## **Social Housing Case Study**

### **Presentation of the case**

**Introduction**

Social Housing is a multifaceted policy that can include provision of shelter for many categories of marginalised and disadvantaged people as well as for a wider spectrum of citizens. Social housing involves the allocation of housing based on needs rather than via market allocation. As rents, homelessness and property prices have increased across Europe, social housing has become increasingly important at a European level and for many EU Funds and Programmes.

Because many with housing needs including the homeless and those at risk of homelessness and people with disabilities, face multiple disadvantage there is usually a ‘social care’ element integrated into social housing measures. Housing is one part of a ‘package’ of support that also address health, educational and employment disadvantage, digital exclusion as well as physical accessibility and safety.

Marginalised and disadvantaged people have a history of institutionalisation (in care homes, mental health facilities, prisons etc ). There is therefore a strong policy impetus not to reproduce the isolation and stigmatisation associated with institutionalisation in new social housing provision. In Greece, the National Deinstitutionalisation Strategy is an important benchmark when designing, implementing, managing and evaluating Social Housing initiatives.

Social Housing can include many different kinds of initiatives. This exercise focuses on a ‘social housing’ case example that is not drawn directly from any Programming Documents although they may well be similar interventions funded in the 2021-2027 Programming period in many member states. This case does however exemplify some of the challenges faced by those evaluating social housing actions.

**Housing, Homelessness and Preventing Homelessness**

Those facing long-term homelessness face multiple disadvantage. Pathways to homelessness can include physical and mental health problems and drug addiction, poor diet, alcohol abuse, periods of unemployment, both social and vocational skill deficits, social isolation as well as lack of accommodation. Traditional policies often start with ‘getting people ready’ for housing via stable employment or attempting to address underlying heath problems. Dealing with housing is seen as a second stage and while health or employment or social services are accessed, people without stable accommodation may continue to live in temporary shelter or in institutions.

Extensive international experience, research and evaluation of what is often called a ‘Housing First’ approach suggests that starting with stable housing can be the most effective way to intervene to remedy homelessness even when other problems exist[[1]](#footnote-1). These other problems must not be ignored but welfare, health and vocational inputs build around an initial stabilisation of housing as a first step. This ‘imagined’ case study draws on some of this ‘new’ thinking in social housing for the disadvantaged.

In this case study, the main provider *Homes First* which is a non-profit, has made agreements with private developers building new social housing stock to manage 30 apartments as part of a homeless prevention initiative. To avoid risks of ‘institutionalisation’ these units are distributed across 5 new housing developments in 2 medium size cities. Each apartment has 2 or 3 bedrooms to allow for families and to reduce the risk of isolation among individual residents living together.

The provider has a team of ‘housing advisers’ who interface with existing health, welfare and vocational agencies and advocate on behalf of those living in their housing units.

Taking advantage of new social ‘housing-stock’ made possible by national policy initiatives this project funded by ERDF and ESF+ has been set up to target 3 categories of people at risk of homelessness.

1. Long term homeless persons, i.e. those who currently have no stable shelter may live in temporary accommodation or are sometimes in hospital, prison or even on the street.
2. Single women with children who have often been the victims of domestic violence and who together with their children are at risk of further separation if they cannot find suitable accommodation
3. Young adults who may have been in foster-care or in institutions during childhood and who are now facing both housing transitions and transitions to independent living and the world of work simultaneously

Among the challenges for providers are:

* Selecting those who will live in these housing units – the provider takes referrals from many different agencies and sometimes also have ‘self-referrals’
* How to integrate multiple health, welfare and vocational services with housing and ensure that psycho-social, economic, vocational and medical support is appropriate
* How to ensure that ‘packages’ of support are delivered in ways that address causes of homelessness whilst at the same time not undermining residents’ autonomy and contributing to institutionalisation
* At a community level because this initiative is distributed across other social housing accommodation preventing stigmatisation of residents and conflict between neighbours.

