

Cyrenians

TACKLING THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

Ask an Act Pilot

Polmont and Addiewell

- Forth Valley Health 'Ask and Act' Homelessness Prevention, app development and Hospital Link Work Model

Ask & act: New prevention

- Part of the **Housing (Scotland) Act 2025** – passed in Scottish Parliament in September 2025 and received Royal Assent in November 2025
- Duty on **relevant public bodies to “ask & act”** on homelessness – identifying individuals and households at risk of homelessness and coordinate response to prevent crisis
- **‘Relevant bodies’** in the Act: Health Boards, Integrated Joint Boards, Local Authorities (e.g. schools, social work etc.), Police, Registered Social Landlords, prisons and YOIs, Social Security Scotland – may be modified in regulations
- Also, extending “being threatened with homelessness” from **2 months to 6 months** – duty on LAs to start prevention activities early

Causes and consequences

Key transition points

- Leaving hospital
- Leaving prison
- Young people leaving care
- Leaving Home Office accommodated (refugees and asylum seekers)

→ The right pathways and coordinated support need to be in place

Principles and Components

Principles:

- Relationship breakdown is the leading cause of homelessness
- Family and relationships have huge influence on prisoner outcomes
- More people are homeless on release than homeless prior to custody?

Could more people go 'home' on release?

Components of the pilot

- Training and awareness raising
- Parenting courses to support family relationships
- Mediation and support for to strengthen and repair family relationships

Training & Awareness raising

- The pilot will deliver 10 training sessions for staff across Polmont and Addiewell
- Coproduced with link centre staff
- Content
 - Overview of the duties within the housing bill
 - Causes and consequences of homelessness
 - Different ways in which an ask might be carried out
 - What an 'Act' might look like
 - Cyrenians pilot – our 'Acts'
- Intended outcomes
 - Prison staff are aware of upcoming duties and feel more confident
 - Risk of homelessness on release is identified early
 - Opportunities to avoid homelessness are identified/ actioned

Parenting Courses

- 2 x 15-week courses for up to 8 participants
- Delivered in Addiewell to prisoners who are eligible for family bonding visits
- Based on Solihull Approach- content
 - Development of child parent relationship
 - Promotes awareness of child behaviours
 - Strategies for effective parenting
 - Strategies for repair if things go wrong
- Intended Outcome
 - Strengthened family relationships
 - Developed relationship between parent and child (good for both)
 - Increased self esteem (for both parent and child)
 - Increased chance of a return to the family home

Mediation and Support

- 15 family mediation and support cases
- Focus on young adult prisoners
- Preservation/ rebuilding of family relationship
- Process:
 - Explore challenges in relationships from both party's perspective
 - Support with practical barriers to participation
 - Formal mediation and mediation agreement
 - Follow up practical support for family and individual, any additional supports required
- Intended outcomes
 - Return to the family home
 - Preservation or reestablishment of relationship regardless



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Hospital in reach pilot delivery summary

Purpose: to test how nhs wards can reliably ask about housing risk and act early to prevent homelessness, supporting safe, timely discharge and reducing repeat admissions.



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What happens on the wards (end-to-end pathway)



Identify and Ask (Ward teams)

- Ward and discharge staff identify patients whose housing situation may affect recovery or discharge (e.g. no fixed address, temporary accommodations, unsafe/unstable housing, risk of tenancy loss during admission, “can’t go home”).
- Staff raise concerns early (ideally at admission and during discharge planning) and contact the Link Worker using agreed channels (in-person or agreed ward process).
- Staff do **not** need to be housing experts—just spot risk, ask a simple housing question, and refer.



Act: coordinated support and discharge planning (link worker + partners)

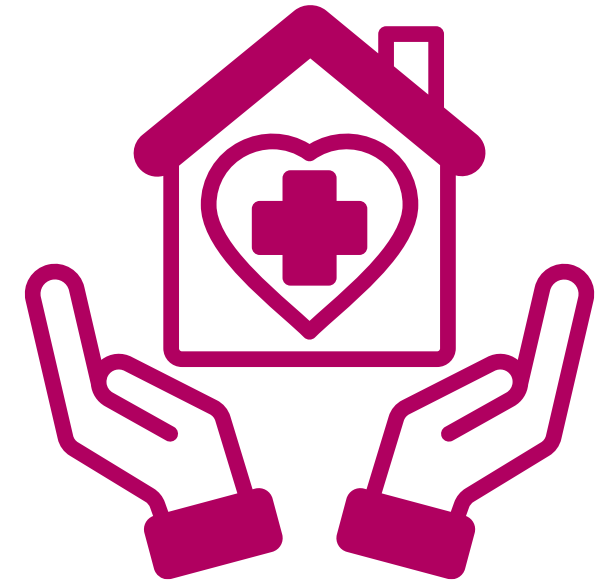
Link Worker coordinates tailored support, including:

