



Together  
we will end  
homelessness

# Housing First Feasibility Study Torbay

## Executive Summary

Chris Hancock  
Head of Housing, Crisis

May 2018





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## Foreword from The Nationwide Foundation

The Nationwide Foundation is pleased to have funded this feasibility study into the potential for Housing First in the Torbay area. We hope that this report will provide the evidence needed to influence decision-makers to implement the Housing First approach across Torbay.

We funded this study as part of our Decent Affordable Homes strategy, which aims to increase the availability of decent affordable housing for people in housing need. We supported Shekinah through our Nurturing Ideas to Change the Housing System programme, which aims to tackle systemic failings in the housing system.

As a funder that seeks to facilitate systemic change, we back promising housing ideas, allowing them to be tested, and then help them move through into action, influence and ultimately widespread implementation. In this instance, while Housing First has seen great success in North America and Europe, we were keen to explore its potential in the UK where the approach is still in the early stages. The particular circumstances in Torbay and the local political appetite to explore a systems-wide approach to addressing the issue of homelessness for individuals with complex needs, provided a good testing ground.

The study provides a comprehensive review of the current services and outlines the level of investment needed to make the necessary changes. If implemented, Torbay will improve outcomes for single homeless people, as well as saving money in the future.

We will be keen to observe the next stages for Torbay as it uses this study to develop its longer-term housing strategy. As well as having regional impact, we hope that the study will inform and influence the national approach to the adoption of Housing First across the UK.

Jonathan Lewis  
Programme Manager  
The Nationwide Foundation

## Foreword from John Hamblin, Chief Executive of Shekinah

For over 25 years, Shekinah has been supporting people who are homeless and rough sleeping. During this time we have repeatedly seen the failure of the current accommodation system to support people with multiple and complex needs. The result has been the creation of a revolving door system where people are falling in and out of services and are often left with no access to accommodation. We are hoping that through this Nationwide Foundation funded study, Shekinah and its partners can start to realise the aspiration, that everyone deserves a place to call home.

John Hamblin  
CEO Shekinah

# Executive Summary

## Background to the Study

Crisis were keen to investigate and evidence how Housing First and housing-led models of support for homeless people can be taken to a greater scale in the UK. In doing this we wanted to see whether the positive step change in outcomes for homeless people achieved in the international context can be replicated at home. Following a wide-ranging study in the Liverpool City Region (LCR)<sup>1</sup> which identified significant opportunities to tackle homelessness and make financial savings we were keen to see how the approach could have benefits in other parts of the UK.

An approach from Nationwide Foundation and Shekinah to undertake a similar piece of work in Torbay was therefore a great opportunity to test this whilst supporting the aim to end street homelessness in Torbay.

Ultimately, any attempt to provide Housing First at scale will require full co-operation from local government and a range of local agencies. Knowledge and experience of Housing First itself is not a prerequisite, but an appetite for innovation and leadership in homelessness solutions is vital. Throughout this study, it has been

evident from the positive reception the work has received that there is this appetite for a new way of working from both statutory and voluntary sectors in Torbay.

### Definitions and Principles

Housing First is a system of support for homeless people with high and complex needs which is designed to deliver a sustainable exit from homelessness, improve health and well-being and enable social integration. Housing First uses ordinary housing, such as private rented or social rented homes. It is designed to

house formerly homeless people with high needs in their own, settled homes as quickly as possible. Support, is then provided to work towards a permanent exit from homelessness (where possible) in the person's own home.

For Torbay, we are proposing a model in which Housing First is focused on those with high and complex needs, but within a 'housing-led' system in which all those experiencing or threatened with homelessness are resettled as quickly as possible in their own tenancies, with support to be provided where needed.

We are also proposing that prevention and housing options services will also need to adopt the principles of Housing First if the adoption of a Housing First approach is to lead to a sustainable and long-lasting end to homelessness. This will require significant cultural and system change across all services, both statutory and voluntary, involved in supporting homeless people.

The UK Housing First principles, which we are working to in this study, are:<sup>2</sup>

1. People have a right to a home
2. Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed (in the case of those who are initially assessed as needing lower level floating support, this can be increased or extended where necessary)
3. Housing and support are separated
4. Individuals have choice and control
5. An active engagement approach is used
6. The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations
7. A harm reduction approach is used

### Context to Housing First

Housing First has achieved marked success in a number of cities and states across North America and Europe.<sup>3,4</sup> In the UK, a number of small scale Housing First programmes are up and running, but not at a scale that would allow for the approach to be tested as an alternative to existing models of provision, or as a model that might encourage the necessary wider system change needed to end homelessness for good.

