



Housing Support and Housing Advice in Hospitals: Review of Evidence

July 2024

Hs.unit@ccpscotland.org

Housing Support and Housing Advice in Hospitals: Review of Evidence

Updated July 2024

Housing support services help people to stay safe and well at home. While this can include support for people to maintain their independence living at home, it also includes support during a crisis situation or through a period of transition, such as leaving hospital. There is evidence that housing support and supported housing has significant economic and social benefits but is not always visible.¹

The purpose of this resource is to highlight good practice examples in Scotland and in other parts of the UK where housing support has been evaluated as a valuable tool both for supporting timely hospital discharge and avoiding hospital readmission. Currently Scotland lacks a national programme to support partnership working of housing support and advice in hospitals.

Contents

<u>Cyrenians Hospital InReach Service</u>	2
<u>Waverley Care’s Milestone Intermediate Care Unit (MICU) Evaluation</u>	2
<u>National Institute for Health and Care Research: A Mixed-Methods Process Evaluation in Two UK Hospital Trusts</u>	3
<u>Fife HSCP and Shelter Partnership</u>	4
<u>Pathway and Crisis: Beyond the Ward- Exploring the Duty to Refer in Hospital Settings</u>	5
<u>Conclusions</u>	6

¹ <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/publications/economic-benefits-of-housing-support/>

HSEU, Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY

t: 0131 475 2676 e: hs.unit@ccpscotland.org www.ccpscotland.org/hseu

The Housing Support Enabling Unit is a partnership initiative between Coalition of Care & Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, funded by the Scottish Government.

CCPS is a registered Scottish Charity No. SC029199

Cyrenians Hospital InReach Service

The Hospital InReach Service supports patients at risk of, or experiencing homelessness to maximise engagement with treatment and support positive discharge and wellbeing. The InReach Service was piloted in two hospitals in Edinburgh by Cyrenians, and has now received funding from Edinburgh Alcohol and Drug Partnership for a further three years with a presence at the Western General Hospital, the Royal Infirmary, and the Royal Edinburgh Hospital.²

In the first 18 months of the service between February 2020 and September 2021, over 300 patients at risk of homelessness were supported to maintain or access accommodation after discharge.³ The project included:

1. Holistic approach to care at admission and a needs assessment in preparation for discharge.
2. Continuing community support after discharge until individual is at low risk of readmission.
3. Working with clinical staff to educate them on the increased needs of people experiencing homelessness and establish links with secondary care and community-based homeless services.
4. Development of specialised Hospital InReach Team dedicated to early intervention and focussed case management.
5. Stronger links into secure housing after discharge.

Evaluation of the programme after the first 18 months found that there was a reduction of 68.7% in readmissions compared to the 12 months prior to Hospital InReach referral. 86% of patients receiving targeted interventions completed inpatient treatment courses, 75% were linked with primary care providers, and 56% had appropriate accommodation sourced prior to discharge. Community homelessness/ housing services were able to contact the Hospital Inreach team during admissions to start earlier planning for discharge, and support better housing outcomes. The InReach team benefits from their flexible approach and close partnership working with clinical teams in the hospital, as well as community partners.

Waverley Care's Milestone Intermediate Care Unit (MICU) Evaluation

Milestone Intermediate Care Unit (MICU) provides proactive support to patients facing discharge into homelessness. MICU was set up during the pandemic by Cyrenians' Hospital

2

<https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s66648/Item%206.2%20Health%20and%20Social%20Care%20Contribution%20to%20addressing%20the%20Citys%20Housing%20Emergency.pdf>

3

https://cyrenians.scot/assets/000/000/868/Cyrenians_Pathway_Evaluation_Report_010422SM%281%29_original.pdf?1660226757

HSEU, Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY
t: 0131 475 2676 e: hs.unit@ccpscotland.org www.ccpscotland.org/hseu

2

The Housing Support Enabling Unit is a partnership initiative between Coalition of Care & Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, funded by the Scottish Government.