- Liaison/referral to local authority homelessness teams / Housing teams
- Support to retain temporary accommodation during admission where possible
- Securing temporary/permanent accommodation prior to discharge
- Practical steps for safe discharge (e.g., transport, essentials, connection to follow-up care)
- Wider supports (income maximisation/debt advice, mental health, addictions, community services)
- Reducing self-discharge against medical advice by addressing immediate needs and stabilising plans

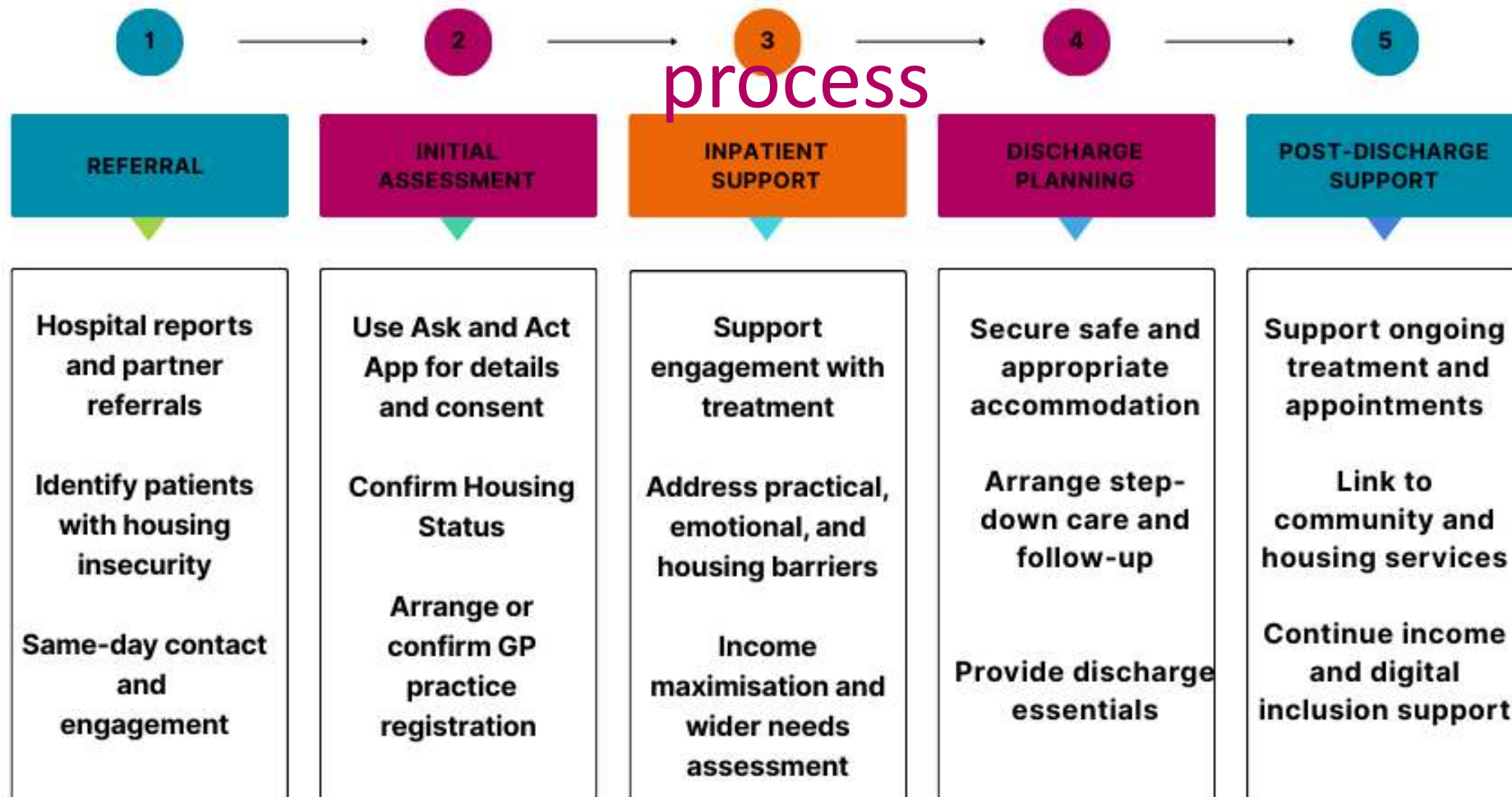


What this model is designed to achieve

- Earlier identification of housing risk (before crisis/discharge failure)
- Faster, safer discharge with fewer housing-related delays
- Improved patient experience and engagement
- Reduced readmission risk linked to housing instability
- Clear, repeatable ward workflow for Ask & Act duties
- Robust data for evaluation and future scaling



5 step process



Progress

- We are currently live and working within the hospital.
- We have two workers, James & Zena. Covering Monday to Friday, and are based within the discharge lounge office.
- We take referrals from across 12 Acute Wards.
- We are currently providing training to frontline NHS workers on Ask & Act, most importantly when / how to Ask and how to Act when risks are identified.



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