This is not to say that there is a lack of interest in the wider potential of Housing First, indeed many organisations are taking a keen interest,<sup>5</sup> and much of the European academic expertise resides in the UK. It is therefore a very positive step that the study in the Liverpool City Region has informed the Westminster government commitment of £28million to support the adoption of Housing First in Liverpool, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands.<sup>6</sup> There are therefore clear opportunities for any work in Torbay to be of benefit locally but also to inform the national approach as to how Housing First may work outside large urban areas. We would hope that Torbay would therefore, rightly, benefit from the increased government interest in Housing First by getting ahead in their plans.

### Objectives of the Torbay Study

The main objective of this study was to produce a theoretical model for the Torbay Region which sets out how a Housing First approach can become the default housing option for single homeless people rough-sleeping or at risk of rough-sleeping across Torbay.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/housing-models-and-access/housing-first-feasibility-study-for-liverpool-city-region-2017/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/national-projects/housing-first-england>

<sup>3</sup> <http://hf.aeips.pt/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Tsemberis.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2015/YMra\\_3en\\_2015.pdf](https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2015/YMra_3en_2015.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/national-projects/housing-first-england>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/215-million-boost-for-council-homelessness-services>

We assessed the feasibility of the proposed model by:

- Evaluating the cost of the model locally and benchmark with national costs;
- Understanding the required policy and process change at local and national level to best maximise the success of the model in ending street homelessness in Torbay; and
- Understanding the wider social and political contexts which will support and challenge the success of the model.

#### **Project oversight, timescale and governance**

We have held over 20 x 1-2-1 meetings with the following services and organisations:

- Torbay Local Authority including:
  - Councillors
  - Housing Options Service
  - Torbay Development Agency (TDA)
  - Homelessness Commissioning Teams
  - Integrated Health and Social Care teams
- Mental health services
- PATH (People Assisting Torbay's Homeless)
- Shekinah
- Drug and Alcohol Commissioners
- Local Department of Work and Pensions Teams
- Westward Housing
- Sanctuary Housing
- Private Rented Sector Agents and landlords

We have held several specific focus groups focusing on criminal justice, access to homeless services, support for homeless people and housing supply.

We also convened a team of peer researchers, made up of people with lived experience of homelessness who undertook over 50 interviews with people currently within the homelessness system in Torbay.

We held a final consultation event which was attended by 60 different stakeholders to present the proposed model and seek further feedback, which has been considered as part of the final report.

#### **What we found**

- There is high demand and unmet need in relation to homelessness services. The data suggests that the current supported accommodation system is supporting some people (roughly 50%) out of homelessness and into more settled housing; but that there isn't capacity within the system to do this for more people. Those that do not move out of the system remain stuck in and out of services and are high users of other statutory services such as health care.
- The study found a high degree of consensus that the current homelessness system can work well for those that can access it, but despite the best efforts of many individuals working in homelessness services not enough people are able to access the system.
- There is a significant use of emergency accommodation, mainly Bed and Breakfast accommodation for single people considered to be in priority need as per Homelessness Legislation. The proportion of single people to families in emergency accommodation in Torbay is 65% whereas the national average is 20%.
- There are some strong examples of multi-agency work, for example where health services and social care are being provided as part of the support at Leonard Stocks House to residents and non-residents on-site. However, these services need additional capacity to meet the high levels of demand for them. For Housing First to succeed, consideration would need to be given as to how they can be delivered flexibly to people in dispersed accommodation.
- Professionals and people with lived experience highlighted several ways

