| 2022-1-IE01-KA220-VET-000089473

ADAPTING HOUSING FIRST
Adapting Housing First - Innovating Housing Staff

‘Outreach Team and Housing First’

Sophia
providing homes - supporting people
Y-Säätiö
Housing First Berlin
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Co-funded by the European Union
léargas

ARRELS

WHY WAS THE OUTREACH TEAM CREATED?

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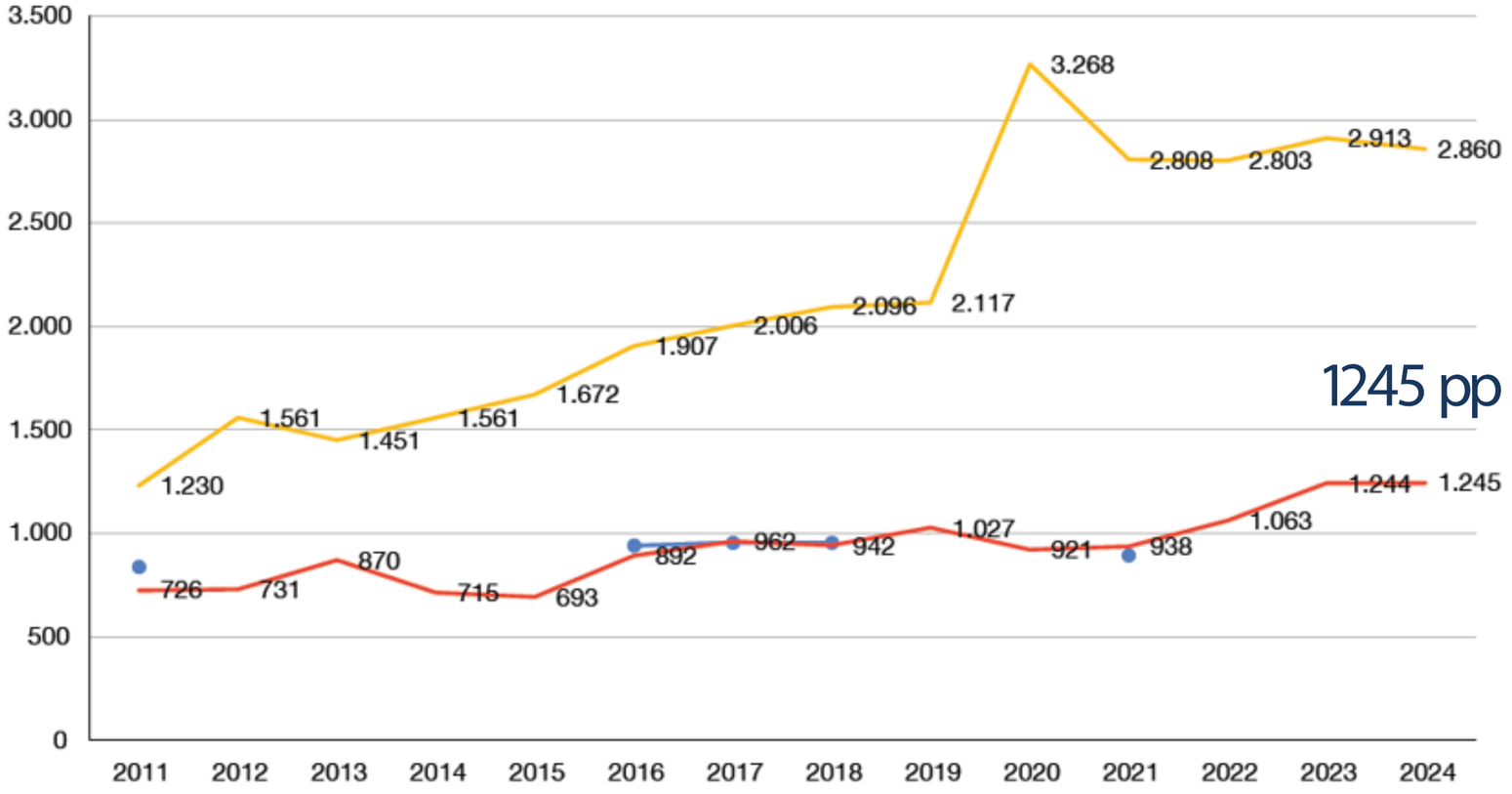
2024 Barcelona.

