Austria

Neunerhaus Housing First, Vienna

Housing First in Austria has been developed as part of the Wiener Wohnungslosenhilfe programme, centred on providing psychosocial support for homeless citizens in Vienna. A three-year Housing First service pilot was developed, following debates about changing the staircase service models that predominated in Vienna. The Neunerhaus Housing First project follows the eight core principles described in Chapter 2.

By 2015, Neunerhaus Housing First had worked with 69 homeless households, including lone adults and families with dependent children. The 69 households contained 131 people (46 women, 38 men, 47 dependent children). The scattered housing is provided by housing management companies and the people using Neunerhaus Housing First all have their own, independent, tenancy agreements. A mix of social housing, private rented and housing association homes are used.

Support is described as flexible, being tailored to individual needs with an emphasis on promotion of social inclusion and on what is termed ‘self-determination’ and ‘participation’ (i.e. choice and control, person-centred planning, flexible support for as long as is required, active engagement). Social inclusion is centred on actively avoiding the kinds of institutionalisation that can be experienced by homeless people. As housing is dealt with immediately, there is more social worker time to focus on community participation and, where possible, supporting Housing First service users into paid work.

Results have been particularly impressive in respect of housing sustainment. An evaluation reports a 98.3% housing sustainment rate for people using the Housing First service, alongside reported gains in social integration. An evaluation, covering the first two years of operation, is available at http://www.neunerhaus.at/fileadmin/Bibliothek/Neue_Website/Neunerhaus/Neunerhaus/Housing_First/20150925_HousingFirst_Report_english.pdf (English).