CCPS is a registered Scottish Charity No. SC029199

Inreach team and delivered by Waverly Care, with support from Edinburgh Council. The service was originally set up for people leaving COVID-19 care, but was then expanded to offer step-down care targeting a variety of needs and to support access to ongoing mental and physical health care and housing support.⁴

164 people have been supported by MICU between April 2020 and March 2023, with an average stay length of 40 days. Support included treatment for substance use, Hepatitis C, HIV, and wound care. The service also supported access to community health provision.

On discharge, 87% of people who entered MICU with no fixed abode, were discharged to accommodation. Of the people who were discharged and returned to the same tenancy, 59% were provided with increased housing support. The MICU service saved a median of 5.5 occupied bed days, accumulating to a £423,583 saving in acute care costs.⁵ In a 2021 evaluation of the service, it was found that savings were also likely to come to Edinburgh Council housing services due to reduced stays in temporary accommodation.⁶

By reducing homelessness and providing housing support within a wider package of care and support, the MICU meets the Scottish Government's strategic goals.⁷ However, the MICU is currently the only service of its type in Scotland.

National Institute for Health and Care Research: A Mixed-Methods Process Evaluation in Two UK Hospital Trusts

A [process evaluation](#) was undertaken to evaluate whether housing support coordinators from Wakefield District Housing working in two hospitals were able to aid hospital discharge and improve the health of wellbeing of service users. The housing support coordinators were embedded in a mental health hospital, and a general hospital in Wakefield.⁸

Of the people supported by the housing support coordinators in the mental health hospital, over a third experienced homelessness, and several were unable to return home due to issues of violent behaviour or damaging previous property. The people who were supported from the general hospital were more likely to face physical barriers to returning home because of physical accessibility issues with the property, and a fifth were experiencing homelessness.

⁴ <https://www.waverleycare.org/find-a-service/milestone-intermediate-care-unit/>
<https://cyrenians.scot/news/558-report-shows-life-changing-impact-of-milestone-project>

⁵ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2514664524015236?via%3Dihub>

⁶ https://www.evoc.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/media/2022/06/MICU-Evaluation-Report_V8.pdf

⁷ https://www.evoc.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/media/2022/06/MICU-Evaluation-Report_V8.pdf

⁸ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1155/2023/4027277>

HSEU, Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY

t: 0131 475 2676 e: hs.unit@ccpscotland.org www.ccpscotland.org/hseu

Service users who were supported by the housing support coordinators received support including:

- Assistance with medical priority applications.
- Support to apply for social housing.
- Referral to other support services (three quarters of service users were referred for further support).

Over half of service users were supported for less than one month, but the evaluation found beneficial impacts both for the service users and for the hospital discharge pathway.

People supported reported improved housing outcomes and reduced housing-related stress, with the housing support coordinators enabling reduced unnecessary delayed discharges and average length of stay. The service benefitted from housing support coordinators who were able to deliver person-centred care with a broad range of skills, and were able to facilitate communication and coordination between different partners.

The evaluation focused on the range of skills that housing support coordinators embedded in hospital will need, including knowledge of organisation adaptations, supporting people with homelessness, and working with people who misuse substances. The service was seen to be more effective in the hospital when the housing support coordinator was based within the hospital discharge team where there was improved access to hospital systems and links with the clinical team. Challenges the service faced included lack of suitable housing and supporting people who had more complex needs. The evaluation found that it would be beneficial to implement housing support coordinator intervention in other hospital settings.

Fife HSCP and Shelter Partnership

A [partnership between Shelter Scotland and the Fife Health and Social Care Partnership \(HSCP\)](#) included two full time members of staff employed by Shelter working in Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy. The intervention took place in the hospital's Discharge Hub between January 2018 and January 2019, and in A&E discharge between November 2019 and February 2020. Shelter members of staff provided a combination of clinical and housing expertise.

There were 91 participants, with 76 from the Discharge Hub and 15 from A&E. Cost analysis was completed by Health Improvement Scotland (HIS) using net cost per bed day multiplied by length of stay. **There were savings of £378,360 in terms of reduced hospital activity.**

Pathway and Crisis: Beyond the Ward- Exploring the Duty to Refer in Hospital Settings

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced in England a duty on various public bodies to refer service users who they identify as at risk of or experiencing homelessness to the relevant local authority. [Pathway and Crisis](#) have investigated the effectiveness of the Duty to Refer within hospital settings and identify opportunities and barriers to successful patient outcomes.

