

## JOB DESCRIPTION

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|-------------------|--|
| <b>Job Title</b>  | <b>Housing First Project Worker</b>                                    |
| <b>Reports to</b> | Transitions Team Manager (in HARP's Supported Housing Service)         |
| <b>Grade</b>      | Start at 11, rising to 16.   |
| <b>Location</b>   | Based Vera House but providing floating support across Southend-on-Sea |
| <b>Hours</b>      | 21 - with a requirement to work evenings and weekends                  |

Housing First is an innovative - but now widely expanding - approach to supporting the most disadvantaged, entrenched, excluded and hard-to-reach homeless individuals. It focuses on finding permanent housing as quickly as possible, and only subsequently addressing the issues that have contributed to that individual's homelessness. Rather than following the traditional routes of hostels and supported housing, and requiring engagement in services as a condition for accommodation, Housing First offers people the security of their own home, and then gives them the intensive support needed to maintain their tenancies. The service is typically designed for long term rough sleepers who have experienced multiple disadvantage, for whom traditional services and shared housing is not suitable, for instance those not comfortable in such social settings.

HARP plans to set up Southend-on-Sea's first Housing First pilot project. Participants in this project will be single people (or childless couples) who will typically be rough sleeping, homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. The project will seek to address these needs and disadvantages by adopting a variety of techniques and approaches aimed at building relationships with the individuals, and developing personalised support plans for each one. Participants' unique needs will be placed at the heart of the project, with HARP supporting each individual to reach their personal goals, to make informed decisions and, ultimately, to achieve a greater level of stability and independence. This work will be carried out predominantly by Housing First Project Workers, but will be fully supported by HARP's wider services and staff team. Housing First Project Workers will provide person-centred housing-related support, information, advice and coaching to participants of the project. The post-holders will act as key-workers for a small group of individuals, with an anticipated staff-to-resident ratio of one FTE worker to six or seven individuals. This may vary during the life of the pilot and dependent on the complexity of the individuals worked with. Staff will be supported by volunteers, usually former service users, who will provide additional advice and support to Housing First participants based on their own "lived experience". Project staff will work flexible hours in line with the needs of the individuals, therefore work will be required outside of the conventional working week, including evenings, bank holidays and weekends.

Individuals engaged in the project will be identified via a range of avenues, including through the Charity's own outreach workers or the wider outreach team in Southend, HARP's Bradbury Centre (day service and "sit-up" service), Night Shelter and women-only hostel (White Heather House), or through Southend Council's Access Panel Referral system.

All work carried out within the project will be underpinned by the Housing First principles:

1. People have a right to a home.
2. Flexible support will be provided for as long as it is needed.
3. Housing and support will be separated.
4. Individuals participating will be given choice and control.
5. The service will be based on individuals' strengths, goals and aspirations.
6. We will adopt the approach of active engagement with participants in the project.
7. A harm reduction approach will be used.

## **Main purpose of the post**

- To be responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the service, managing a small caseload of individuals with the overall goal of supporting them to sustain their tenancies.
- To provide personalised, strengths-based support to participants, tailored to their needs and aspirations, with individuals choosing as far as possible what, how and when support is delivered.
- To provide flexible, ongoing and intensive support to Housing First residents to help them to choose, set up and personalise their homes.
- To promote choice and wellbeing of participants in the project. This will be achieved through regular contact with them, including visits to their homes and support in community settings, as appropriate.
- To support the stability and progression towards participants' independence, to help them to achieve their personal goals, adopting an adaptable and flexible approach.
- To meet with commissioners, produce reports and participate in service monitoring.

## **Key duties and responsibilities**

- To make contact with, and build and maintain proactive working relationships with, individuals within the post-holder's caseload.
- To offer a personalised service to each individual on the caseload, adopting a psychologically-informed and trauma-informed approach to supporting them, including reflective practice.
- To support individuals on the caseload to make appropriate, informed and empowered choices about their housing options, locations and personal safety, within the bounds of what is possible.
- To work closely with HARP's Landlord Liaison and Eviction Prevention Officer to help to identify and address barriers to securing appropriate accommodation for the project's participants.
- To liaise with the Landlord Liaison and Eviction Prevention Officer, to help build positive relationships with providers of suitable accommodation for the Housing First project.
- To provide practical support to new residents moving into housing such as help with obtaining furniture, working with Southend Council in securing Essential Living Fund (ELF) allowance for this wherever possible, or sourcing suitable items via HARP's furniture shop or from HARP's storage.
- To work to assist Housing First residents to maintain their tenancies, signposting them as appropriate to relevant benefits advisory services, and encouraging them to engage in HARP's *Renting Ready*, budgeting and similar tenancy-sustainment training programmes.
- To step in wherever necessary to assist with neighbour relationships, particularly when issues arise, for instance due to participants' behaviour, rent arrears or damage to the property.
- To work with residents to ensure they understand and comply with the terms of their tenancies, helping them to manage their rent payments and other housing costs independently.
- To support Housing First residents in dealing with minor repairs and maintenance, encouraging them to take responsibility for their homes including in terms of safety.
- To hold regular meetings with Housing First residents - at times and frequency convenient to them - primarily in their homes, as well as in the community, to discuss their needs and help resolve issues.
- To assist participants on the caseload with their budgeting, helping them to take full responsibility for their financial matters, and providing allocated personal budgets to them where appropriate.
- To monitor participants' physical and mental health, and identify and seek to address social isolation and exclusion.
- To encourage individuals to engage with HARP's meaningful activities programme, bearing in mind that Housing First residents may struggle with social interaction so may need personalised activities to be made available to them outside the Charity's "standard offering".
- To develop, maintain and coordinate effective working relationships with external agencies, promoting effective communication for and about individuals participating, ensuring HARP's pilot is widely known about, understood and promoted.

