



*The role of social
experimentation in driving
change in the homeless sector :
Observations from Belgium.*

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FEANTSA

POD MAATSCHAPPELIJKE INTEGRATIE
BETER SAMEN LEVEN
SPP INTÉGRATION SOCIALE
MIEUX VIVRE ENSEMBLE



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Agenda



3 questions

1. What paradigms?
2. Is it necessary to change it?
3. If so, how?

→ *Learnings from the HFB experiment*

1. What paradigms?



1. What paradigms?



To what?



2. Is it necessary to change it?



First quick (simplistic) answers

- **No:** HF is only for a small and specific target group. A large diversity of needs → a large diversity of offers (HF is only a new one more).
- **Yes:** the classical system is not enough efficient (HF is the best deal). Let's do HF everywhere.

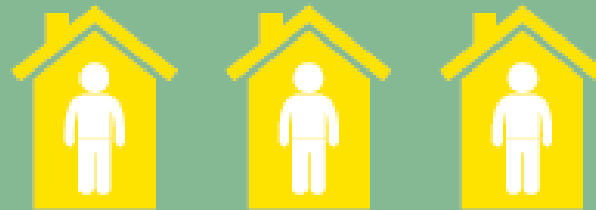
Some learnings from HFB



CONTINUOUS EVALUATION OF 378 PERSONS



HOUSING FIRST BELGIUM
141 TENANTS



TRADITIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM
237 PERSONS



137 HOMELESS

100 TENANTS

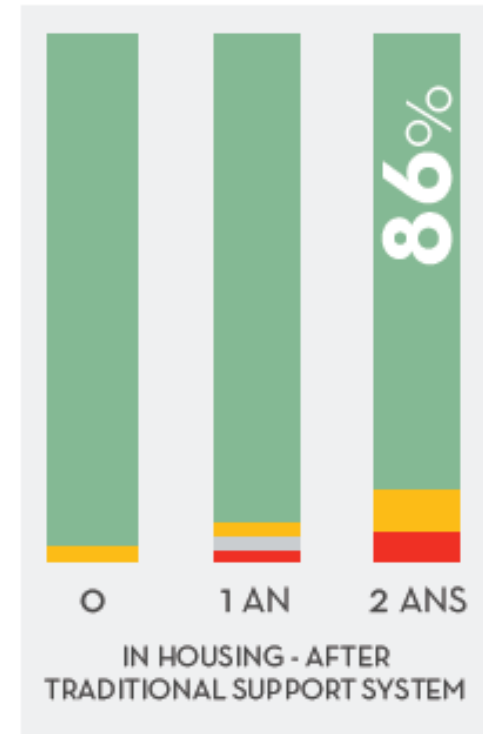
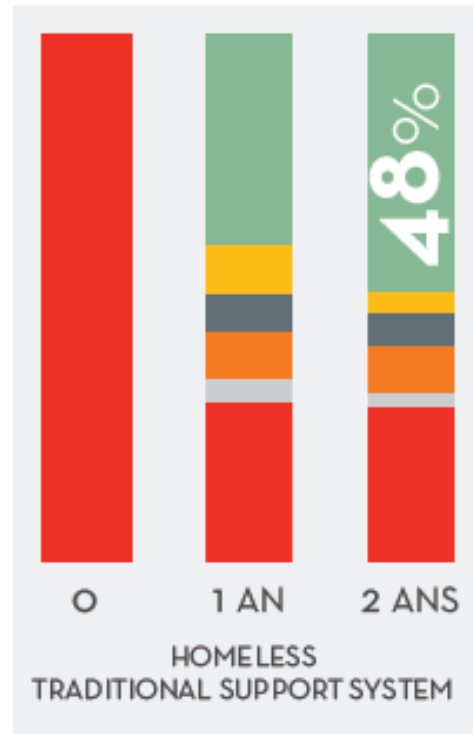
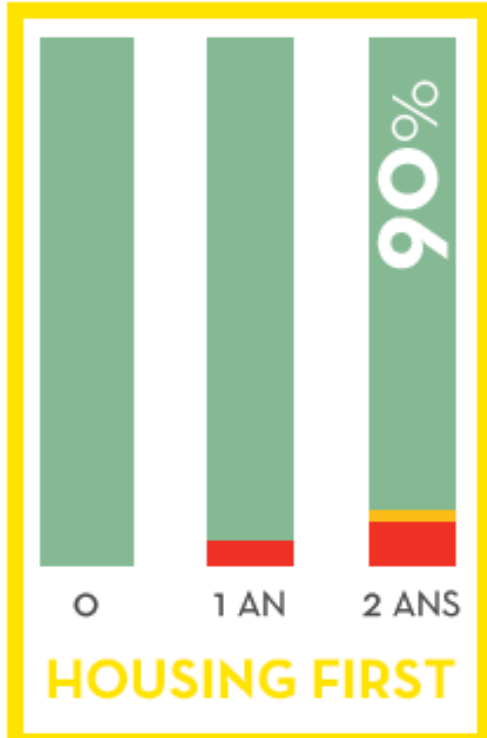