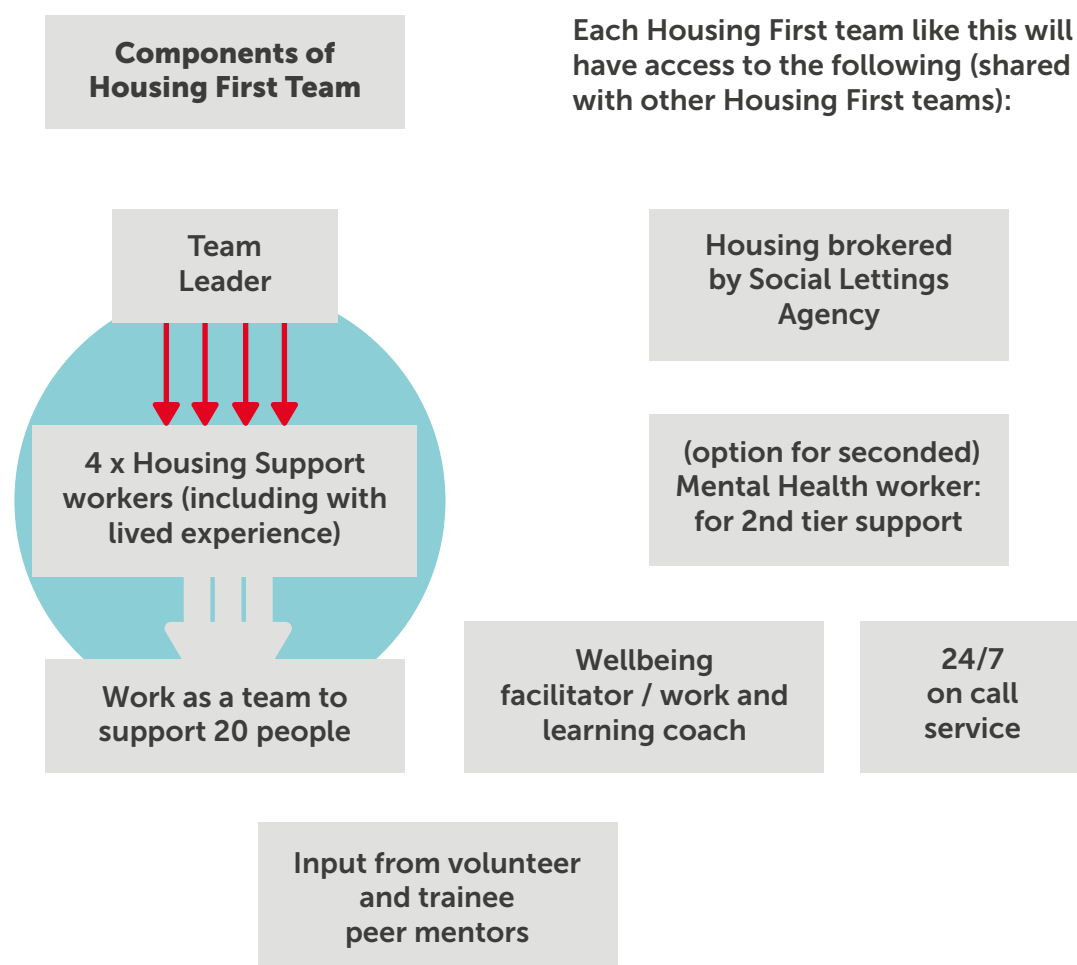
in which current accommodation options can be unsuitable for people with complex needs. However, this was due mainly to physical limitations of the accommodation available rather than the quality of support services.

- Emergency provision which has been created to add to capacity has suffered from a lack of move on options and therefore any additional capacity has itself become silted up and the intentions to provide immediate, short stay solutions have not been realised.
- The application of strict local connection criteria leads to homeless people with relatively low, initial support needs remaining on the street whilst they become more entrenched and develop support needs which are then only met through crisis services such as primary health care. Opportunities to prevent homelessness and save costs in the longer term are being missed.
- Interviews with homeless people who did not meet the applied local connection criteria identified that they had other reasons for being in Torbay (i.e. they had **not** chosen to come to the area because they assumed it would be easier to be rehoused). We also found that numbers of homeless people without a local connection as per the legal definition, were in the minority and on par with other similar parts of the UK.
- People with lived experience of homelessness told us they thought that support to help people exit homelessness should include: i) emotional support; ii) peer support; iii) non-judgemental support iv) independence; v) opportunities for rehabilitation and longer term planning; vi) structure and purpose.
- There is a significant drop off in the support available when people leave supported accommodation and then move into independent accommodation. This reduction in support leads to people not being able to move on from current

services but also people failing when they move into supported accommodation.

- The private rented sector has considerable potential to provide housing supply for Housing First (most people in fact move on from the homelessness system is into the PRS as opposed to social housing) A proposal for a management and/or lease offer to private landlords and agents through a Social Lettings Agency has been welcomed and has the twin benefit of addressing empty homes. Initial discussions have identified that capital investment in exchange for longer term nomination rights could allow such a project to fund itself through the recouping of initial capital outlay through rental income.
- Local housing associations are keen to contribute to support a Housing First approach but will require reassurance on the nature of the support tenants will be provided with and the length of time support will be available for. Existing allocations through Devon Home Choice are unlikely to work effectively for Housing First therefore an alternative process should be considered. There is then potential for any Social Lettings Agency do manage and allocate properties to form the social and private rented sector.
- Overall, the homelessness system is disjointed, without a clear overall sense of pathway from prevention, to intervention, to recovery and then move on for everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. Individual interventions at each stage can be seen to be successful but there are few examples of people moving through each stage seamlessly and out of homelessness for good.