Evolution of homeless people living on the street and housed in residential resources of the Barcelona homeless care network (XASPLL)



1245 pp living on the Street

People sleeping on the street estimated by the social intervention teams in the public space.

People housed in xaspll's residential resources

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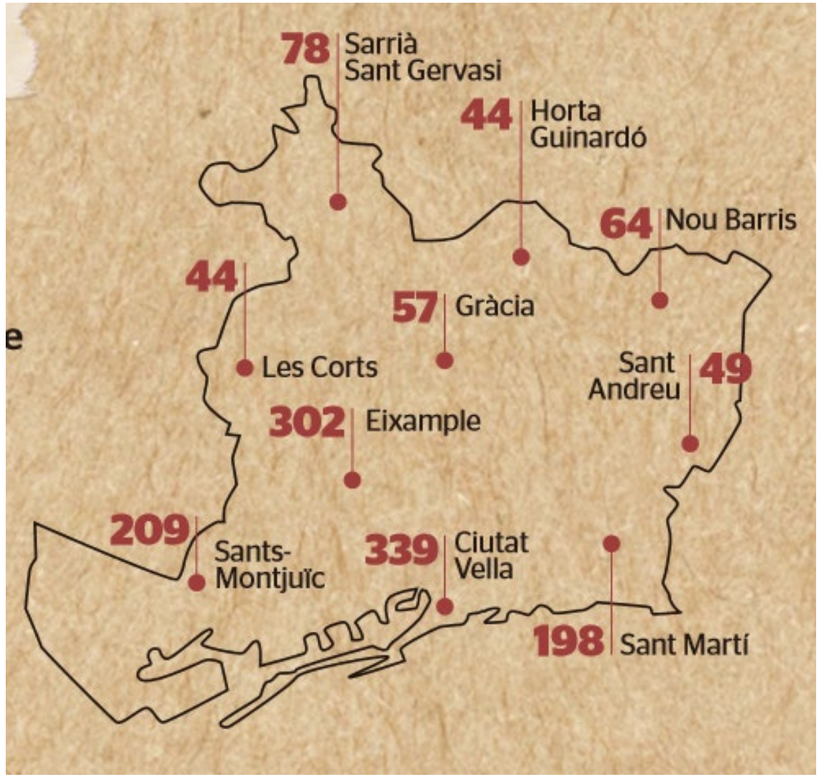
2024 Barcelona.

- **At least 1,384 people sleep on the streets of Barcelona, according to the latest count by Arrels**
- **786 People visited by Outreach Team. 104 women**
- **404 Accompaniments to health network**
- **607 average visits per month, 7291 per year (2024)**
- **We allocate 22% of our budget to visiting people directly on the street and providing them with basic services.**



HOW WE WORK AND ORGANIZE:

Main focus: Identify people who are sleeping rough and asses their needs, in order to inform them and connect them with available services.

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TEAM

Our team is made up of:
- 6 staff members
- 30 volunteers
- Staff Works flexible hours
- Frequency of visits depends on the need of each person.

We collaborate with organisations like:
- Arrels legal team
- Salut sense sostre
- SASSEP, ESMES

THE ESSENCE OF OUTREACH WORK

The essene of outreach work lies in being a bridge between people living on the streets and the services available to them.

Outreach plays a key role in helping people acces:

- Housing
- Healthcare
- Support with paperwork...

This isn’t about paternalism, it’s about realism.

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TARGET GROUP

“Priority Profile”: Those who are in a situation of extreme social, economic and emotional vulnerability. Often, they have lived on the streets for many years.

- Health problems
- Long history of living on the streets
- Lack ok connection to support networks
- Exclusion from available services
- Risky situations
- Difficulties in managing their finances

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VERBAL AND NON – VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Verbal communication: showing respect and empathy

EXAMPLES:

- ➢ Avoid giving orders
- ➢ Use the person's name
- ➢ Acknowledge their feelings without judging them

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REAL EXAMPLE:

It’s about Carlos, a man from Portugal who has been living on the street since at least 2008. We’ve known him since that same year, and on several occasions, we’ve offered him a flat. He always said no—he never needed anything.

