Five high-impact housing actions for mental health hospital discharge

The NHS ten-year plan emphasises a strategic shift toward providing more proactive, preventative and community-based care.

Access to good quality and affordable housing is fundamental for delivering this shift. It supports recovery and enables greater independence for people with severe mental illness.

The strategic case for integrating mental health and housing is well-understood. A focus on integrating housing across mental health and social care systems supports efforts to relieve pressures on NHS inpatient services, improve flow, reduce length of stay and improve outcomes for individuals.

NHS planning guidance for 2025/26 prioritises improving patient flow through mental health crisis and acute pathways. The medium term planning framework (2026 – 2029)1 also seeks to eradicate inappropriate out of area placements and reduce average lengths of stay in adult acute mental health beds. Too often housing barriers to discharge are not identified early enough. They are complex and difficult to resolve, and there is a lack of timely access to housing expertise.

As a result, across the country length of stay has continued to rise and over 50% of bed days are lost to delayed discharges linked to housing or social care.

The guidance asks providers to implement the 10 high impact areas for mental health discharge.

From HACT's extensive work across the country we have identified 5 high impact housing actions that can support mental health discharge.

These actions are for Mental Health Trusts, working with their local system partners. When implemented, they create the right foundations for delivering and sustaining integration between mental health and housing.

HACT

Five high-impact housing actions

For more information on the strategic case for integrating mental health and housing please follow this link.

1 **Introduce a housing needs triage and assessment framework**
across inpatient and community services to enable early identification of housing issues affecting admission and discharge.

2 **Establish a dedicated housing team**
with specialist expertise to address complex housing cases, embedded across inpatient and community services, and fully integrated with local authority housing and homelessness teams.

3 **Fully implement the Duty to Refer and improve co-ordination between NHS, local authority and housing partners**
working with partners to share housing needs data and information that supports system prioritisation, planning and decision making.

4 **Identify specific internal leadership on housing**
to drive partnership working, system co-ordination, and operational improvements.

5 **Co-create a Mental Health and Housing Strategy**
with your system partners and key stakeholders, with a multi-agency housing improvement programme.



How HACT can help

HACT can support Trusts and their partners to develop and implement the 5 high-impact housing actions through focused, flexible support packages tailored to your needs and local context.

We will work with you to engage key internal and external stakeholders, and support health leaders to develop knowledge and confidence about housing.

Discovery reviews

Rapid reviews and extensive stakeholder engagement to uncover housing barriers, challenges and opportunities.

Deep dives

In-depth analysis and stakeholder engagement on specific pathways focused on strategic and operational integration with housing, and identifying areas for major improvement.

Implementation support

Focused on operational improvements to introduce housing needs, triage and assessment frameworks, housing workforce requirements, and collaborative solutions.

Strategy Development

Convening system partners to co-create joined-up mental health and housing strategies that embed housing as a driver for improvement and transformation.

System Engagement

Enabling ICS-level collaboration and co-designed solutions.

hact.org.uk/tools-and-services/health-services

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