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## Study Session

“Youth Work to Make Housing First for Youth...WORK!”

Study session organised within the [Youth for Democracy programme](#)  
in cooperation with [FEANTSA Youth](#) & [Housing First Europe Hub](#)

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## Introducing FEANTSA Youth

### Who is FEANTSA Youth?

FEANTSA Youth is a network of professionals from across Europe working 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, human rights activists and other stakeholders. Our membership expands each year through the study sessions with an emphasis on empowering young professionals to advocate for the needs of young homeless people within their communities.

The network comprises 250+ people from more than 100 organisations from 20+ European countries, working in a wide variety of fields including social work, youth work, academics, 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. Across Europe we see increases in youth homelessness, even in Finland the only EU country where homelessness as a whole is reducing, youth homelessness is increasing.

Homelessness is not limited to sleeping rough or shelter use. It extends to sofa surfing and wider insecure housing. It results in being locked out from your basic rights for housing, security, private possession, education, employment, health and social protection.

In the follow-up to previous study sessions, we have seen the growth and international coordination around youth homelessness. Over the past 6 years the network has built a better understanding of youth homelessness and has begun focusing on certain profiles of youth homelessness, identifying the specific needs of youth based on their lived experiences.

### FEANTSA Youth Study Sessions with the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe's Youth Department has provided FEANTSA Youth with the expertise and platform to grow over the past seven 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.

Over the past several years we have hosted study sessions on preventing youth homelessness, advocacy, housing solutions embedded in human rights, access to social rights, LBGTIQ homelessness and women's homelessness.

### Objectives of this Study Session

This study session aimed to support the scaling up of Housing First for Youth across Europe, as a human rights-based approach that puts the principles of youth work at the core of how to understand and respond to young people's experience of homelessness. This included the objective to:

- Develop a concrete understanding of human rights and youth work, with a view to how they can strengthen the delivery of Housing First for Youth.

- Possess the skills to advocate for human rights-based approaches and youth work in supporting young people in Housing First to their colleagues, networks, and other relevant actors
- Co-produce new materials and resources to support upskilling and training of colleagues and peers within their networks to develop and implement Housing First for Youth.
- Develop their youth participation skills to involve young people with lived experience and reflect on how the views and voices of young people can be integrated into their own workplaces and projects
- Gain an understanding of the value of building effective coalitions of the actors necessary to establish programmes like Housing First for Youth as a means to reducing and preventing youth homelessness and social exclusion in their communities.

### Preparatory Team:

This study session was designed and delivered by a team that pooled together the expertise of both the homeless sector from across Europe.

Robbie Stakelum	FEANSA Youth, Belgium
Patricia Tovar	Hogar Si, Spain
Thijs Huisman	HVO Querido, The Netherlands
Lisa O'Brien	Focus Ireland, Ireland
Heidi Walter	A Way Home Canada, Canada

## Insight into Youth Homelessness

When working with youth it is very important to have a youth-centered approach. This means recognizing that the causes and consequences of youth homelessness are distinct from adults and therefore the solutions and our approach to them must be adapted to their specific age and needs. Across Europe youth homelessness is addressed in different ways, with participants facing different challenges and opportunities. During this session participants had the chance to explore their contexts, and situation in other European countries.

### Key challenges:

The key challenges identified during the session included:

- **Housing difficulties:** Lack of social housing provided by government, no recourse in a private market that is too expensive and young people facing discrimination in accessing private rental market.
- **Social barriers:** Stigma and discrimination by young people which include aporophobia (fear or rejection of poverty), homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, and racism. This challenge also captures the need for an intersectional approach to youth homelessness, while we need solutions designed for youth, not all youth are the same.
- **Lack of government support:** Youth homelessness is given limited attention at national level. There is a lack of funds for services dedicated to youth.
- **Young migrants:** A growing challenge across Europe are difficulties regarding documentation and access to services for young migrants. This is challenging when homeless services are being tasked with responding to a migration crisis, while also navigating barriers to working with youth under the age of 18 such as unaccompanied minors.

### Key opportunities:

The key opportunities identified during the training included:

- **Passion:** Across the countries represented it was clear that the professionals are enthusiastic workers and committed to changing the way youth homelessness is tackled, with plenty of ideas and existing practices to share.
- **Importance of coalition building:** Countries which have established local or national coalitions around youth homelessness have achieved significant impact in legislations, youth homeless strategies and housing first for youth projects, providing an inspiring way of working together.
- **Media interest:** Due to increasing levels of youth homelessness, in most countries there is growing media interest in the topic, which helps to build awareness of youth homelessness and combats stereotypes of homelessness which typically exclude youth.
- **Housing First for Youth:** Existing Housing First for Youth projects which have been evaluated prove the model works to support vulnerable and marginalized youth. The development of these services since the last study session on the topic 5 years ago demonstrates that not only do these work, but the organisations can share how they've built their services.
- **Migrants and refugees:** Although there can be legal barriers to supporting migrants and asylum seekers, there are examples of Housing First for Youth that are supporting this target group.
- **Access to Housing:** Existing models have already had to deal with housing shortages, and shared innovative models to access housing through social landlords, selling shelters or converting shelters to housing.



*Figure 1: Map of Challenges and opportunities.* This image shows the outcome of the activity. The pink post-it represents the challenges and the orange the opportunities of their local context in relation to youth homelessness. Self-made photo, 3 October 2022.