### **Groupwork 1: Scoping the evaluation**

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| **Using programme theory/intervention logics to orientate**  In any sector, scoping an evaluation and deciding on the focus and unit of analysis for an evaluation poses many challenges. What should be included? Which actions? Where to draw the boundaries? What is the focus? Should elements of neighbouring or overlapping actions and programmes should be included? A valuable ‘map’ for programme managers and evaluators to orientate this stage is a preliminary ‘programme theory’ (or intervention logic). At this early stage we do not expect a more elaborate ‘theory of change’ outlining how an intervention or policy works and why. However we should be able to depend on a more straightforward programme theory that summarises the assumptions of policy-makers and policy designers about how an investment in services, infrastructure and skills is expected to contribute to policy objectives. If even a basic programme theory has already been developed this can be a useful ‘map’ for those scoping an evaluation, if no such map exists, the scoping stage of an evaluation can be an opportunity to start outlining at least a basic set of assumptions. |

It has been decided to evaluate this *Homes First* initiative. The evaluation will have to consider the standpoint of different stakeholders including the *Homes First,* regional government which channel EU funding and residents. Although results and impacts in terms of housing stability and integration into communities and employment will only be possible at a later stage of the evaluation, the foundations for this – establishing baselines, data availability and identifying implementation difficulties - will need to be addressed from the beginning.

Deciding on the focus and unit of analysis for an evaluation poses many challenges. What should be included? Which actions? Where to draw the boundaries? In this case should all categories of persons at risk of homelessness be evaluated in the same way? Should there be a common core but separate sub-elements for the long-term homeless, women with children and young people? How far should ‘packages’ of support from welfare, health vocational training and other agencies also be evaluated? Should this include the professional skills and methods of support workers including housing advisors? Should there be an economic as well as a housing dimension, for example by assessing costs and benefits in terms of employment of this and alternative strategies to reduce homelessness? Should the possibilities of replication of this ‘pilot initiative’ be anticipated and bult into the evaluation…

**Scoping Orientation questions**

Taking into account the above ***please consider the following***:

How would you begin to think about the focus and scope of such an evaluation?

*The evaluation may need to cover several actions. Identify the main ‘hard and soft’ instruments that are being implemented as part of the programme that correspond to the focus of the evaluation. Which would you include in the scope and why?*

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| e.g. building, skills training,  **A ‘Housing First’ approach Programme**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **“Hard” Instruments** | **“Soft” Instruments** | | 1)The construction of appartements \*  \*taking into account the requirements of the current regulatory framework for physical accessibility and safety | 1)The provision of social care services, ie :   * Health services and dealing with health issues * Educational services and dealing with relevant issues * Employment services and dealing with relevant issues * Provision of vocational training * Skills development * Dealing with issues of digital exclusion * Indebtedness counselling, legal advice. etc * Support of family/dependent members | | 2) The construction of the infrastructure in the broader area of the newly built social housing appartements | 2) Measures for physical accessibility and safety | | 3) Institutional Framework about the technical features of the houses and the criteria of the beneficiaries | 3)Measures and Actions for Deinstitutionalisation | |  | 4) Publicity of the program | |  | 5) Awareness raising campaigns (p.e against drug addiction or alcohol abuse, for driving a healthy diet,etc) | |  | 6) Measures for digital accessibility | | ***Why ?***  Based on the fact that social housing is a multifaceted policy, attention has been paid to the construction/housing dimension in combination with the provision of social care services and support that help programme’s target population to enjoy an integrative single ‘social housing’ policy that ensures psycho-social, economic, vocational and medical support avoiding stigmatisation and isolation. | | |

How will you identify and engage actual and potential users of the above evaluation and set up arrangements to maintain engagement throughout the evaluation cycle?

