

NICHOLAS PLEACE

**HOUSING FIRST IN BRITAIN AND
EUROPE: PRACTICALITIES,
CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

OVERVIEW

- ▶ How is Housing First being used in Europe?
- ▶ Strengths and limitations of Housing First
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Fidelity
- ▶ Costs
- ▶ Strategic integration of Housing First
- ▶ Possible lessons for Canada

HOW IS HOUSING FIRST BEING USED IN EUROPE

- ▶ A lot of small pilot projects
- ▶ But more and more emphasis on integrating Housing First into homelessness strategy
- ▶ Overall though, the pattern is pretty uneven
- ▶ Variations between countries
- ▶ And within countries

FRANCE

- ▶ Un chez soi d'abord programme
- ▶ Pilots in Toulouse, Marseille, Lille and Paris
- ▶ For homeless people with mental health problems
- ▶ 85% housed at two years by Housing First
- ▶ Gains in social integration and mental health
- ▶ Rolled out across 16 cities



ITALY

- ▶ Housing First Italia
- ▶ A coalition of homelessness service providers and academics
- ▶ Led by the Italian Federation of Homelessness Organisations, fio.PSD
- ▶ Small scale and pilot services
- ▶ Without significant public funding
- ▶ Evidence of success at local level



SWEDEN

- ▶ Housing First being supported by academics at Lund University
- ▶ And individual cities
- ▶ But no national strategy as yet
- ▶ Evidence of success at local level



LUNDS
UNIVERSITET

GERMANY

- ▶ Has been talked about
- ▶ But only just starting to happen

PORTUGAL

- ▶ Casas Primeiro, Lisbon
- ▶ An initial pilot that has increased in size
- ▶ But scale of Housing First across the country is not that great
- ▶ Again, smaller projects
- ▶ Sustained housing, gains in health and wellbeing



FINLAND

- ▶ Housing First integrated into the national homelessness strategy
- ▶ As you can hear about at this conference, Finland has reduced all forms of homelessness
- ▶ Proof that homelessness can be ended
- ▶ Housing First services used for long-term and repeatedly homeless people
- ▶ Within a wider strategy using prevention, fixed site and other forms of floating/mobile support



ENGLAND

- ▶ Housing First initially advocated by academics who saw North American evidence
- ▶ Me
- ▶ Taken up by Homeless Link, federation of English homelessness organisations
- ▶ Housing First England programme
- ▶ Initially small pilots, not all of which survived
- ▶ The UK has been one of the slowest in adopting Housing First, but England has just started a £28 million (\$CAD 47m) pilot programme in Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham



Housing First England

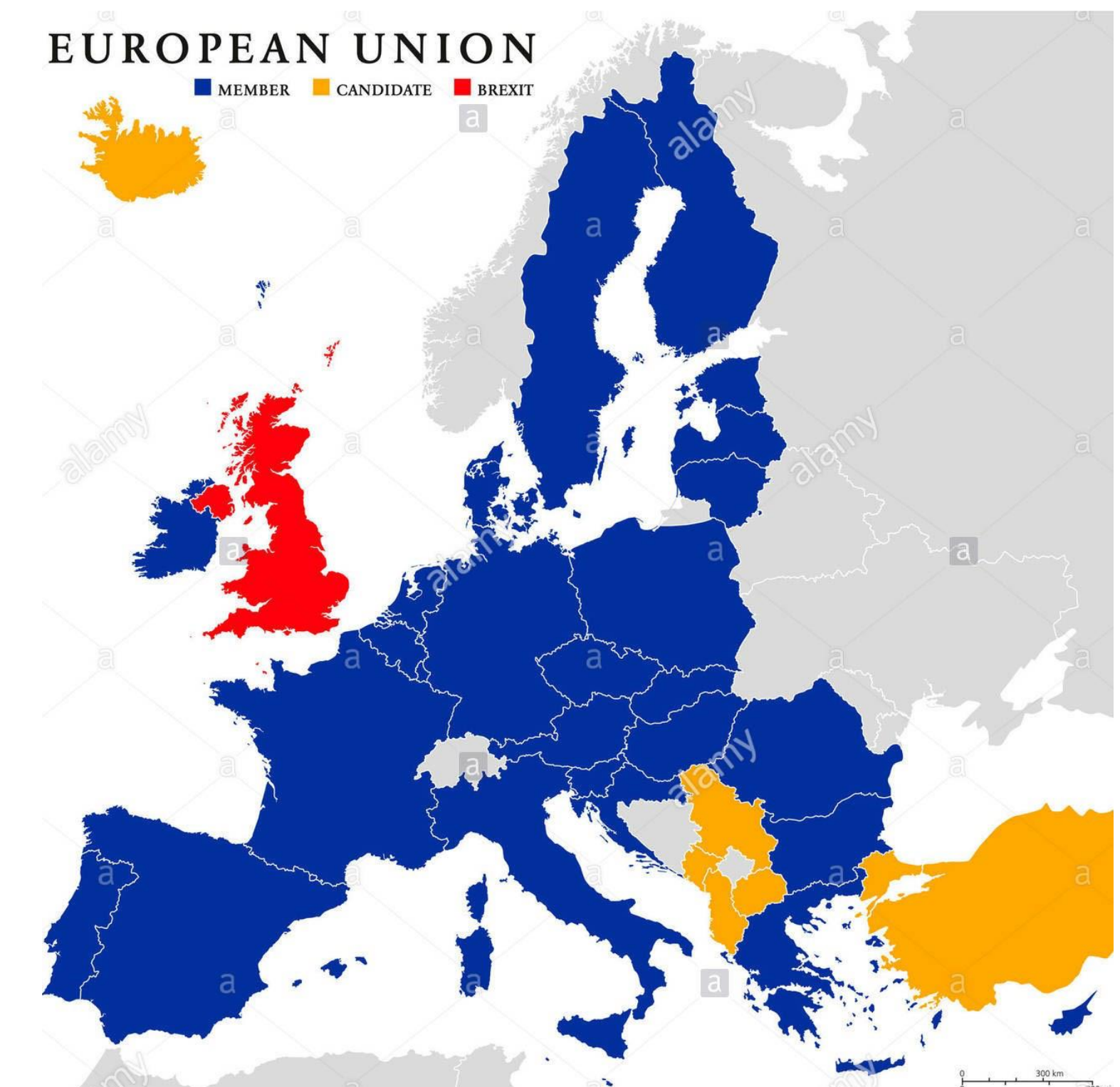
BELGIUM

- ▶ As in France, tested through a series of pilot services
- ▶ Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt, Brussels, Molenbeek, Liège, Charleroi and Namur
- ▶ Three year pilot programme
- ▶ Now being rolled out nationally



EUROPE

- ▶ Housing First is mainly being used in the North West
- ▶ Scandinavian countries
 - ▶ National strategy in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway, France, Luxembourg, Ireland
 - ▶ Pilots, homeless-sector led programmes in Sweden, UK
- ▶ But is being developed elsewhere
 - ▶ Housing First Italia, Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic



PAN-EUROPEAN LEVEL

- ▶ Housing-led and Housing First approaches being recommended by the European Commission
- ▶ European Union's civil service
- ▶ Although housing and homelessness policy are determined at national level
- ▶ Housing First being advocated by FEANTSA, the European Federation of Homelessness Organisations



HOUSING FIRST GUIDE



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Welcome to the
Housing First Guide Europe!



What is Housing
First?