## Human Rights & Youth Homelessness

The Housing First for Youth model is grounded in a human rights framework, that means we should acknowledge the fact that youth homelessness is not only a result of individual circumstances, but a failure of the government and state to act on their responsibilities as human rights protectors. When the model is embedded within a human rights perspective services can recognise that young people have a fundamental and legal right to have access to adequate housing and support. Adapting a human rights-based approach also means recognises that human rights are interdependent, inalienable and indivisible. This means that the right to housing connects to other rights around education, employment, healthcare, privacy, access to an adequate standard of living etc. We cannot look at one right without recognising how it links to other rights. Housing First for Youth therefore is not just about housing but takes a strong focus on empowering young people and community integration to access other rights.

Social workers typically receive little training on human rights and during the training participants explored the intersectionality of rights in order to view their work not just as social services, but as human rights protectors.



*Figure 2: Working in groups Diamond Ranking activity.* This image shows participants working in groups during de Diamond Ranking activity. Self-made photo, 3 October 2022.

Taking human rights enables to move from the individual to the system. A person experiencing homelessness is usually blamed for their situation, society perpetuates the view that homelessness is caused by individual behaviour and circumstance rather than as a failure of the state to protect and deliver human rights. Taking the human rights perspectives views homelessness as a series of system failure regarding housing, education, employment, health etc. Participants highlighted that the human rights approach is key to advocating around youth homelessness.

## Housing First for Youth

Housing First for Youth is underpinned by five core principles. While Housing First, for adults, is booming in Europe at the moment, it is important to note that young people are not placed in a Housing First programme, but rather in a Housing First for Youth service specifically designed to meet the needs of young people.



Each of these principles recognises the youth specific needs young people present with. For young people experiencing homelessness the service isn't just about an exit from homelessness but should also incorporate a healthy transition to adulthood to ensure the young person has the skills to sustainably exit homelessness for good. For this reason, HF4Y has distinct principles, which place a greater emphasis on i) youth choice, youth voice & self-determination and ii) positive youth development and wellness orientation.

### Right to Housing with No Preconditions

Housing is a human right. All young people are 'housing ready', and housing should not be conditional on good behaviour. For example, benchmarks used in other programmes such as abstinence or sobriety or going to therapy or counselling are removed in Housing First for Youth. Rather housing is the starting point for young people to choose which services to engage in.

Housing provided to young people should be safe, affordable, and appropriate. The housing offered should be based on the needs of developing adolescents and young adults. Due considerations should be given to location and accessibility.

### Youth Choice, Youth Voice & Self-Determination

Choice is probably the most misconstrued of the principles. Choice doesn't mean the young person can ask for a penthouse apartment, but it does mean that the support workers offer options to the young person, and they have a choice. HF4Y takes person-centered approach- treating all youth as individuals, we don't box all 'youth' into a single box and provide the same housing and supports.



Choices are best made when youth have been provided with all valuable information and options available to them. Listening to them and their opinions and bringing their ideas into our work and allowing them to be a driver in their case management and goal setting. During the study session Heidi Walter shared stories from her experience of working with a young person who wanted to set goals around becoming a rapper. Others shared stories of young people wanting to become a famous footballer. When a young person sets their goal regardless of what they want to work on, or how you feel about it as an individual, you honour and respect that and engage with the young person. Empowering them to develop skills to advance their aspirations. It is however also important to help youth understand that no person in our society has complete choice, in what they want, whenever they want, and that choice has limits.

### Positive Youth Development

HF4Y practice is not focused just on meeting basic needs but also on healing and recovery. Research shows that most of the youth coming from homelessness come from homes with high levels of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) and while rough sleeping, accessing shelters or being precariously housed continue to experience ACE's. These kinds of experiences can further impair cognitive development, decision-making, the ability to form attachments. Housing is first, but it is not the end goal.

### Individualized & Youth Driven Supports

A youth-driven approach recognises that all youth are unique and as a result so are their needs. Where they are coming from, and their experiences also differ. So, we shouldn't think that what works for one youth is going to work for another youth. The supports provided on a program basis can range again dependent on the youths' needs and capacity.

Importantly these supports should not be time limited but accommodates an "as long as it takes" mentality. Youth experiencing homelessness have several challenges they are experiencing and putting pressure on youth to address their challenges within a limit time frame is unhelpful and counterproductive.

We must remove our "expert" hat and allow the youth, as much as possible and appropriate, to direct their life. When support workers realize that they are not "the" expert, it takes away stress as well from their role and the expectations that we put on ourselves as workers.

### Social Inclusion and Community Integration

Many young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness experience social exclusion. We know from research that isolation is as deadly as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. It literally steals life from our youth. So, if we know this, what do we do in our program and what opportunities do we provide young people to ensure they feel connected?

HF4Y in this area must be about helping youth build strengths, tools, and relationships that will sustain them throughout their lives. Key areas of inclusion include:

- Inclusive housing that does not isolate.
- Opportunities for social and cultural engagement (racialized, LGBTQ2S, faith and other subpopulations).
- Engagement in meaningful activity: this can include, education, employment, recreation, when appropriate.

- Connection to relevant professional supports: when family or other natural supports are strained or non-existent, many young people benefit from a positive relationship with professionals such as doctor, therapist, social worker, teacher, etc.
- Building natural supports: healthy relationships with friends, meaningful adults, and family. Even though many young people.
- leave home because of family conflict, family continues to be important to most of them, even those who become homeless.

During the study session participants spent time digging into each of these principles, considering what their services are currently doing and what potential was there to advance the principles further. Additionally participants shared challenges they encountered with the principles, and proposed ideas for how to address these challenges.

### Concrete Examples

During the training participants understand the theoretical understanding of Housing First for Youth but found it difficult to translate the principles into action. Participants then had the chance to hear from more concrete examples. This section outlines a short summary of what was presented.