### Proposed Model

The study proposes a potential model which should be put forward for further discussion and consultation with local commissioners and providers.

The key headline proposals are as follows.

- That the following criteria should be applied when determining eligibility for Housing First:
  - a significant history of unstable housing and/or homelessness (at least 12 months as homeless or within homelessness services)
  - a judgement that other service options (including reconnection) either have presented or would be likely to present a risk to the individual or others they might share with, or have provoked / might provoke anti-social behaviour

to the detriment of the individual and/or community

- a decision to accept the tenancy being offered and a basic willingness to engage with the Housing First team, at least at the outset (though this does not mean that the individual is motivated to accept any treatment or therapy)
- a history of at least two of the following:
  - repeated substance misuse;
  - enduring mental ill-health;
  - profound learning difficulties;
  - long term and deteriorating physical health;
  - profound social isolation; and
  - repeat offending.

- The proposed service model suggests that a support team of 6 people (4 support workers, 1 Team Leader and second tier support from 1 mental health Support Worker (50% of time split between each team) can support up to 20 individuals requiring the intensive support of a Housing First approach.
- Employing people with lived experience of homelessness within the support team is essential to help encourage a culture where the person-centred, flexible support which underpins successful Housing First projects elsewhere can be developed.
- The introduction of a mental health worker attached to each support team would need to be agreed with mental health Services but precedent has been established with mental health expertise already located within the Council Housing services.
- Access to all other statutory support services (physical health, drug and alcohol services and welfare benefits) could be made through mainstream, universal services with the help of the Housing First support team to navigate and / or advocate through the system.
- Supply of housing is proposed to be drawn from a pool of properties managed by a 'Social Lettings Agency' who would take on management of properties from the private sector and potentially the social sector although this requires some further exploration (although initial discussions with both Westward and Sanctuary housing has been positive about contributing stock).
- To manage demand for services moving forwards, it is essential that the model be built on enhanced investment in homelessness prevention activities. The Homelessness Reduction Act provides a platform for this by creating additional legal duties the local authority need to meet. Housing First should therefore be considered as an option but only after other opportunities to prevent or relieve homelessness have been explored.
- Building on current and local good practice examples then the development of clear and consistent pathways between the criminal justice system, NHS provision and drug and alcohol services should be prioritised. Given the geographic remit of statutory services involved in this then consideration should be given to agreeing this Devon wide. The Homelessness Reduction Act and the upcoming Duty to Refer (being implemented in October 2018) again provides a legal platform for this.
- As part of this prevention offer sustained or renewed investment in floating support services, which fit with the basic principles of Housing First in terms of ethos and approach, will be required.
- The Housing First approach should therefore not only be considered to provide a new housing options for someone but also as an approach which can 'rescue' existing failing tenancies for people who meet eligibility criteria.
- Emergency provision will still need to be part of the offer. However efficient the system becomes there will remain a need for a relatively small scale (5-10 units) of 24-hour accessible accommodation. It is vitally important that this emergency provision operates without local connection restrictions. Whilst access to a Housing First service should be restricted to those with a connection to Torbay (or with no safe connection elsewhere) it is important that reconnection and signposting work takes place with someone indoors rather than attempting that on the street.
- It is also envisaged that the adoption of Housing First to scale will be a gradual process and it will be vital that any change of provision be managed so as to avoid existing services ending unpredictably or providers' business models

becoming unviable. It would provide no benefit for services to be ended before new provision could be put in place. As such there would need to be some 'double-funding' of services, we have set out the cost implications of this below.

- If the approach is implemented, then there will be a need to provide ongoing recovery services for people to access. These could build on existing, successful, meaningful occupation services for people provided in Torbay. Dispersed accommodation does offer significant benefits but could lead to social isolation if opportunities to retain or create new networks aren't available. There are already a range of successful non-commissioned services such as those provided at Endeavour House, Growing Lives and TRIP (Torbay Recovery Information Project) providing meaningful occupation services which should be supported to provide ongoing support to Housing First clients.
- It has proved more challenging to secure consistent data on levels and type of need than it did for the Liverpool City Region study. Whilst the TESH (Torbay Ending Street Homelessness) project has helped provide detail the lack of a consistent data recording system across street outreach, the hostel, Housing Options services and then Home Choice has made building a complete picture very difficult. Shekinah's plans for the ECINS system should create the necessary shared IT system but it will need consideration as to how it can link to other systems.<sup>7</sup>
- The model proposed is an ambitious one and requires additional spending. Given that the key challenge in Torbay is one of capacity primarily rather than inefficiency it will be necessary to make cost benefit arguments to other statutory commissioners beyond the local authority to supplement budgets.