Core principles
of Housing First



Delivering
Support



Delivering
Housing



Evaluating
Housing First



Housing First
and Wider
Strategy

HOUSING FIRST

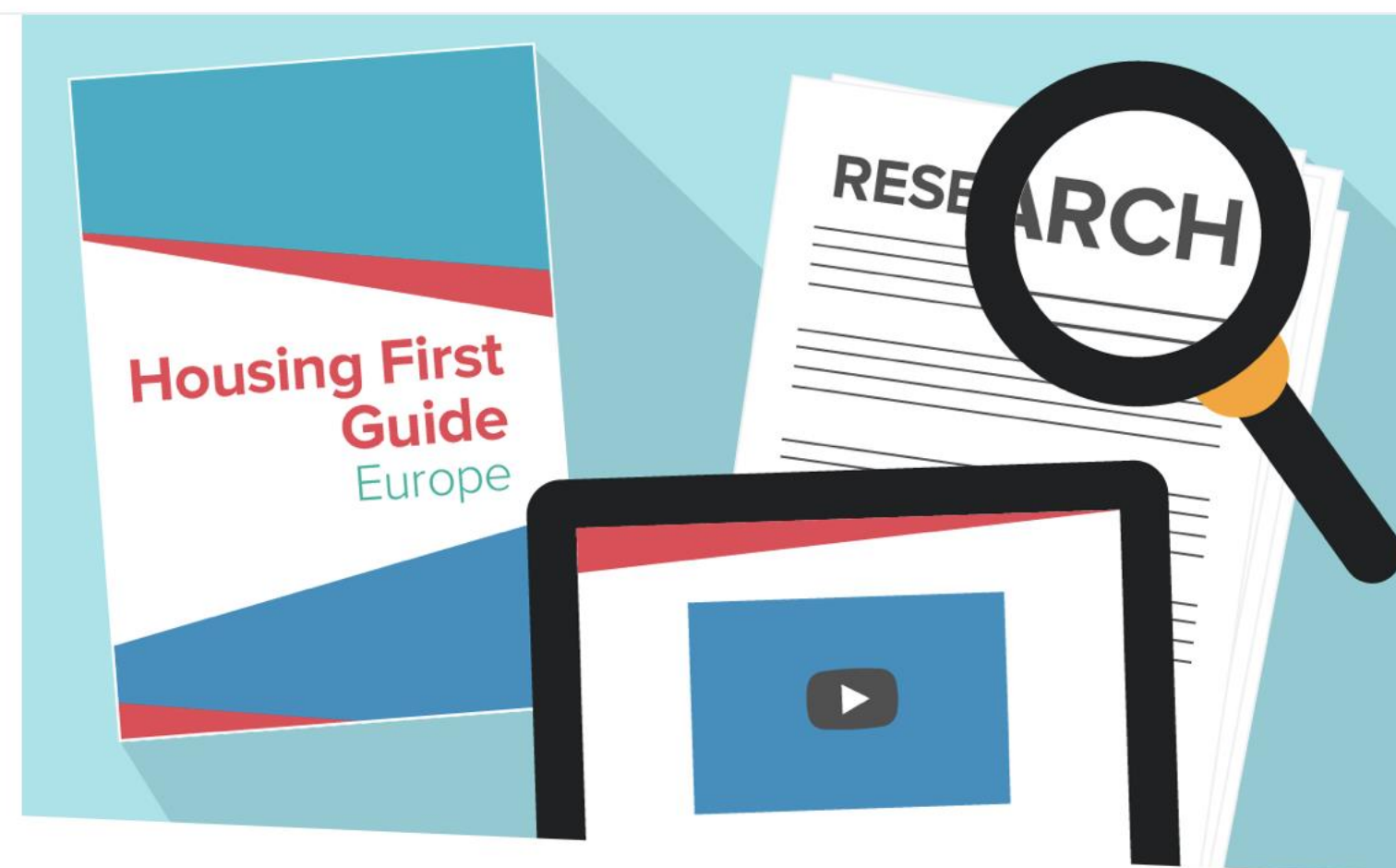
EUROPE HUB

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Welcome to the Housing First Europe Hub

The Hub is a group of organisations, public authorities and foundations working to scale up Housing First in Europe. The Hub organizes training on Housing First, conducts and publishes research, and produces tools for practitioners and policy makers to understand, explain and deliver Housing First.

The resources on this website are available to everyone. More information about our training, research and other programmes will be made available over the next months. Click on the links to find out more about the Hub Partners, as well as about Housing First in your country or city.

[Read more about the Hub](#)

STRENGTHS

- ▶ Ending homelessness
- ▶ Success rates between 75-90%
- ▶ Measured as keeping someone housed for one year
- ▶ Slightly different measure than is sometimes used in North America
- ▶ Not days/nights housed
- ▶ But being in your own flat (apartment) or house and living there for one year or more

STRENGTHS

- ▶ Remarkable consistency
- ▶ High rates of housing sustainment (ending homelessness) in very different countries
- ▶ Success in countries like Denmark and Sweden that have very extensive welfare, public health and public housing services
- ▶ In countries like France and the UK, where welfare, public health and public housing spending is, on global terms, comparatively high
- ▶ And in countries with lower spending in these areas, Italy, Spain, Portugal and some examples from Eastern Europe

STRENGTHS

- ▶ Positive results in terms of improvements in health
- ▶ Improvements in mental health
- ▶ Changes to health service use, i.e. less use of emergency services
- ▶ Improvements in addiction
- ▶ Improvements in social integration (economic activity, family and friends support networks)
- ▶ But results are, as Canadian research is also showing, uneven

LIMITATIONS

- ▶ Addiction does not always improve
- ▶ Mental health does not always improve
- ▶ Physical health does not always improve
- ▶ Social integration does not always improve

LIMITATIONS

- ▶ Addiction, health, mental health and social integration do not always improve
- ▶ One reason might be the time for which people have been using what are still quite young services
- ▶ Another reason might be about expectations, how much can you really expect a single service like Housing First to do?
- ▶ Another reason might be the reliance on other services, Housing First is a case management/service brokering model
- ▶ However, these patterns have also been reported outside Europe

LIMITATIONS

- ▶ While expecting absolutely positive results is not realistic
- ▶ There are some questions around how much Housing First should be expected to achieve
- ▶ And what role other services need to play to support it

WHERE ARE WE
SUPPOSED TO FIND
ALL THIS HOUSING
FROM?