#### *The Canadian Journey – Change Management*

Housing First for Youth has been growing in Canada for the last decade, and this journey hasn't always been the easiest or most straight forward. To deliver HF4Y in Canada services had to undergo a change management process to reframe, unlearn and relearn the way they thought about work, the way they saw youth and the human rights perspective, which was challenging and frustrating but absolutely essential. In this context they had a good conversation about their pathways, how they went about securing housing, how the budgets were made up, staffing team structure, prioritization and coordinated access.

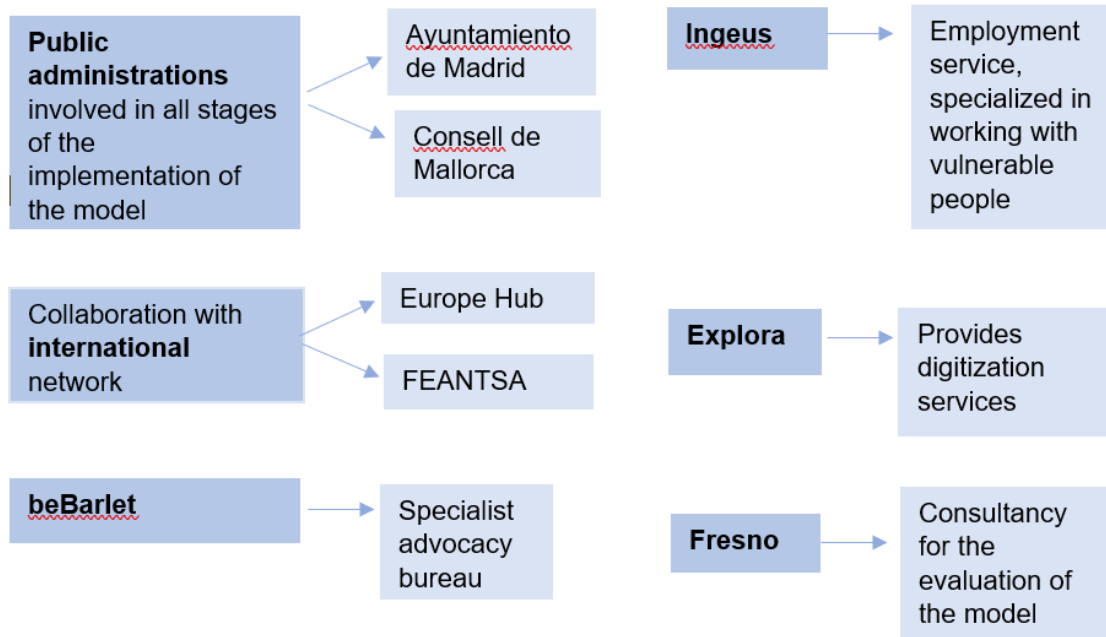
Many of the staff that attended this session were in front line positions or embarking on service delivery work and wanted to understand more of the “nuts and bolts” to the role of a HF4Y Support Worker. The session on Canada focused on the continuum of service models which have been developing in Canada over the past 6 years and the emphasis on research. The success of the model is evidence in Canada by the vast scaling up of HF4Y across the country. Importantly research has helped to develop HF4Y as an evidence-based practice and it also ensured that continuous evaluation meant the model can be adapted and continuously improved.

#### *Spain's New Services - Starting Housing First for Youth*

A session focusing on Spain provided a real example of how an HF4Y model is implemented from the beginning including the obstacles and opportunities encountered in the process of starting from scratch.

The Spanish service will be implemented in two different cities in Spain Madrid and Mallorca. The service will be provided to around 105 young people. The implementation of this project is supported by the European Commission through their recovery COVID-19 funds called NextGenerationEU. The objective is to demonstrate to Spanish public administrations that HF4Y works and will help change public policies in regards youth homelessness.

In the Spanish context in order to have a real impact the HF4Y service is bringing together the different stakeholders to ensure the success of the project. As outlined in the graphic below:



The Spanish project is only getting started but the key challenges they currently face in getting up and running include:

- Time limits: HF4Y model in Spain only has funding until December 2024, and supports should not be time limited.
- Constraints of public administrations. As their involvement and participation in the model is desired, it often means slower decision-making and less independent.
- Difficulties regarding housing. Trying to have as many different housing alternatives as possible for the clients can be really challenging due to the housing crisis in Spain.

#### *Day to day insights in a HF4Y project:*

In this session, a support worker from a Housing First for Youth project at HVO Querido in Amsterdam, Netherlands shared insights into the daily work of a project.

The service recognises the importance of youth choice and self-determination, young people new to the programme are allowed to interview staff and choose who becomes their social worker. On average, there is a caseload of 9 young people per staff member, and this allows the project to be available and flexible.

Access to housing is always a challenge. There is a coalition between the municipality of Amsterdam, the social housing corporations and Housing First organisations. The municipality has established that the social housing corporations must give a percentage of the houses that become vacant to Housing First organisations, which provides a stock of housing for this project.

The contract of the rental home is initially in the name of HVO Querido. When a young person is ready (debt-free, paid or voluntary work etc..) then they can get the rental contract in their name and then the HF4Y supports are phased out.

## Service Delivery

During the study session participants explored how to deliver a services, going beyond the principles, examining how to include service philosophies and methods.