*Clarify the different actors involved in the evaluation scope. Which could use the evaluation? How could they be involved in the evaluation process?*

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| **Institutions or groups involved in design and delivery…** | **Actors or groups targeted by the programme** | **Actors not directly targeted but involved in the implementation** | **Actors not directly targeted but ultimately benefitting or losing from the programme** |
| 1. The provider’ Home First’ 2. Central Administration, mainly Ministries with relevant responsibility 3. Local & Regional Authorities 4. Private developers 5. Potential Beneficiaries 6. Social partners/stakeholders/ Representative groups | The following 3 categories of people at risk of homelessness.   1. Long term homeless persons 2. Single women with children who have often been the victims of domestic violence 3. Young adults who may have been in foster-care or in institutions during childhood currently in transitions to independent living | 1. The providers of social care services 2. The team of ‘housing advisers’ of the provider 3. Private developers | 1. Citizens 2. Neighbours 3. Local agencies (p.e local social services, local schools) 4. Local Community 5. Market 6. Abusers of women, providers of addictive products/drug dealers, institutions hosting relevant vulnerable groups. |

What criteria should be used to judge success?

*In particular, consider positive outcomes that are expected on the above actors targeted or expected to benefit from the programme, or negative situations that the programme is expected to address*

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Criteria to judge success** |  | | * Outputs and Outcomes * Agenda * Methodology * Stakeholders * Potential users * Timetables and momentum/a * Needs of the 3 target groups covered and satisfaction from the programme * Portfolio and relevant policies * Strategies * Resources used * Use of evaluation questions | | | **Positive outcomes** | **Negative situations** | | * Quality houses and integrated social services provided * Employment creation * Social inclusion/integration * Reduce social inequalities * Deinstitutionalisation * Upgrade of areas in the 2 cities under the programme implementation * Capacity-building * Awareness-raising Campaigns * Enhance local enterpreneurship capacity * Decrease of ‘school dropout’ * Reduce school congestion * Decongestion of local social services | * Dissatisfaction in the neighbourhood-complaints and social unrest in the neighbourhood, school, etc. * Action unable to reach beneficiaries resulting into empty houses. * Degrade of areas in the 2 cities under the programme implementation * Increase of ‘school dropout’ due to transition * Uncertain use of criteria for appartements’ distribution among programme’s target groups * Possible inequal distribution of apartments among the three categories of people at risk of homelessness * Possible inability to provide soft services support * Dynamic data that may change during the programme, resulting in not achieving the reflection of the situation as it is upon use * Possible corruption * Unproper behaviour by beneficiaries resulting into houses’/infrastructure’s’ destruction | |

### **Groupwork 2: Evaluation Questions**

Key to any evaluation is the Evaluation Questions asked – what is it we want to know. Evaluation questions both emphasise the scope of an evaluation and anticipates the broad approach that will be needed if not specific methods.

Which evaluation questions would, in your opinion, be of interest to the different stakeholders identified before? How could you verify this?

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| …   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Stakeholders** | **Questions** | | Home First Provider/ Private Developers | * Has the initiative ’Home First’ for social housing achieved its objective? * How many people have benefited from this programme? * Is it ensured that all the three categories of beneficiaries enjoy social housing on an equal base? * What were the percentages of distribution of each category? * Were the criteria for social housing distribution appropriate? * Have the apartments been given according to the initial time plan? * Is it ensured that the distributed apartments are functional and in accordance with qualitative criteria of construction? * Have sufficient management and repair services been provided after distribution services, in case of relevant need? | | Beneficiaries | * In which degree beneficiaries are satisfied with the social housing intervention? Has the initiative ’Home First’ for social housing achieved its objectives according to them. * In what way social housing intervention has affected their life ? * Have sufficient supplementary social care services been provided ? * In which way, social care supplementary services provided help to the beneficiaries? * How many of the beneficiaries get vocational training, health services, educational services, counselling, support, deinstitutionalisation services ? | | Ministries | * Has the initiative ’Home First’ for social housing achieved its objective(s)? * What are the advantages and disadvantages compared to traditional policies of institutionalization of vulnerable groups? * In what degree the programme helped policymaking concerning social housing? * How do the relevant initiatives promote legal framework reforms ? * Have the social housing apartments been given for a lifetime or for a concrete period? * What are the dimensions of coherence of the initiative with relevant strategies ? * Is there a chance to replicate the initiative ’Home First’? In this case, are there any changes in the design or the delivery of the initiative? | | Regional Authorities | * Have the relevant resources been appropriately distributed ? | | Local Authorities | * In what way, local services have gained or lost from the social housing intervention ? Have they been decongested in any way? * Did local authorities manage to present administrative sufficiency for the programme’s coverage ? | | Local Community (Neighbours, Enterpreneurs) | * Will neighbours continue to stay in the same block of flats with the Social Housing Initiative Beneficiaries? * What was the impact of the social housing intervention in general? * What was the impact of the social housing intervention on the local market/on local enterpreneurs? | | * How could you verify this\*   \*this applies to all above mentioned stakeholders categories and evaluation questions | * with interviews, questionnaires, research using statistical data before and after the intervention both for the selection and for the answer to the “evaluation questions”. | |