- The model proposed aims to end homelessness in Torbay which is a more ambitious target than simply replacing the existing capacity of the system, which as we have set out is not sufficient to meet the full need. Therefore, we do expect budget spend to be higher than current spent for 9 years but there would then be sufficient provision for no-one to be without the offer of a home and support in Torbay. It is also highly likely to assume that without changing the current system substantially then current levels of spend on emergency housing would escalate beyond the predicted amounts required to support Housing First.
- We estimated that Housing First would be nearly 2 times more cost effective and achieving a successful outcome for homeless people with complex needs than the current provision. This also only considers local authority direct spend on homelessness, by adopting this approach considerable savings would be made across all services currently interacting with homeless people.

### Implementation and Costings

#### Phase 1 (Initial 6 months)

Actions needed:

- establish a strategic advisory board, with representatives from the local authority, health, criminal justice, and housing associations. It will be key to seek voluntary sector involvement (throughout this process the role of street services provided the best opportunity to hear and discuss the views of homeless people themselves)
- to set-up a co-ordination body to oversee the establishment of 2 operational project boards for both the Social Lettings Agency and the support teams

- the co-ordination body would also hold responsibility for promoting the findings of the study and providing training on Housing First principles and methodology across Torbay
- set up Lived Experience Advisory Board, where possible of people with previous and current experience of homelessness in Torbay. We feel it is very to build on the interest and enthusiasm people with lived experience have shown this study.
- appoint a project lead to make proposals on the detailed implementation of the Social Lettings Agency to identify potential host organisation or to set up new entity (maybe possible to base this within Torbay Development Agency to realise wider potential of such an agency to provide additional PRS stock for a wider group of people in housing need)
- appoint a project lead to make proposals on the detailed implementation of the support service. Establish protocols and pathways with statutory and voluntary agencies
- undertake a detailed exercise planning for the gradual decommissioning of existing services after year 2 to provide funding for Housing First service
- amendment to new IT system to enable referral and monitoring of Housing First provision. Shekinah's plans for the ECINS system should create the necessary shared IT system but it will need consideration as to how it can link to other systems
- underpinned by the Homelessness Reduction Act establish increasingly consistent approach to prevention of homelessness, floating support and housing-led solutions within Torbay and (in partnership) across wider Devon

Resource Needed	Timescale	Estimated Cost
Full time implementation Co-ordination Role	2 years (after which could be mainstreamed into commissioning team)	£110k (£45k pa post plus on costs)
Full time project Lead for implementing Social Lettings Agency	2 years (unless picked up under TDA work)	£80k (£35k pa post plus on costs)
Shared IT system implementation	One Off	£10k
Training / Awareness Raising events	Over 2 years	£10k
<b>Total</b>		<b>£190k</b>

#### Phase 2 (years 1-2):

Initial intensive focus on those regularly sleeping on the street and those that struggle most to retain supported accommodation.

Actions needed:

- establish Social Lettings Agency service to point where up to 75 properties can be taken into management in first 2 years
- establish Support Service teams to point where 40 individuals can be supported within 2 years (based on recommended caseloads in the Feasibility study (max 20 per team) this would require 2 teams. (40 individuals to be supported by end of year 2)
- secure commitment from mental health Commissioners to contribute sufficient mental health expertise to meet need across 2 support teams within 2 years and with ongoing commitment to scaling up
- integrate Housing First approach with existing outreach services and housing options teams through co-location, training and encouraging Housing First approach to be written into new commissioning strategies
- explore how Housing First principles and approach can be adopted more widely across homelessness services, especially for young people and domestic abuse survivors.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.empowering-communities.org/software/e-cins/>

Resource Needed	Timescale	Estimated Cost
Estimated cost for provision of Local Lettings Agency and Support service for 40 clients (40 x 12,733)	Over 2 years	£328,800 (based on £10,960 per person per year x 30 to allow for fact not all 40 will be in service for full 2 years)
<b>Total (including Phase 1)</b>		<b>£518,800</b>

These effectively represent double running costs whilst existing supported housing provision remains unchanged.