## Harm Reduction

This learning activity focused on approaches in Iceland and Portugal. Harm reduction is a model used to minimise the negative social or physical consequences of a person's behaviour. Harm reduction approaches are common around substance use, where rather than practicing abstinence, the focus is on reducing harmful practices. It was originally born from drug users themselves to reduce the harm caused by the consumption of certain substances. Harm reduction is a humanitarian approach, that recognises that every person has the right to choose their behaviour which can include using drugs. It is based in the premise that drug use in our society is unavoidable, and it is the harm what is important. The aim of harm reduction is precisely the prevention and reduction of harm caused by the use of drugs. Harm reduction aims to reduce judgement and stigma associated with drug use, and focus on helping the individual.

To help bring a stronger harm reduction approach in your work here are some things to consider:

- Working with an outreach team to promote an awareness of your work and approach.
- Peer support workers, they really understand people needs and can engage easily and help build trust.
- Importance of government support. In Portugal they deliver injection safe packs for drug users and drug consumption has been decriminalized.
- It is essential to work with the community. For example in Portugal harm reduction includes providing drug dealers and drug users naloxone training to help prevent deaths from overdose.
- Shifting the emphasis away from the drugs in favour of addressing the person's needs. This can help avoid stigma, when working with drug users services should never judge consumption but explore with the person why they consume.

Finally, there was a group discussion where we all agreed about the importance of implementing the harm reduction approach in our professional practice, not only regarding substance use, but to any activity or behaviour that may be causing harm to our client.

## Social Housing & Social Landlords

Access to housing is a key challenge faced by many participants who want to deliver Housing First for Youth. This session looked at how to partner with social landlords. Almond Housing, a social landlord in Scotland who leases housing units for HF4Y, led the participants in this conversation.

In Scotland the shortage of social housing is a key obstacle. Many Housing First projects use private landlords to acquire housing. Even for social landlords, their focus is on reducing risk, and there are many assumptions around young people, in addition to their experience of homelessness, which mean social housing companies are reluctant to work with homeless youth.

Almond Housing bought into the idea of Housing First for Youth, the key is finding an advocate for HF4Y within the social landlord organisation. In this case Tracey was convinced of the social imperative to support these vulnerable youth, and was convinced by the promising results from Canada that they could do this in Scotland. The Rock Trust, the organisation providing the social supports and services made the case for how it would work. This partnership is important, as they both met significant resistance from i) local housing department who did not think it would work and ii) local police that said the young people weren't suitable due to anti-social behaviour.

Housing providers speak a different language to social services. They are more focused on risks and managing the financing. In this instance Rock Trust was able to broaden Almond Housing's understanding of youth needs, and showcase how together they can address their needs via a Housing First for Youth project.

To broaden connections to social landlords, housing providers or social rental agencies social services should approach umbrella groups or federations and check out their members. You should also find their events and conferences, and participate with them to foster networking. Don't hesitate to reach out to them, or use your existing network to find people in those organisations that could be your ally.

Finally, if approaching social landlords come armed with the research and evidence. HF4Y works. Demonstrate the efficacy of the model. In Scotland HF4Y is directed to youth leaving care, with complex and multiple needs. In this service 92% of the young people using the service successfully sustained their tenancy and 100% remained engaged with the support programme.

### Trauma Informed Care

Many young people experiencing homelessness have also experiences of trauma. Trauma impacts how young people come to, arrive, and navigate social services. When supporting young people to exit homelessness it is important to not re-traumatise young people and to engage in a way that does not provoke shame. A trauma informed environment is a holistic approach that looks at the organisational structure and is led by professionals that commit to safety. These spaces normalise sharing of feelings and is based on consent. There are some key steps to help build Trauma Informed Spaces.

1. Safety: We ensure it through the way we design the space, and we measure it by how people feel - both users and staff. We ensure that there is no chance of being harmed.
2. Trustworthiness: A whole way of working based on trust means transparency and awareness in how support workers engage with young people.
3. Choice: Users and staff have a say in the way we do things.
4. Collaboration: Recognise that users and staff have valuable experiences that we can use to shape our services.
5. Empowerment: Power is shared, it isn't directed by Senior staff down, but all staff and service users are empowered within the organisation.

### Strengths Based Work

Strength based work supports people's individual process of recovery towards their own desired quality of life in which they, like any citizen, are allowed to participate in society, belong, matter and be who they are. The clients strengths, talents and passions is the starting point, rather than their problems. This recovery-oriented way of working is called Krachtwerk in Dutch, meaning strength-based work.

The methodology uses strengths inventories, action plans and team-strength-based meetings. The core of a strengths inventory is to gain insight into the client's strengths, interests, resources and desires to support their recovery process. An action plan translates the goals into small, achievable actions to realise these goals. In a team-strengths-based meeting, social workers learn from each other by discussing situations they experience in their work with young people. The team supports and strengthens each other's work to better assist young people in achieving their goals.

## Case and care management

Focus Ireland uses a shared care protocol in their Housing First for Youth projects. The protocol forms part of the care and case management model of housing and is designed to bring all relevant supports together. Shared Care and Case Management is a multifaceted collaborative process between service users and service providers focused on improving the quality of service provided and the impact on outcomes for the client

The model follows the following model:

Stage 1 - Needs Met: Are current identified needs of the young person being met? By whom?

Stage 2 - Initial Assessment: Identify and prioritize current support needs, which may include the initial assessment from referral agent

Stage 3 - Planning Meeting: Organise first shared care meeting where you set goals and identify further support needs, including further referrals as required.

Stage 4 - Formulate Support Plan: Case manager takes notes of all input, and compiles the support plan based on actions agreed during planning meeting. The case manager gets consensus on the formulated support plan from the client and team.