However, more than once, he told us that he’d like to live in a place like a garage or a converted storefront apartment—something on the ground floor, a single open space.

One day, we spoke with our colleagues from the support team (Mireia and Jose), and they told us they had a flat that matched what Carlos was looking for. So we offered to show him a “converted storefront apartment” that was available. And for the first time, he accepted.

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- Non – verbal communication: approaching with care

EXAMPLES:

- If the person is sitting or lying on the ground, crouch down or sit near them to be at eye level.
- Respect their personal space.
- Avoid sudden movements or acting in a rushed or distracted way.
- Speak in a soft and calm tone, even if the person it’s upset.

REAL EXAMPLE:

It’s about Maria, a woman from Brazil whom we’ve known since 2019. She is a very clean and organized person. Many times, when we visit her, she asks us for cleaning products so she can keep everything in perfect order.

One day, I went to see her and something surprised me. On the same sidewalk, just before the bench where she usually sleeps, she had placed a small carpet. In that moment, I realized that this was her “safe space”- a personal area that she had created. And I understood that, if I stepped over that carpet, I would probably be invading her space.

HOW DO WE CREATED A BOND?

- We must not make assumptions
- Our role is to offer help, not jo judge them-
- Our goal is to build a relationship of **trust**
- Our approach- is person centred
- Our model is rooted in a low-threshold approach and harm reduction
- We offer unconditional support

GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN OUR WORK

- We include a gender perspective in our intervention.
- We look at how gender roles affect life on the streets.
- We identify specific risks for women and LGTBIQ+ community.
- We build safe and trusting bonds.
- We adjust our support to their specific needs.
- We ensure that they receive the attention and care they deserve

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REAL EXAMPLE:

José, a 69-year-old man from Chile, whom we've known since 2013. He has always rejected us, never speaking to us and looking at us with distrust. Until two months ago, when, after being hospitalized, the healthcare professionals asked him who they could contact. He answered, "with Arrels". This was the perfect moment to start building a bond with José.

Right now, we are visiting him weekly at the hospital, and working with the hospital's social worker to find him a place to go. Returning to the street is not an option for us.

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Transitions betweent HF outreach team and HF Suport team

When does the support team step in?

- Acompany in this transition: building bond in early stages
- Person expresses **willingness to be housed**
- Outreach team identifies **priority profile**
- Support team joins outreach for **initial visits**
- This starts the **joint follow-up process**

GOALS OF THE JOINT FOLLOW UP

- Build an **early relationship** with the person
- Assess the person's **autonomy** to sustain housing:

CHALLENGES

- Different team views on housing
- Reduced autonomy
- 3 basic conditions (30%, visits, neighbour coexistance)

•Focus on **community impact** (neighbours)

•We usually **go ahead with housing**, but adapt support:

- Assisted flats
- Backup plans
- Gradual or flexible entry

LOW TRESHOLD ENTRY

We work with people with:

- Poor physical/mental health
- Addictions, mobility issues

Yet we **adapt to their pace** and needs
Examples:

- Use flat only during the day
- Request for garage-style housing
- Declining housing ≠ ending support

CASE MR FRANK

- 11 years rough sleeping → prison
- Outreach team: long term follow up
- Support team visited in prison
- Volunteer support maintained from street to housing
- Strong **relational continuity** = smoother transition

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KEY PRINCIPLE

“No one should return to the street.”

- **Continuum-based Housing First model**

- If housing fails, support continues

CRITERIA AND DECISION MAKING

We balance:

- **Person's will** (living alone, neighbourhood)
- **Professional assessment**

  Risk of conflict

  Independence vs. shared housing

  Flat suitability (mobility, support needs)

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OUR APPROACH

- **Shared perspective**
- **Flexible & relational work**
- Not an *administrative* handover, but a *human* one
- Focus on **trajectory** and **real needs**

WAYS FORWARD

🔧 **Improvement proposal**:

Create **hybrid teams** (outreach + support)

Joint first contacts

Builds **trust before moving in**

Reduces fear, resistance, and risk of failure

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THANK YOU!
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