**Phase 3 (Year 3 and beyond)**

Given, that we have identified an annual cost per person of £17,986 for existing 24-hour emergency or specialist services there is now the potential to return savings through decommissioning of existing services.

At this point if we assume that 50% of the individuals supported by Housing First are from this type of provision (or at least would have been if they hadn't been helped by Housing First) then there is the potential to redirect £359,720 (20 people) of savings to support the cost of Housing First in years 1 and 2.

We have not assumed any savings from decommissioning in years 1 and 2 because practically decommissioning will depend on obligations and commitments which potentially restrict the use of existing services and how flexibly these might be addressed. However, if services units can be decommissioned as they are freed up after year 2 (and that there would be 2 years of double funding to prepare for this point) it is reasonable to assume a direct contribution from decommissioned services into new services from that point.

It would be possible to achieve quicker savings by targeting Housing First at people currently using services, however we should be mindful that

Housing First works best for those who choose it and that we should not miss the opportunity to address street homelessness, even though no direct cost is accrued. Therefore, we have assumed the 50% as the best way of striking that balance.

Over 5 years this would look as follows (considering all aspects of the system which would require funding including emergency accommodation.

The table on the facing page assumes all clients will be in accommodation from start of the year for full 12 months whereas people will enter accommodation at different points in the year, with this amount being the maximum spend needed at year end but not an amount which needs to be paid out consistently throughout the whole year. As stated above we would expect the actual cost to be lower than this and based at the end of each year we assume that 75% of this maximal cost is more realistic as people enter the new system at different points.

We would also assume that full time implementation roles in years 1 and 2 would not be required and any remaining work be subsumed into existing structures. However, it is essential that the principles of Housing First continued to be championed across all relevant services and therefore it will be essential that fidelity of the model is checked and challenged where necessary. It may well be possible to consider this as a sub-regional role if others in Devon adopt the approach.

We have proposed staggering the adoption of Housing First to be realistic over availability of housing supply, to acknowledge the challenges of scaling up support services that quickly and also to spread costs over a longer period. Should funding opportunities present themselves to scale up more quickly then savings could be realised more quickly.

Service Type	Cost per year (millions)					
	Current	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Housing First	0	0.22	0.44	0.66	0.88	1.00
Emergency & Specialist Housing – 24 Hour Cover	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.28	0.18	0.18
Emergency & Specialist Housing – Other	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.17	0.12	0.08
Non Supported Temporary Accommodation	0.18	0.18	0.09	0.07	0.04	0.01
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.09</b>	<b>1.31</b>	<b>1.44</b>	<b>1.18</b>	<b>1.22</b>	<b>1.27</b>

**Overall Funding Requirement**

**Year 1 & 2**

Implementation Costs £190,000

Running Costs (Double Funding) £328,800

**Year 3**

Additional money needed above current budget (after factoring in money saved through decommissioning) £90,000

**Year 4**

Additional money needed above current budget (after factoring in money saved through decommissioning) £130,000

**Year 5**

Additional money needed above current budget (after factoring in money saved through decommissioning) £180,000

Total additional funding required over 5 years (above current spend on homelessness) = £918,800

We proposed this is required to reach a point where homelessness levels would plateau and then start to decline and therefore the budget would decrease year on year after this point. By year 9 budget spend would then be lower than current spend on homelessness but there would then be sufficient provision for no-one to be without the offer of a home and support in Torbay.



## Thank you

**The study has been funded by the Nationwide Foundation and commissioned by Shekinah in partnership with Torbay Council and Westward Housing. It therefore represents the views of Crisis and not the views of any of these parties.**

**Crisis received support and help from many people in Torbay who we thank, and especially those people with lived experience who shared their honest and frank accounts of their own homelessness.**

**Crisis would like to also specifically thank those listed below for their help with this work:**

John Hamblin – Shekinah  
Debbie Freeman – Torbay Council  
Stuart Bakewell – Westward Housing  
Danny Crowley – Shekinah  
Rachel Danemann – Torbay Council  
Bryony Stevens – Torbay Council  
Kath Friedrich – Torbay PATH  
Naomi Duncan-Jones – Torbay NHS

**We would also like to thank the following organisations and groups for their participation in the study:**

Friends of Factory Row  
Torbay and Brixham Job Centre Plus  
Torbay Health and Social Care Teams  
Sanctuary Housing  
EasyLet Agents  
Devon and Cornwall Police  
Devon Probation Services



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# Crisis

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