Everybody in the Homelessness Sector

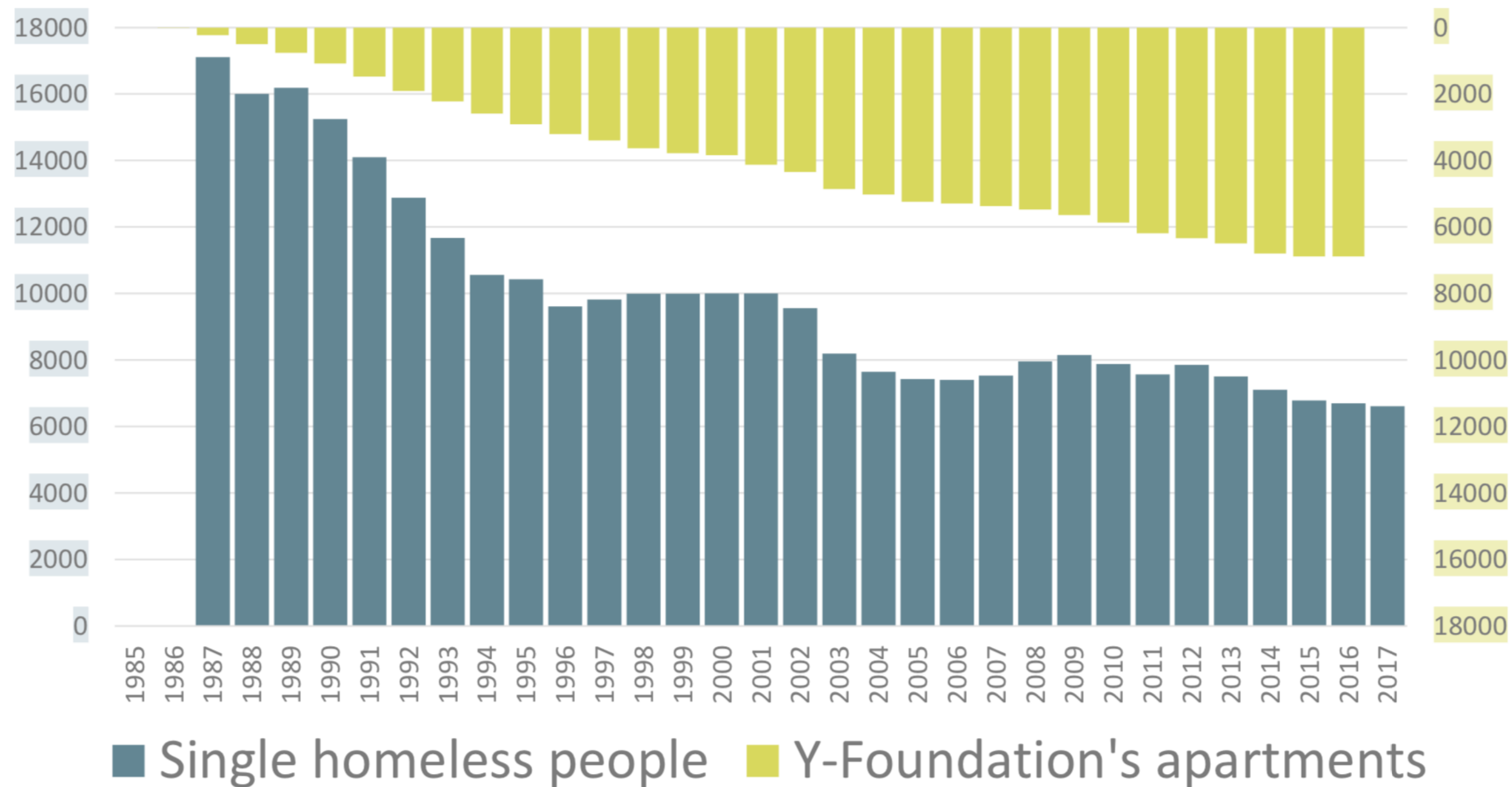
HOUSING

- ▶ The wait for one-bedroom social (public) housing in the London Borough of Westminster is three years
- ▶ The average weekly rent in the cheapest third of the private rented sector is above what the welfare system will pay
- ▶ Average private rents across London as a whole were £157 a week, £675 a month, £8,101 a year (2016/17), \$CAD 13,700.
- ▶ Every economically prosperous area of the UK has an undersupply of affordable, adequate housing
- ▶ And the same is true across much of Europe

