerenlanden
10

black: realized (221)
white: planned (38)

Individual housing

woonboerderij Meerkerk

Odijk

Driebergen

Houten

Mixed collaborative Housing projects (community living)

Meanderpark

Nijevelt

LIVIN

WijCk Wonen

Communal spaces

Communal living rooms

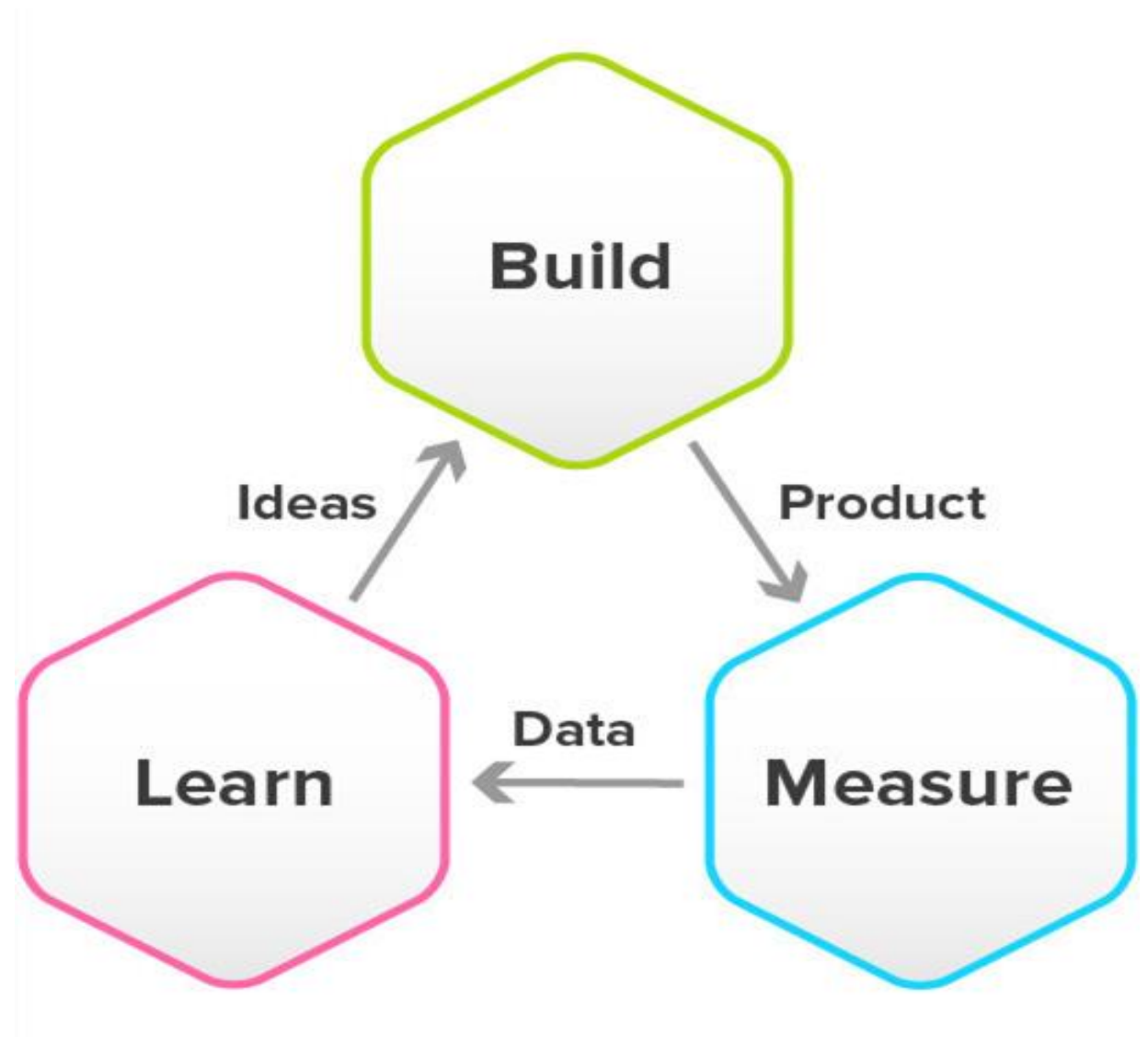Benches & green space

Garden

Action Research

1. Determining critical **succes- and failure factors** of:

   ▪ Housing

   ▪ Support

   ▪ Neighbourhood integration

2. Organising a **dynamic process** with all parties involved: learn and experiment together,
   to enhance the chance for sustainable recovery of service users

Research proces

1. Session with service users
2. Session with support workers
3. Session with external parties (a.o. housing association, municipality, care managers, community coach)
4. Feedback session

➢ Research on 14 housing projects
➢ 5 projects also a second cycle of sessions
➢ Focus on action - how can we improve….? Who should pick this up?

