

## LYON METROPOLE LYON PUTS HOUSING FIRST

Lyon Metropole provides tailor-made, diversified response to the needs of each individual in or at risk of homelessness. The process is guided by the principles of Housing First that ensure a right to stable housing for all without conditions such as being 'housing ready'.

### Fighting homelessness through the Housing First approach

Lyon Metropole, like many cities over Europe is confronted with an increase of homeless people. In 2019, around 16 000 people were homeless in Lyon Metropole. The city counted 2500 rough sleepers, 6500 users of shelters and transitory solutions and 7000 people housed by third persons or staying in settlements. This phenomenon is reinforced by a lack of social housing (demand is 7 times greater than the offer). Young people (in particular leaving child assistance schemes) and women were identified as particularly affected by homelessness.



Traditional solutions such as emergency accommodation and the staircase model (in which individuals have to go through a series of steps and type of provisional accommodations to prove that they are housing ready before accessing a stable solution) have shown their limitations. A new approach is needed.

### Lyon Metropole's plan for Housing First and the fight against homelessness

To address this dire situation, Lyon Metropole, in partnership with the state, has developed a 5-year plan for Housing First and the fight against homelessness. The implementation period covers 2018 through 2022.



The additional funding provided by the state and the accelerated implementation of Housing First aims at developing affordable housing supply based on a principle of social diversity, improving the quality of the existing stock and facilitating inclusion through housing.

For this purpose, Lyon metropole developed 3 main strands of action. First, the metropole is making more housing available (for example by working with private owners), but also offering a variety of forms of housing combined with support. For example, the metropole is developing boarding houses. These small structures gather

Calvin Covaciu arrived in Lyon as EU mobile citizen but had no income. After 10 years living in a settlement in very bad conditions, he was included with his family in the project 'a school, a roof, rights'. They were allocated a vacant house and provided support in exercising their rights (like accessing benefits) but also support for the schooling of the children and adult's employment. Calvin shared during Eurocities' meeting that the project gave him a chance to get out of the vicious circle linking homelessness and unemployment. He also insisted on the importance for him and his family to have an active role in the process. He is proud to now be helping other families in similar situations as peer worker on the project.

a reduced number of individual flats with shared areas (kitchen, community rooms, etc.) A professional 'host' is also present during the day to provide different types of support.

Providing a variety of support based on the individual needs of the beneficiary is indeed the second strand of action. Intense focus is also put on preventing homelessness by offering targeted support to groups or individuals identified as being at risk of becoming homeless and fighting evictions.

The third priority of the plan is to change mindsets (in particular of politicians, NGOs, social workers and all partners) in favour of Housing First and to establish a mechanism for the

permanent improvement of the plan (through training, collection of data, monitoring and evaluation, etc.)

The plan developed by Lyon metropole defines clear objectives to be achieved by the end of the 5 years:

- Reduce the number of homeless people by half
- Ensure that all people leaving institutions (like prisons, hospitals or foster care) have a house
- Prevent evictions

## Funding

Lyon Metropole dedicated an annual budget of €106 million to its housing policies. This includes actions towards affordable housing and homelessness. The plan for Housing First and the fight against homelessness is mainly funded through a national grant (€1 017 500 in 2018-2019 and €910 000 in 2019-2020).

To ensure financial sustainability beyond the 5 years of the partnership with the state and guarantee long-term investment, Lyon Metropole is also looking into new funding opportunities such as through the European Investment Bank (EIB) or using social impact bonds.

## Successes

The plan being still in the very first phases of implementations, it is too early to identify clear figures and success rates. Though, projects adopting Housing First approaches have already shown their added value. For example, preliminary results from the project 'a school, a roof, rights' indicate that after 2 years all

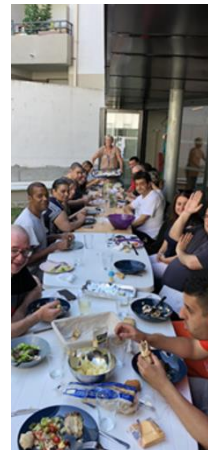


households had accessed social housing and at least one member of the family was employed. Figures also demonstrate a financial added value as the hotel costs to shelter a family for one month (under the previous system) can cover the costs of accommodation for a full year under this project.

The diversification of methods to increase the availability of housing for vulnerable individuals has also been successful. The system of 'solidary owners' which consists of a collaboration with private owners has made available 432 flats to Housing First Programmes.

The exchanges with other city experts from the working group homelessness helped identify some of the success factors in the approach taken by Lyon Metropole:

- Clear commitment to Housing First and willingness to change mindsets (through training, monitoring etc.)
- Broad partnership with a variety of stakeholders (59 municipalities within the Metropole, national government, NGOs, private landlords, beneficiaries, university and research organisations etc.)
- Thinking outside the box a providing a variety of solutions (boarding houses, intermediary solutions, private housing, public housing stock etc.)
- Willingness to ensure housing for all beyond the 5-year plan as shown in the initiative 'zero return to the street' following emergency accommodation of all rough sleepers during lockdown and the covid-19 pandemic.



## Challenges

Despite a strong political will to support the process, Lyon Metropole has been confronted to certain challenges during the first phase of implementation of the plan. The first major challenge is linked to the lack of public housing (or social housing) that contributes both to limiting the options to respond to the needs of vulnerable households, but also reinforces the tension in the housing market. To increase the availability of housing for the Housing First programmes, the partners of the projects work towards mobilising private housing. Yet attracting private landlords has proven difficult, both in terms of communication around the project (informing owners about this opportunity) but also convincing them to commit to a long-term engagement (6 to 9 years).

Another challenge is linked to enabling choices by the beneficiaries. While the project allows for case-by-case solution (in terms of selecting the appropriate form of housing for that person, the levels and types of supports provided) which contributes to giving beneficiaries ownership of the solution, it is often difficult to take into account other individual criteria (preferred neighbourhood etc.) due to a limited availability of options.

Finally, Lyon Metropole anticipates challenges in ensuring the sustainability of the approach beyond the 5-years of accelerated implementation with the support of the state. To address this situation, the metropole is both using this opportunity to fund long-term investment and looking into innovative solutions and financial schemes for the future.

## Lessons to transfer to other cities

- Create a partnership with a variety of key stakeholders involved in housing and homelessness policies (NGOs, municipalities, state, private owners, research organisations, university and training institutes etc.)
- Diversify the housing offers to adapt to each individual situation and needs (boarding houses, intermediary housing, high quality modular units, tiny homes, social housing, municipal housing stock, private housing etc.)
- Accompany the provision of housing with a variety of social support for tenants (life skills, language, schooling, employment, budget, accessing benefits, administrative skills, health and psychological support, etc.)
- Involve private owners to increase the availability of housing to vulnerable groups beyond public (social) housing. Guarantees and incentives (rent guarantee, renovations, management of the property, financial or tax incentives etc.) can be developed to attract more interest from private owners.



## What next?

Lyon Metropole continues to develop its plan for Housing First and the fight against homelessness. The Municipality and the different partners are defining and implementing new strategies to continue develop the availability of housing (for example through intermediary housing, high quality modular units, renovations of public buildings etc.). The approach developed under this plan is also being extended in the context of the covid-19 pandemic. After a first phase of emergency housing for all people in need (during the first lockdown), the Municipality of Lyon has now committed to provide sustainable long-term solutions to all and avoid any return to the streets.

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## Additional resources

- [Video Lyon puts Housing First](#)
- [Report on cities delivering social rights – Access to affordable and social housing and support to homeless people](#)



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