Stage 5 - Implement Support Plan: Case manager monitors the implementation of support plans and organises shared care review meetings as agreed/ emergency. They are responsible for keeping shared care support plan updated and circulated

## Family and Natural Supports

Most services do not include families, predominantly because there has been a belief that family is bad, not healthy, and not a positive role model for youth. In Canada research has shown that over 70% of youth experiencing homelessness are connected to their family in some way. However young people do not know how to navigate those relationships, not clear on how to set boundaries and not sure how to move forward. Knowing that most of young people will return to their family home in some capacity; whether it be to live or visit, it makes the most amount of sense to support this rebuilding and reconnecting while they are receiving other supports.

Housing First for Youth Services should consider including support around family connections and natural supports, which can be connected to the fifth principle around social connection and community integration.

Services should also be non-judgemental and supportive of honouring chosen families, particularly in the case of youth who do not have a family they wish to be in touch with. Not everyone will want to maintain contact with their family, nor may it be safe to do so, and in these instances services should support other natural or community supports.

## Facilitating Other People's Learning:

Housing First for Youth can often be misunderstood as a regular Housing First programme, which young people participate in. But this is not the case. As an advocate for Housing First for Youth it is helpful to think about how you approach people and facilitate their learning on the model.

Learning happens in many contexts. It can happen in formal trainings, but it can also happen in conversations, seminars, emails and over coffee. During this session participants explored their individual learning habits and preferred learning styles, through experiential learning. Participants became aware that we have preferences when it comes to visual, practical, oral and aural learning. Some key takeaways included:

- Meeting people where they are at: We all learn in different settings and different ways. Adjust your content and tone to the information other people have. For example if you are having a coffee meeting think about simple key messages you want them to walk away with, it won't be possible to say everything, and more importantly they won't remember everything. If you are running a training or seminar, similarly, plan the content so it builds. You don't want to overwhelm people at the very beginning and risk them switching off.
- Make communication simple: People will only remember a certain amount of what you tell them. When you are facilitating other people's learning in a conversation or in a meeting or casually over coffee, the potential to retain the information is low. As discussed and experienced oral messages have a lower chance of being remembered, so keep the messaging simple.
- Visual: As the cone of learning highlights, you also want the person whose learning you are facilitating to learn via different methods for example using visual tools. Presenting points in graphs or infographics. Or if you are in meetings include follow-up emails repeating key information or sending additional resources you couldn't showcase in person.
- Active: Where it is possible you should include the active participation of the person you are working with. Putting them in an experience where they learn, or where they feedback key points and actively share their perspective and learnings will help them to retain the information and messages you want them to walk away with.

## Advocacy

During the study session Lisa O'Brien from Focus Ireland and Tracey Longworth from Almond Housing shared their respective experiences as a homeless service provider and social housing company in advocating for a new Housing First for Youth service. In broadly discussing their advocacy approaches they outlined the following key steps.

Writing a proposal. The proposal should have a clear outline of the why the service is needed including relevant youth homeless figures that are specific to the area you hoping to set up the service. You should also outline challenges you might expect and propose opportunities to overcome them. It is also important to provide a detailed description of the HF4Y model of work and successes in other places including any relevant research. The proposal can also outline any anticipated staffing requirements and budget

The proposal can then be adjusted depending on the recipient of the proposal e.g., if you seek funding, you could include some of your organisations past work that has been successful.

The next part is compiling a list of people needed to advocate to, this list can expand over time as you move from starting a project to scaling up a project. The list can include i) your internal line management structure, ii) local municipalities and funders, iii) other support agencies iv) landlords or housing associations and v) national government.

During the session the speakers shared some ideas that were used to help educate people about HF4Y and advocate for a service such as:

- Inviting someone from another country with experience to meet with them and where possible match them with a person who is from a similar background to them e.g., a housing provider to speak with another housing provider
- Inviting them to participate in a conference or webinar where HF4Y is on the agenda to learn from other voices and experts.
- Organising a site visit to an existing service to get fuller picture of how the service would work or meet the young people the service would support.
- Offer training on Housing First for Youth to promote awareness of the model, and tailored to the organisation you are advocating to.

During the session participants mapped key stakeholders they would need to advocate to in order to pilot or scale Housing First For Youth in their service. This included i) their own organisation, ii) local municipalities or funders, iii) politicians and iv) housing associations. In small groups participants designed approaches for advocating to these different stakeholders.

## Advocating to a Housing Association

Start with an opening statement that can connect the Housing Association to the young people that will be supported in this programme.

Begin by asking:

*'Do you have kids? Brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews. Throughout our conversation, I want you to imagine your valued young person as one of the homeless youth you have the chance to support by collaborating with Housing First For Youth'*

Then proceed to the problem.



*'In our city, here is the current situation is XXXX'.*

Insert the current statistics around youth homelessness, including numbers sleeping rough and in shelter or housing. You can also point to obstacles and challenges they face around accessing housing, to tie the solution the Housing Provider has to the problem young people are facing.

*"These young people suffer complex needs, currently inadequately dealt with by our current system.*

*Picture your valued young person/relative with no more contact or support from you, their family or a support network. Completely abandoned and their future in the balance. This is the reality for the young people that Housing First for Youth will benefit"*

Bring your expertise and experiences to the table. Outline how you work with young people, demonstrate other recent successful interventions with other target groups, or outline how you work with other organisations, even internationally, who are rolling out successful Housing First for Youth intervention.

Then you can propose the solution you offer.