Some learnings from HFB



100%

0%



ROOFLESS
(STREET/
NIGHT SHELTER)



HOUSELESS
(PRISON)



INSECURE/INADEQUATE
HOUSE



HOUSELESS
(SHORT-TERM
ACCOMMODATION*)
* Example: reception centre



HOUSELESS
(HOSPITAL/
TREATMENT CENTRE)



ADEQUATE HOUSE

Some learnings from HFB



1. HF = fastest access to long-term solution

- **HF works in Belgium too.** Housing retention after 2 years = 90%.
- **Outside HF, homeless people with lower needs are also capable of living in housing (86%).** But: Many of them have first been to a reception centre and have thus been prepared to access housing (47%).
- **The traditional support system to address homelessness doesn't facilitate rapid access to housing.** 2 years are needed for 48% to achieve housing.

Some learnings from HFB



2. HF = recovery

3. Housing (not only HF) = social integration

- Better/faster access to social rights.
- Street control group: 50% are still not in order with their identity card and 23% don't have any income.

4. Housing (not only HF) = empowerment, self-esteem

5. HF support = efficient (17.80 euros/day/person).

2. Is it necessary to change it?



~~First quick (simplistic) answers~~

Evidence based answers

- **Yes:** HF is more **effective, efficient, sustainable, just**. HF invites to social innovation; to fast track the exit from homelessness. ~~Let's do HF everywhere.~~ **It is about housing led policies/practices.**

2. Is it necessary to change it?



Evidence based answers

- **Yes** and *The housing support needs to be as long and intensive as necessary.*
- **Yes** and *The housing support teams should have specific resources with regards to health/addiction.*
- **Yes** and *The lack of housing should not make us accept any kind of rental option. Someone responsible for housing should be appointed and ensure mediation if necessary.*



Give money where it can do the most good.

WE DON'T NEED
COINS WE NEED
CHANGE ...

Help us end homelessness and drug addiction in Vancouver and in your community.
Local businesses are collecting donations which go directly to agencies that help
overcome homelessness and help people conquer drug addiction.

3. How to change it



Social innovation – Change management

- “If you want truly to understand something, try to change it » (Kurt Lewin)
- « People support what they create » (Kurt Lewin)

3. How to change it



Some learnings from HFB

- Testing HF in order to adapt the copy-paste to our Belgian specificities
- From a bottom-up process
- Public/Private stakeholders
- Coordination/steering from stakeholders
- Stakeholders freely developed the HF teams needed
- Pluri-institutional HF teams

3. How to change it



Some learnings from HFB

- 3 independent regional knowledge centers
- Inclusive/participative evaluation methodology
- Mirror of existing common challenges in the traditional support system
- Social laboratory → Transferable solutions, HFB is opening doors
- Inclusive communication (not dichotomic)

3. How to change it



With common recommendations

1. Describe and record the number of homeless people.
2. Match the needs and the offer of services through an efficient orientation scheme.
3. Support social innovation and the development of programmes like Housing First.
4. Aim for short circuit solutions for durable exit from homelessness and avoid the use of emergency reception facilities.
5. Dare to use housing-led programmes.
6. Increase access of low income households to quality housing and support innovation in this area.

3. How to change it



With common recommendations

- 7.** Invest in supportive housing services adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries. They should be intensive, multidisciplinary and long-term if necessary.
- 8.** Establish a concerted plan to fight homelessness involving all levels of governance in the areas of anti-poverty policy, social integration, urban policy, health, social action, well-being, housing and employment.
- 9.** Prevent homelessness by anticipating evictions and exits from youth institutions, hospitals and prisons.
- 10.** Longitudinally evaluate the efficiency and the effectiveness of the practices and policies documenting the trajectories of the targeted population.

... still a challenge...





They didn't know that it was impossible, so they did it.

Mark Twain.

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