You have presented your initial work to your colleagues and asked some potential users of your evaluation for feedback. The main concerns that have emerged from your consultations are the following:

1. Of particular interest are groups such as long-term homeless people, single women with children, and young people, which may have specific needs (e.g. access to childcare for mothers) or issues (e.g. personal safety) affecting their experience. Stakeholders would like to know whether the programme is deploying the right skills and methods to engage with and support these groups and ensure that they benefit from the ‘Housing First’ approach.
2. The rationale behind ‘Housing first’ is that it ultimately reduces homelessness and promotes social integration more effectively than conventional programmes based on initial institutionalisation. National officials would like to verify whether there is evidence to support this claim in the Greek case.

What evaluation questions could you ask to address these concerns?

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| …   1. Evaluation questions to verify whether the programme is deploying the right skills and methods?    1. What was the percentage of potential beneficiaries (homeless, women, young adults) that received support from the social intervention programme for both hard and soft services?    2. In what way the advice /information provided led to designed-results?    3. In what way were the resources (human and financial) used by the programme enough for elaborating all programme dimensions?    4. Has there been expertise and well trained/educated staff engaged?    5. Were there any expert-groups to deliver the maximum of the programme’s scope/goal? 2. Evaluation questions to verify whether there is evidence to support this claim in the Greek case.    1. Have there been available updated data to verify the beneficiaries needs?    2. Has there been a SWOT Analysis before the evaluation to define specific characteristics and needs of the beneficiaries?    3. What are the advantages and disadvantages compared to traditional policies of institutionalization of vulnerable groups? Where applicable, measurable data must be provided.    4. Does this intervention lead to reform of National Social Housing Strategy?    5. How many beneficiaries have been successful in finding a permanent/steady job? |

What information would you need to answer these questions? What approach, methods, or tools could you use to retrieve this information and make sense of it?

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| Note information/data sources……  …  Information needed   * Profile of population in need - categories of people at risk of homelessness * Numbers/ Percentages of people in need * What are the supplementary services that are needed for an integrative solution * Which will be the impact of social housing for beneficiaries and for others   A top-down approach  Methodology/ Tools:   * SWOT Analysis * Data from responsible authorities and statistical analysis of them * Questionnaires * Statistics * Legal Framework * Objectives to be achieved * Policies and Strategies |

How should the voice of residents and staff be included in the evaluation?

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| Note information/data sources……  …  By means of   * participation in consultation * questionnaires’ completion * use of an online platform for expressing ideas, problems, proposals * engagement and dialogue in the designing of policy |

### **Groupwork 3 Quality Assurance**

In the months which have followed this initial reflection on the evaluation of the programme operated by Homes First, a first evaluation has been launched. Company Z… has been retained to carry out the evaluation. During the evaluation, your colleagues have faced a number of issues. Rather than dealing with these issues piecemeal, the Greek Evaluator Network has decided to set up a community of practice, with a view to better address quality issues.

To achieve this, you use the ‘[What if?](https://quadrant-conseil.fr/ressources/outils/cards_whatif.pdf)’ deck of card. Each person in your group selects three cards. The cards briefly present a quality issue. For each card, ask yourselves:

* What should I do in this specific situation?
* What can be done in the future to prevent this from happening?

Discuss this with the group.