*"Each of those 400 homeless young people on our streets have complex needs. We provide expertise, in depth support, fully equipped to deal with this. HF4Y is a holistic end to end & human rights led programme, effective for these long-term needs. Examples of success include Rock Trust in Scotland, where 92% of participants sustained their tenancies & 100% remained engaged in the programme. This is unheard of in other youth homelessness solution"*

Then you make your call to action, detailing a concrete ask from the housing provider.

*"We are asking for houses for these young people from you. With your crucial involvement, these young people can finally get a fair chance at life. This is our problem to manage as a society, and we provide you with a proven opportunity to make change. HF4Y is innovative and prevents young people from falling through the gaps as they are now. We are excited to connect you with one of our young people, who has benefited from HF4Y"*

In concluding you can answer the questions they may have.

### [Advocating to a politician](#)

First of all, it's going to be a lot easier if you're not approaching the politician as a single organisation, but a coalition from across the sector. Speak to other organisations who agree with you and try to get them on your side as well. The more people you are representing, the more likely it is that you'll be able to convince them of the momentum behind Housing First for Youth.

Do your research. Find out about what work they've already done. Are they someone who already cares about the issues you want to talk about? Show them that you know that, let them know why you have chosen to speak to them and not some other politician. Connect their policy issues around healthcare, justice, discrimination etc to the situation of youth homelessness.

Try to compliment them on the work they are already doing in this field. Make it seem natural, like you've been keeping up with their work and really admire it.

Explain how this new work can build on what is already being done. How can you make the good work that is being done even better

Use other countries (especially other European or neighbouring countries) as examples. Focus on countries that are doing better than you, let them know that you need to catch up with them. If no

other country is doing this yet then let them know that your idea will put you in the lead, every other country will be looking to you as a good example of how things are done.

Make it easy for them to say yes! Don't go in and ask for lots of resources and funding, only ask for what you absolutely need. The more work you can do at the start, the easier it will be to get backing. Once you've proved it can work, you can go back again to ask for more so you can expand. Going back to the first point, the more organisations you have working with you, the easier this will be since you can share resources.

Put it in a way that is easy for them to understand. Use facts, use numbers, show them how much money this is going to cost and how much it is going to save in the long term. Let them know the risk and the benefits. You need to know your topic well and be able to show them all the details. Remember, speaking with one politician isn't where the work ends. If they like your idea, then they need to go away and convince the other politicians they work with. Make this easy for them, give them everything they need to make a convincing argument to their parliament.

And the most important rule is DON'T GIVE UP. Politicians are very busy, they have lots of organisations wanting to meet them for lots of different reasons. Most likely, you will meet with their assistants a few times to go over the basics, they will then pass this on to the politician before you arrange a meeting. This meeting might get cancelled or re-arranged many times before you finally get to meet them. It's annoying, but it's normal! Be polite, but also be firm, keep pushing for a meeting and eventually you'll get one.

### Advocating to Potential Funders

Introduce your organisation and the work you do, including yourself and your specific work, linking to why you are talking to the funders.

Explain the background expertise your organisation has on youth homelessness and other successful projects. Build the foundations for trusting in your expertise and knowledge.

Explain, simply and briefly, what is Housing First for Youth. Outlining why it is different and why it is an innovation in tackling youth homelessness.

Provide data and statistics on how and why existing systems are failing youth experiencing homelessness.

Showcase the research and best practices coming from Canada, Ireland, and Scotland, demonstrating that it works, and highlight that you have a network of people with direct experience in rolling out the services to support the delivery. Perhaps use case studies of how HF4Y works, to make it feel more practical.

Discuss the budget, begin outlining the existing system and how costly that is for social services, justice, and healthcare budgets. Contrast this with the costs of HF4Y, highlighting the savings that are made over time. In addition to providing a better, more human rights and dignified solution to homelessness.

Depending on the level of experience of the funder, you can also discuss how you will incorporate Trauma Informed Care, family and natural supports and care and case management practices which will improve the quality of the work done and improve the quality of the service offered to young people.

In closing you can connect your work back to your European network, the experts that you collaborate with.

## Advocating within your Own Organisation

Begin with an opening statement to frame this conversation. *“As you know, 1/3 people I homelessness in France came directly from the care system-so what do we do? I think I have a solution”*

Proceed with a problem statement. For example *“Two years ago you created a policy for financial aid to people coming from care from the ages 15-25 however, as you know, young adults from 21-25 need housing and are not best supported by only providing financial support. Given this, the gap needs to be addressed and housing for young people is the answer. When you don’t have housing, it is harder to access health services, education, employment etc. which leads to its own complexities such as poor physical and mental health, addiction, anti-social behaviour”*

Share data and statistics. For example if you know the number of youth requiring housing supports or referrals from housing share this. You can also share data on the complex needs that youth present with and challenges that exist in meeting those needs when a young person is trapped in the shelter system or couch surfing.

Provide an example of this problem. Share an example of a young person in your service that highlights these challenges, but also the impact it has on young people.

Provide an overview of HF4Y, outlining how its innovative, and the success it has had in other countries.

Draw a direct connection to your organisation’s mission or values. For example, if your organisation is focused on ending youth homelessness, or preventing youth homelessness, make a direct connection.

Frame this solution as a human rights based approach. This model of service has the potential to change young people’s lives, by recognising and vindicating their human rights, through delivering on their right to housing we can improve their access to rights such as education, healthcare, adequate standard of living, employment, family, privacy etc.

Finish by making your internal request. How will you proceed and highlight a method of piloting Housing First for Youth. This could be a direct ask to pilot a project for a small number of young people, or could be a request to organise a full training on the topic with external experts.