- To advocate for participants and be persistent in encouraging them to engage with relevant services as well as with any reconciliation work that would be to their advantage with external agencies.
- To offer guidance, advice and support on ways in which substance misuse - or other harmful activities - can be practiced more safely, for instance adopting and following managed alcohol reduction plans.
- To liaise with agencies (with client agreement), to enable access to support including regarding substance misuse and recovery, offending and criminal justice, health including mental health, domestic abuse, welfare and housing benefits, adult and child protection, employment and training.
- To accompany participants as appropriate to interviews, appointments, house viewings or other similar meetings, encouraging them to self-advocate but also offering support as necessary.
- To support individuals to access community resources in order to develop positive peer networks, for instance - as appropriate for each person - social, recreational, sport-related, faith-related, learning-related or arts-based groups or activities.
- To carry out regular case reviews within agreed timescales, monitoring individuals' progress.
- To maintain accurate case files via the Charity's *Inform* database, minimising the use of written records in line with GDPR (data protection) legislation and principles.
- To participate actively in agreeing and achieving key performance indicator targets, in conjunction with the primary Funder of the project and with any other external commissioner of the service.
- To promote and encourage the involvement of peers (ie: those with "lived experience") as volunteers within the Housing First pilot, working closely with HARP's Volunteering Coordinator.
- To participate in, and prepare a written report for, Quarterly Service Review meetings for the project.
- To help develop the Housing First service over time, learning from emerging practice in other projects across the UK and sharing learning from HARP's pilot with other projects.
- To participate in submission of data to Housing First England, Homeless Link and other sector-wide bodies as required from time to time, to assist in the analysis of project outcomes in order to help inform best practice and to influence future commissioners of the service and the model's approach.

### **Key outcomes targeted from post**

- Participants in HARP's Housing First project will have, and maintain, a home of their own.
- Participants will have every opportunity to identify and achieve their personal goals and aspirations.
- Individuals' access to help and support, in terms of their personal rights, is maximised for their health including mental health, finances, social opportunities and interaction, work and occupation.
- Harm is reduced, including through reduction in:
  - rough sleeping
  - homelessness generally
  - mental health issues
  - substance misuse
  - alcohol dependency, or alcohol consumption at levels adverse to physical and mental health
  - criminal behaviour
  - anti-social behaviour.

### **Other responsibilities and duties**

- To provide temporary cover for colleagues as and when required within the Housing First project.
- To participate in a rota of duties in order to ensure that service delivery is available to participants in the evenings, at weekends and on bank holidays, including over Christmas and New Year.
- To follow the organisation's policies and procedures, particularly in relation to Safeguarding, Health & Safety, Confidentiality, Data Protection and Equal Opportunities.
- To attend staff meetings, and relevant training and development, as and when required.

- To develop skills and competencies to meet the demands of the role as it evolves over time.

*This job description does not provide an exhaustive list of duties, and the post-holder may be required to carry out other incidental duties within the scope, spirit and purpose of the job, or other reasonable duties as requested by HARP from time to time.*

## PERSON SPECIFICATION FOR RECRUITMENT

### Housing First Project Worker

| Attributes                                | Essential   | Desirable   |
|---|---|---|
| Experience                                | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Experience working in social housing or homelessness, mental health, substance misuse, offending or a similar, related field</li> <li>2. Experience of helping vulnerable adults to identify and achieve personal goals</li> <li>3. Experience of managing complex situations</li> <li>4. Experience of working within the boundaries of confidentiality &amp; safeguarding frameworks</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Experience of working with, and motivating, volunteers</li> <li>2. Empathy for Housing First project participants gained through direct or indirect (eg: through a family member) "lived experience" of homelessness</li> </ol> |
| Knowledge, Training & Qualifications      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Understanding of the issues involved in resettling vulnerable homeless people</li> <li>6. Understanding of how multiple disadvantage affects take up of services by individuals</li> <li>7. Understanding of professional boundaries</li> <li>8. Understanding of equality and diversity</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Understanding of the principles and philosophy of Housing First</li> <li>3. Knowledge of welfare rights and the benefits system</li> </ol>  |
| Personal Attributes, Skills and Abilities | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Ability to work remotely from HARP's offices, providing intensive floating support at participants' flats or elsewhere in Southend</li> <li>10. Ability to plan, prioritise and work under own initiative, and to multi-task effectively</li> <li>11. Excellent organisational skills, enabling the post-holder to handle a small but intensive caseload</li> <li>12. Ability to work collaboratively and constructively within a small team setting</li> <li>13. Excellent interpersonal, communication and active listening skills, with the ability to negotiate with, influence and motivate a diverse range of stakeholders to engage with the pilot project and develop best practice</li> <li>14. Ability to be flexible and adaptable in response to work demands &amp; working hours</li> <li>15. Ability to respond positively and proactively to changes in the internal and external environment, demonstrating persistence and determination in dealing with challenges</li> <li>16. Demonstrable interest in and personal commitment to alleviating homelessness</li> <li>17. Creativity and enthusiasm for finding positive solutions to best address participants' needs</li> <li>18. Ability to remain calm and take appropriate decisions under pressure</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Good ICT skills including familiarity with service database packages such as <i>Inform</i></li> <li>5. Car owner and driver ("clean" licence)</li> </ol>  |