Success factors Housing

- Direct access to permanent housing: security and stability as foundation for recovery

- High quality housing (mainly new build or renovated)

- Sufficient resources for decoration and furniture, due to extra budget (tailor made)

- Close collaboration between care provider and housing association

Failure factors Housing

- Temporary rental contracts in name of the care organisation (permanent in case of good behaviour)

- Hasty selection of residents for apartments

- Limited choice in location, housing type (individual/collaborative) and type of apartment, limited possibility to refuse the offer

- Limited choice in type and color of curtains and floor

- Specific house rules only for residents with support

- Insufficient information for residents about rental contract, process of moving, costs, collaborative housing

- Insufficient housing options for homeless people with severe and multiple problems

Success factors Support

- Most support teams work with a strength-oriented approach

- Flexible and person-centred support

- Accessible and open support workers

- Active attitude of support workers

- Some projects carefully matched residents with support workers

- 24/7 accessibility (not of own support worker)

Failure factors Support

- Many support workers are poorly educated in Housing First methodology or Mixed Collaborative Housing methodology

- Budget management mandatory

- Support sometimes to much demand-oriented

- Lack of expertise in psychiatry and addiction

- In some projects insufficient support in finding meaningful day-activities and strengthening social networks

- Some service users regularly received new support workers

- Mandatory transition to a team focused on people with lower support needs after approximately two years

- Mainly attention for individual trajectory, less support for integration in the neighbourhood community

Success factors neighbourhood integration

General:

- Safe and pleasant neighbourhoods with facilities and opportunities for meeting other people (shops, schools, parks, gym, library, playgrounds)

- Placement in municipality of choice (rare)

- Advise and support in making contact with neighbours

Mixed Collaborative Housing projects:

- Residents are in general more open to contact

- Many opportunities for meeting people: activities, commissions, community living room

- Community worker and community association

- Use of social media for connection: facebook, whatsapp, etc.

Failure factors neighborhood integration

General

- Isolated living complex, far from facilities, in unsafe neighbourhood with nuisance

- Placement in a neighbourhood far away from friends and relatives, lack of choice in location

- Stigma and self stigma

Mixed Collaborative Housing projects

- Sometimes 'regular' tenants had no real motivation for living in collaborative housing projects

- Stigma: supported residents in one of the projects all had the same curtains – easy to tell who receives support

Eight core principles:

Housing is a human right

Choice and control for service users

Separation of housing and treatment

Recovery orientation

Harm reduction

Active engagement without coercion

Person-centred planning

Flexible Support for as Long as is Required

Housing First Guide Europe (Pleace, 2016)

Core principles of Housing First in Living Lab 'First a Home'?

1. Housing is a human right

   🟧 Good behaviour is a condition for a permanent rental contract

2. Choice and control for service users

   🟧 Limited choice in location/housing, limited choice in support services

3. Separation of housing and treatment

   🟥 Most residents rent (initially) from their care provider

4. Recovery orientation

   🟧 Most but not all projects make use of strengths-based methods

5. Harm reduction

   🟥 Unknown by almost all support workers

6. Active engagement without coercion

   🟧 Sanctions for not behaving well and refusing budget management

7. Person-centred planning

   🟩 Flexible and person-centred support

8. Flexible support for as long as is required

   🟥 If less intensive support is needed, service users receive support from a different team of support workers

Conclusions

- Living Lab 'First a Home' is very successful in ending homelessness, also for people with less intensive care needs. People are housed in high-quality independent, self-contained, apartments. Drop-out rates are extremely low.

- Service providers and housing associations find it difficult to really say goodbye to the staircase model of provision – housing remains conditional: one or more temporary contracts before a permanent one, initially renting from care provider (last step of staircase model).

- Service providers still provide care as usual, no real paradigm shift in service provision.

- Training of support workers in Housing First and Mixed Collaborative Housing methodology is crucial to make Housing First and Mixed Collaborative Housing work for people experiencing homelessness.

Continuation of the project

Parties involved continue to improve housing and support with the formulated lessons in mind.

The Utrecht agglomeration is developing a new regional policy plan that aims to scale up 'First A Home'.

Lessons learned from research (UvA and HU) will be published and brought together in a guide for the housing, homeless and care sectors and local authorities in order to stimulate good practices in other regions.

Questions? More information?

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