HOUSING

- ▶ The highly successful Finnish homelessness strategy, which incorporated elements of Housing First
- ▶ Also had a major social housing building programme

Homeless people vs. number of our apartments



FIDELITY

- ▶ In Denmark and in France, Housing First looks like *At Home/Chez Soi*
- ▶ But in Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, not so much
- ▶ Variations in who Housing First is for
 - ▶ Finland, UK, for *anyone* who is long-term and recurrently homeless
- ▶ Variations in how it works
 - ▶ Finland, UK and elsewhere, an intensive case management model, but not actually ICM

FIDELITY

- ▶ In terms of ending homelessness
- ▶ Performance seems very similar, or actually, the same
- ▶ Some variation in fidelity is inevitable, public services, welfare and health systems differ radically from US and Canada
- ▶ But its not really clear whether what a lot of Europe is doing is strictly “Housing First” in the Sam Tsemberis sense
- ▶ Operationally, things differ, but the core principles, the *philosophy* of Housing First is being followed

FIDELITY UK

- ▶ No requirement for weekly meetings
- ▶ Full tenancies from the start, no sub-letting or leases
- ▶ No financial control
- ▶ Co-production
- ▶ Your behaviour might change, but that's a matter for you

HOUSING FIRST WILL
SAVE LOADS OF
MONEY, RIGHT?

European Governments

COST EFFECTIVENESS

- ▶ A lot of what Europe already does solves homelessness
- ▶ When Housing First appeared, it was tested against US linear residential treatment (LRT) or 'staircase' models that were expensive and had inconsistent results
- ▶ A lot of European homelessness services, particularly in the North West, are not like that
- ▶ In Finland or the UK, harm reduction, choice-led services with an emphasis on strength based approaches have been mainstream practice for *decades*
- ▶ These existing services do stop and do prevent homelessness

COST EFFECTIVENESS

- ▶ As in Canadian and US research, the initial data on Europe suggest a clear pattern
- ▶ People with very high and complex needs who make extensive use of emergency and other publicly funded services can be supported much more economically by Housing First
- ▶ But there will be cost spikes from people not using any services
- ▶ And when someone is not, to use UK terminology, a “frequent flyer”, the economic case is less clear

COST EFFECTIVENESS

- ▶ Housing First is good value for money
- ▶ Because very £ or € spent is going on a service that is stopping homelessness for a high proportion of people with high and complex needs
- ▶ But outcomes on addiction, mental health, physical health and social integration are uneven
- ▶ And both these things could become weak spots, politically

HOUSING FIRST CAN
SOLVE ALL
HOMELESSNESS AND
IS THE BEST THING

European Governments, bits of the
homelessness sector and the bits of
the media

USING HOUSING FIRST STRATEGICALLY

- ▶ Key lesson, which you can hear about at this conference, is the one from Finland
- ▶ Housing First was used as *part of a comprehensive, integrated strategy*
- ▶ The Finns built and used their *own version* of Housing First, as a model and as a philosophy
- ▶ Housing First was used to support long-term homeless people with high and complex needs
- ▶ In *combination* with prevention, specialist services and lower intensity services
- ▶ It is an integrated, coordinated strategy that solves homelessness

Housing Network

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Wed 14 Mar 2018 10.48 GMT



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Housing First alone can't solve the UK's homelessness crisis

The scheme has ended homelessness in Finland and can help
in the UK, too - but only as part of an integrated approach



▲ The UK can learn lessons from Finland's use of Housing First as part of an integrated approach to homelessness.
Photo credit: Matt Cardy/Getty Images Photograph: Matt Cardy/Getty Images

The **Housing First programme** is only a small step in the fight to end homelessness. It may have helped end homelessness in other countries, but it cannot, on its own, do the same in the UK.

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POSSIBLE LESSONS FOR CANADA

- ▶ Housing First is clearly a model that we should be using
- ▶ But we need to be careful
- ▶ Don't claim too much in terms of cost effectiveness
- ▶ Or say it can solve all homelessness on its own
- ▶ Because that might create political risk
- ▶ Advance, with a degree of caution

THANKS FOR LISTENING

- ▶ Nicholas Pleace, Director, Centre for Housing Policy
 - ▶ <http://www.york.ac.uk/chp/>
- ▶ European Observatory on Homelessness
 - ▶ <http://www.feantsaresearch.org/>
- ▶ Women's Homelessness in Europe Network (WHEN)
 - ▶ <http://womenshomelessness.org/>