## Advocating to a local municipality

Start with a friendly greeting and establish any prior connections for example, *“Hi, we met at the conference it’s been fantastic to see the great work you’ve been doing in X area”*

Discuss the problem already known and how you want to help prevent this situation from happening. In particular connect the existing problem to any role or duty the local municipality has around youth or homelessness.

Use a blend of research and evaluations from existing Housing First for Youth projects and real life case studies of young people in the system, which can demonstrate the value of Housing First for Youth.

Position the proposal as a form of collaboration, *“we are facing this challenge with you”*, your organisation is an ally with a solution for this problem.

Provide an overview of Housing First for Youth, at an earlier stage this doesn't need to go into the details of all the principles, but enough information for them to see how it is an innovation and is different to other existing services and practices.

Answer any questions they may have.

Finish with some follow-up action, which can be an email with more information or a follow-up meeting.

## Networks & Coalition Building

Housing First for Youth is an evidence based, and highly successful intervention to combat youth homelessness. HF4Y is one part of a strategy to end youth homelessness. However we also need to consider the big picture of how homeless, social, youth, housing, justice, health, education and employment are working towards combatting youth homelessness. Across Belgium, Denmark, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Canada we have seen the development of coalitions to combat homelessness.

During the study session participants heard from Bill Rowlands from End Youth Homelessness Wales, who presented the Welsh coalition to end youth homelessness. Within the coalition they have developed a HF4Y service, but it also stretches wider with initiatives around preventing youth homelessness.

In the Welsh context the sector realised that the existing approach wasn't working effectively to support young people. From the outset the coalition sought to bring partners that 'represent the breadth of experience and expertise needed to tackle youth homelessness. This went beyond normal suspects from just a housing background, to develop a full systems approach.

The coalition comprises a steering group made up of homeless charities, young people, advocacy services, housing associations, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Welsh Government, Think Tanks, Training providers, Universities, The Youth Justice Board, Police and Health. Each stakeholder has a role to play when it comes to the fight to end youth homelessness, this isn't just the job of homeless services. The coalition further establishes task groups around different topics such as care experienced youth and LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness.

The coalition is underpinned by the principles of collective impact where cross sectors collaborate to ensure that they are co-creating solutions with people with lived experiences of YH, service providers, researchers, policy makers and funders. This has been adopted from the Canadian coalition with focus on bringing together key cross-sectors to work towards the collective goal of ending youth homelessness by 2027. Using this approach the coalition has achieved the following:

**Upstream Cymru** – The coalition has rolled out this school screening tool, that identified youth at risk of homelessness and puts in place early interventions. It has been modelled by an Australian projects which saw youth drop out of education fall by 40% and saw youth homelessness drop by 20%. With education, local councils, homeless and social services involved in the coalition they were able to work together to deliver this service.

**Ty Pride** – Ty Pride offers intensive, individual support specifically designed for LGBTQ+ young people aged between 16-25. The project offers both an accepting and warm environment for those living in Ty Pride itself, as well as tailored support in the community for LGBTQ+ young people in north-east Wales, with specialist mental health support and help to engage with the wider LGBTQ+ community from Viva. This new service was made possible by bringing LGBTIQ organisation into the youth coalition to support commissioning research on this topic, and then working together to develop a service to meet the needs of LGBTIQ young people at risk of homelessness.

**HF4Y** – with the support of local authorities, the Welsh government, housing and social services within the coalition they have developed and delivered a HF4Y service in Wales. The coalition also connects with other coalitions in Europe to learn and share practices.

**Tai Ffres** – based on the Finnish Youth Housing Association, Tai Ffres is a collaboration between a Welsh Housing Association and Llamau, to deliver a new and youth-focused approach to housing in

Wales. Aims to offer young people affordable tenancies, with support if needed but not as a prerequisite of obtaining a tenancy. This project was made possible through connecting with international partners and other coalitions to inspire the practice, and the members of the Welsh coalition to deliver it.

During the presentation Bill focused on the international collaboration. A key ingredient to the work they've accomplished has been learning from others, seeing what works and adapting them to Wales. Having an international network also helps to troubleshoot problems and get support from others when you face challenges or unsure what to do next.

## Recommendations & Follow-Up

### Recommendations:

The following recommendations were made:

- In future study sessions ensure the voices of experts by experience are captured, as their voices brought to perspectives and important insights to the discussion.
- FEANTSA Youth & the Housing First Europe Hub will organize a follow-up training of trainers, for participants who wish to become a trainer on Housing First for Youth in their country.
- More organisations need to be trained on the differences between Housing First and Housing First for Youth, to ensure the model is delivered effectively.

### Follow-Up Actions:

Following this study session participants met again online, with participants from previous study sessions and decided some follow activities which include the following:

- An online training on harm reduction models, based on the experience of the Portuguese participants.
- A working group on trauma informed care which will explore doing some research or a webinar series on how those working with youth can take a trauma informed approach to their work
- A mentoring programme that will connect young professionals within FEANTSA Youth to experts within the wider FEANTSA network to share knowledge and experience and support the development of individuals within the network.
- Those interested in coalition building will join a coalition building day in Belgium in March 2023, to plan how they can work together to build stronger coalitions.
- A 3-day training of trainers is being designed for April 2023 as a follow-up to this session, to transform participants knowledge on Housing First for Youth into trainers on the topic.
- The Housing First Europe Hub will launch a community of practice in 2023 for Housing First for Youth, which will connect participants working on this issue for regular online calls to discuss and troubleshoot problems they encounter. The community of practice will incorporate projects from Canada to learn from their existing experiences and expertise.
- FEANTSA Youth will support a study session being planned in Canada in 2023 to adapt the Council of Europe's human rights education and non-formal education model for services working on youth homelessness.