Example: Sussex Partnership NHS Trust

[Sussex Partnership NHS Trust \(SPFT\)](#) has integrated new housing roles into clinical teams. Sussex Partnership co-produced new ways of working with service users, local authorities and the third sector. Before the housing intervention, the equivalent of 10,000 days of occupied hospital beds were due to housing-related delays. During the first 6 months of operation, 251 people were supported to sustain their existing housing or to get new accommodation. Housing related delays to discharge were reduced by more than 50%. From a £550,000 investment in the housing roles across the hospital trust, a £2.5 million return of investment is anticipated per year.

Pathway and Crisis made the following recommendations for system-level change⁹:

1. DHSC and DLUHC should ensure that local authorities and health bodies have access to a wide range of housing options for people experiencing homelessness discharged from hospital with complex needs.
2. DHSC should explore requiring emergency departments, urgent treatment centres and hospitals to have a dedicated housing officer.
3. DHSC should consider requiring specialist homelessness teams in hospitals providing inpatient care that admit more than 200 people experiencing homelessness each year.
4. DHSC and DLUHC should explore extending duty to refer to other parts of NHS including primary care, community mental health and drug and alcohol services.

⁹ <https://www.pathway.org.uk/resources/beyond-the-ward-exploring-the-duty-to-refer-in-hospital-settings/>

HSEU, Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY

t: 0131 475 2676 e: hs.unit@ccpscotland.org www.ccpscotland.org/hseu

The Housing Support Enabling Unit is a partnership initiative between Coalition of Care & Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, funded by the Scottish Government.

CCPS is a registered Scottish Charity No. SC029199

While the Homelessness Reduction Act only applies in England, the recommendations of the report are increasingly relevant in Scotland with the incoming Housing Bill and implications of the new prevention duties for relevant public bodies including health boards.

Conclusions and Future Policy Implications

- **Embedding housing support staff in hospitals can reduce delayed discharge and improve outcomes for people leaving hospital.**
- **There is evidence of cost benefit savings from housing support partnerships in hospitals.**

The evidence from the above good practice examples demonstrates that embedding housing support and housing advice in hospitals can not only improve outcomes for people after discharge, but also deliver cost savings through reduced readmissions, reduced delayed discharge, and follow-on savings from other positive health and housing outcomes. Housing support services for people in hospital not only benefit older people, but also people with other housing support needs to live independently. With the breadth of evidence supporting the economic and wellbeing benefits of preventative services, it is critical that investment is not confined to services aimed at reducing delayed discharge. However, coordination of housing and social care and support services in hospital is key to support people to live well at home as independently as possible. Within the examples above, flexibility and cooperation were common contributors to successful models of support with effective joint working between health and housing systems critical to positive outcomes. Successful discharge to appropriate accommodation is currently made more difficult due to existing and growing pressures on the health system and on housing supply.

Partnership working between housing support partners and health colleagues in hospitals will become more crucial with the proposed Housing Bill and implementation of the prevention duties. The Housing Bill proposes a new duty on relevant public bodies, including health boards, to ask if someone is at risk of homeless, and act to minimise this risk.¹⁰ Existing good practice to minimise the risk of homelessness is already being undertaken in health settings, and the learning and challenges of these services should be built upon for implementation of the new prevention duties.

¹⁰ <https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/housing-scotland-bill-session-6>

HSEU, Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY
t: 0131 475 2676 e: hs.unit@ccpscotland.org www.ccpscotland.org/hseu

About the HSEU

The aim of the Unit is to offer support and assistance to providers of housing support and supported housing across the voluntary sector, the private sector and to Registered Social Landlords. You can find out more about the work of the Unit on our website.

Hs.unit@ccpscotland.org

The HSEU is a partnership initiative between Coalition of Care and Support Providers Scotland (CCPS) and Scottish Federation of Housing Associations



HSEU, Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY
t: 0131 475 2676 e: hs.unit@ccpscotland.org www.ccpscotland.org/hseu

The Housing Support Enabling Unit is a partnership initiative between Coalition of Care & Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, funded by the Scottish Government.

CCPS is a registered Scottish Charity No. SC029199