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| *…*   |  |  | | --- | --- | | 1. *Political Interferences to methodological choices and how findings and conclusions should be presented* | | | What should I do in this specific situation? | * Discuss with the evaluator, in order to get some evidence substantiation for the methodological choices and the results * Presentation of the evidence/substantiation to the political leadership with main arguments against interferences. * If it is Accepted, OK * If it is not accepted, * make light amendments to methodological choices being liable to evaluation’s scope * use probably part of the results * rephrase the results | | What can be done in the future to prevent this from happening? | * To discuss with political leadership the scope of the evaluation as well as the methodology and criteria used * To substantiate choices based on eu and national legal framework as well as on evaluator’s comments | | 1. *During the final conference, one of the stakeholders mentions that programme’s intervention had negative impact but this is not mentioned in the evaluation report* | | | What should I do in this specific situation? | * Update the report- make the relevant corrections * Awareness raising campaigns against fear for neighbours and local community in the name of social inclusion | | What can be done in the future to prevent this from happening? | * Enhance transparency * Create a new more stable legislative framework for publicise impact * Provide motives, mainly financial ones but not exclusively, for local community by means of compensatory/counterbalanced measures | | 1. *Colleagues within the national public administration mention that the evaluation report is not reliable, as it includes factual mistakes* | | | What should I do in this specific situation? | * Try to define from where derives the problem/factual mistakes * If the problem derives from methodology, change methodological choices * If the problem is found to data collection, this seems to be difficult, as there is a need for new data, redo the report from the beginning and possible miss the time momentum | | What can be done in the future to prevent this from happening? | * Design a well-based methodology * Define the criteria used and provide a more analytic data description for elaboration * Create a pilot questionnaire based on selective questions an interim deliverable * Apply sampling test * Set better requirements in the call of evaluation * Choose progressive monitoring of the evaluation and avoid the acceptance of the final deliverables, in case they do not comply with the initial set standards. | | 1. *The evaluator was obliged to carry out 50 interviews in accordance with the relevant signed contract. However, as the main results have been drawn, the evaluator carried out only 40 interviews and proposes the rest of resources to be used for other deliverables of the contract.* | | | What should I do in this specific situation? | * If there is a clear reference in the contract and a clear clause, that leads to contract amendment due to physical and financial object decrease. * Check the influence of amendments to the deliverables and decide on the amendment of the contract * Possibility of changing questions during the process of evaluations according to the results | | What can be done in the future to prevent this from happening? | * Rethink the Contract terms * Not define the number of interviews in the contract-use of reference’ sufficient number of interviews for safe results concerning the intervention * Predict alternative actions concerning the methodology | |

In any social care/welfare initiative ethical issues are a key dimension of ‘quality’ – what safeguards should be in place to protect residents and staff (e.g. housing advisors and other welfare and healthcare professionals) and other community members?

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| *…*  Residents   * Neutral questions to all those participating to the programme * GDPR * Creation of favourable conditions for interviews and questionnaires * Familiarisation   Staff (advisors and other professionals)   * Independence * Objectivity/ Impartiality * Special education and training * Choose the right person for each intervention * Use of behavioural criteria during the process of choosing staff * Use of checklists   Others   * Independence * Objectivity/ Impartiality * Questionaires * Checklists * GDPR |

The discussions with the community of practice have prompted a desire to address some deeper issues affecting the quality and ‘usability’ of the evaluations that are commissioned by your administration. An internal study on these questions is launched in your Department. You are concerned in particular with identifying:

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| ***Capacity issues***  *Is there enough methodological / substantive expertise available in-house? On the market?*   * Focus in methodology * Yes, there is methodological expertise according to previous experience, which is updated and enhanced by means of relevant training (seminars, workshops). * In case expertise in house is not enough, support could be asked by the market, that can provide a relevant substantiated report made by competent experts. | ***Available tools***  *What are the tools (checklists, templates…) that are available in-house to ensure quality? How adequate are they?*   * A monitoring mechanism supplied with a monitoring system that monitors provision of services in-house. * Use of checklists * Questionnaires concerning the data collection |
| ***Administrative processes***  *What mechanisms exist to anticipate quality issues (e.g. preliminary studies, consultation of stakeholders) or to address them (e.g. crisis resolution)? Are they working well?*  Mechanisms to anticipate   * Methodology- focus on the preliminary deliverables, so as to find problems for correction   Mechanisms to address quality issues   * Committee for Monitoring and Acceptance of Convention Deliverables * Supervisor, ready to check and address to the competent unit of each part of the Convention * The convention itself, as a tool for monitoring the terms of reference for reporting issues of quality relevant to deliverables. | ***Shared culture and vision***  *Is there an agreement on what constitutes quality and how to improve it within the administration or among policy actors?*   * Accountability * Stakeholder’s engagement and involvement * Dialogue between and among all * Data validity * Right choices of samples * Channels of communication with/ between stakeholders * Expertise and Know-how |