# Appendix 1: Study Session Programme

## Sunday, 2 October 2022

Arrival of participants

19:00 Dinner

21:00 Welcome evening

## Monday, 3 October 2022

09:30 Opening with Introduction to study session

**Balint Molnar**, Deputy Director of the EYCB

11:00 Break

11:30 Team Building Activity

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Understanding Youth Homelessness, sharing experiences from our different contexts and mapping of challenges and opportunities.

16:00 Break

16:30 Framing Youth Homelessness within Human Rights.

17:30 Reflection group

18.00 Wrap-up

19:00 Dinner

21:00 Intercultural Night

## Tuesday, 4 October 2022

09:30 How do we learn? Understanding core principles in designing trainings - *Part 1*

11:00 Break

11:30 How do we learn? Understanding core principles in designing trainings - *Part 2*

13:00 Lunch break

14:30 Housing First for Youth: A brief overview and history of why Housing First for Youth is different to 'adult' Housing First.

16:00 Break

16:30 Core Principles: What are the core principles of Housing First for Youth and how do we integrate them into our service delivery.

17.30 Reflection Groups

18:00 Closing

19:00 Dinner



### **Wednesday, 5 October 2022**

09:30 Service Delivery: Sharing experiences from participants around key topics when it comes to delivering a Housing First for Youth service – *Part 1*

11:00 Break

11:30 Service Delivery: Sharing experiences from participants around key topics when it comes to delivering a Housing First for Youth service – *Part 2*

13:00 Lunch break

14:30 Service Delivery: Sharing experiences from participants around key topics when it comes to delivering a Housing First for Youth service – *Part 3*

16:00 Break

16:30 Youth Participation: How do we meaningfully engage the voices of youth in service design and delivery.

17.30 Reflection Groups

18:00 Closing

19:00 Dinner

Free time

### **Thursday, 6 October 2022**

09:30 Being an Advocate: How to make the case for Housing First for Youth, and to whom? – *Part 1*

Guest Lecturer; **Tracey Longworth**, Almond Housing, Scotland

11:00 Break

11:30 Being an Advocate: How to make the case for Housing First for Youth, and to whom? – *Part 2*

Guest Lecturer, **Tracey Longworth**, Almond Housing, Scotland

13:00 Lunch

Free Afternoon in the city

19:00 Dinner out in the city

### **Friday, 7 October 2022**

09:30 Networks and coalition building: How to organise around preventing and combatting youth homelessness

Guest Lecturer: **Bill Rowlands**, End Youth Homelessness Wales, Wales

11:00 Break

11:30 Action Planning: What will you do with everything you've learned this week?

Guest Lecturer: **Bill Rowlands**, End Youth Homelessness Wales, Wales

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Next Steps: Where do we go beyond this study session as a community? How can FEANTSA Youth and the Housing First Europe Hub support you?

16:00 Break

16:30 Evaluation

17.30 Closing

19:00 Dinner

**Saturday 8 October 2022**

Departure of participants

## Appendix 2: List of Participants

### **Albania**

Borjana Dine	Child Rights Center Albania & ECPAT Albania
Kejsi Hysa	STREHA Shelter

### **Belgium**

Laura Van Barel	Stad Antwerpen
Leen Aernouts	A Way Home Flanders
Mattia Mansueto	KULeuven
Mauranne Debosschere	W13 (A regional association of 14 local municipalities + Regional Centre of Social Work)
Charlotte Cattoir	Back on Track

### **France**

Audrey Nicol	Association Maison D'Accueil
Amandine MERAUX	Association Maison d'Accueil
Clarisse Dachy	SOS Children's Villages
Emma Baz	SOS Children's Villages
Manon Deschamps	Groupe SOS

### **Greece**

Christina Bliouba	Emfasis Foundation - Non Profit
Natalia Tereza Zoi Markopoulou	Ithaca Laundry
Taxiarchoula Spanou	Roots Research Center

### **Iceland**

Soffía Hjördís Ólafsdóttir Soffía	Reykjavik municipality
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### **Ireland**

Aisling O Hara	Galway Simon Community Youth Service
Rebecca Morris	Focus Ireland

### **Italy**

Naomi Karels	Cooperativa Sociale Progetto Tenda
Sonia Calozzo	Piazza Grande Social Cooperative
Viola Segnalini	PsyPlus ETS

### **Lithuania**

Cedric Raffier	Vilnius social club
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### **Netherlands**

Marije Keurntjes	Humanitas Onder Dak Twente
Merel Rupert	Humanitas Onder Dak

### **Portugal**

Siliva Busi GAT - Grupo de Ativistas em Tratamentos/Housing First project

**Spain**

Mari Carmen Castro Enamorado Provivienda

**United Kingdom**

Rebecca Stewart Rock Trust

Lauren Page-Hammick Homeless Link

Billie Jo Mann Crisis

Cindy Boa Clarion and YFF

Shea Moran A Way Home Scotland Coalition (Rock Trust)

**Preparatory team**

Robbie Stakelum FEANSA Youth

Patricia Tovar Hogar Si

Thijs Huisman Hvoquerido

Lisa O'Brien Focus Ireland

Heidi Walter A Way Home Canada

**Lecturers**

Bill Rowlands End Youth Homelessness Wales

Tracey Longworth Almond Housing, Scotland

**Course director**

Robbie Stakelum FEANTSA

**Educational Advisor**

Dani Prisacariu

**Council of Europe**

Ida Kreutzman Educational Advisor

Irisa Veizaj Project Assistant