### **Groupwork 4: Evaluation Use**

Below are some ‘scenarios’ of evaluation use. You discuss these scenarios with your group. What would you do? How could you better address this situation in the future? Consider in particular how the different groups of potential users could be involved in the evaluation process.

1. EU and National authorities have been eager to know whether *Homes First* made a difference and if not why! They are showing their interest repeatedly during the evaluation process, before a report has been published. They are particularly interested in how the evaluation could support the current efforts to redefine the national housing strategy.

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| Identify kinds of use, types of users, when use is likely, what should be the channels for disseminating lessons and results?  …   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Kinds of use | The evaluation can be used   * for substantiation and evidence for the continuity and the reform of national social housing strategy and relevant programmes * for the development of other supplementary to social housing strategies (p.e. strategy for deinstitutionalisation, for violence against women, etc) * for revising legislative framework * as substantiation for the change (increase/decrease) of target groups of beneficiaries * for the provision of data for a registry * for indicators * for new relevant initiatives * for enterpreneurs and investors’ attraction * for public awareness raising * for publicity and visibility * for reflection on the programme’s interventions * as best practice in EU or Ministries for other programs | | Types of users | * Competent Ministries for the revision of legal framework according to the needs and for the development of policies and strategies * Local Authorities for the revision of data kept at local level * Beneficiaries, as evaluation conclusions may lead to broadening the spectrum of beneficiaries * Local community for the creation of questionnaire to find out the impact of newcomers * Local entrepreneurs | | When use is likely | When   * the evaluation is clear and results-oriented * the results are measurable * the evaluation is beneficiaries and their needs oriented * there is well-based and ex ante well-designed methodology   It will be used immediately, continuously and prevention. | | Channels for disseminating lessons and results | * Websites of stakeholders * Social Media * Publication of two-pages brochure with qualitative data and lessons learnt * Press release by the ‘Home First’ provider and diffusion to the sites of national and EU authorities * Capitalisation of the evaluation report for sound cooperation among stakeholders for policy making and strategies development | |

1. In this scenario, the Homes First initiative is regard as a failure. However, many lessons can be learned when things do not go as planned. Actors in the social housing and welfare sector want to draw their own lessons, perhaps to scale-up or replicate or avoid aspects of such initiatives.

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| Identify kinds of use, types of users, when use is likely, what should be the channels for disseminating lessons and results?  …   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Kinds of use | The evaluation can be used   * for the design of a new relevant programme taking into account different programme dimensions * for the reform of the strategy under discussion * for the annulation of the programme * for avoiding a similar unsuccessful programme * for reflection on the programme’s negative side of interventions | | Types of users | * All those involved in the design * Ministries * Local Authorities * Regional Authorities for resources management * Actors for social housing * Welfare sector * Evaluators | | When use is likely | When   * the evaluation has failed to meet its scope * the results are vague * corrective action is needed * there is a need for redrafting of strategies * there is a need for new programmes   It will be used for future actions and prevention. | | Channels for disseminating lessons and results | * Websites of stakeholders * Social Media * Publication of two-pages brochure with mistakes and lessons learnt * Press release by the ‘Home First’ provider and diffusion to the sites of national and EU authorities * Dialogue and engagement of stakeholders for policy making and strategies development | |

1. See *Social Housing and Beyond*, European Commission DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion for description of a range of related social housing initiatives, including Housing First, that can be supported. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)