Homeless Link

National Homelessness Skills Framework

For frontline roles



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Acknowledgement: This framework has been funded by MHCLG through the VCFS programme.

How to use the framework:
A practical guide to using this framework

There is a full user guide to accompany this framework, which contains further information on how to use the framework, including an explanation of the 'levels' in Part 2.

1. Start at part 1 by reviewing the roles to find the one that most closely matches your current role or a role that you're interested in.

2. Review the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are linked to your chosen role.

3. Assess your strengths and identify any areas for development. Use the framework to have a conversation with your manager about your career planning - whether that is broadening your specialisms, or moving into a more senior role.

   If you're new to the sector think through what transferable skills, knowledge or behaviours you might have, consider volunteering and review our learning and development options.

4. Draft a plan to prioritise a few areas (knowledge, skills or behaviours, or a mix of all three) to focus on, being mindful not to overwhelm yourself.

In order for the framework to be useful, a willingness to learn new knowledge and skills that are relevant and useful for the job is needed. This includes seeking feedback, attending courses or other development opportunities, being open to new ideas and approaches and then applying the learning to your work.

The framework can also be used by line managers during supervisions or appraisals, to support with personal development planning. Identifying the essential knowledge, skills, and behaviours for different roles can also aid recruitment processes.

Part One: Roles and services

Introduction to roles

For this first phase of the framework, we are focussing on roles that are considered ‘frontline’.

We recognise that this is not an exhaustive list of all the frontline roles in the homelessness sector. However, we have picked out the key roles identified during focus groups and through sector surveys. The names of job titles can vary across the sector and therefore we have highlighted possible alternatives to job titles for those who are new to the sector. For each role, we have provided a description, the types of services it applies to, the essential and additional knowledge, skills and behaviours required, and a case study from someone currently working in the role. The framework is purely focussed on the specific needs of working in the homelessness sector. Therefore, there will be other generic skills that organisations need to consider such as health and safety or manual handling, which may also be relevant.

- Support Worker
- Activities Coordinator
- Floating Support Worker
- Drug and Alcohol Worker
- Outreach Worker
- Peer Worker
- Housing First Worker
- Night Support Worker
- Complex Needs Worker
- Housing Management Worker

Introduction to services



Types of services often vary within the homelessness sector. For this framework, we have identified the most common types of services but acknowledge that each service may look different according to the area/need.

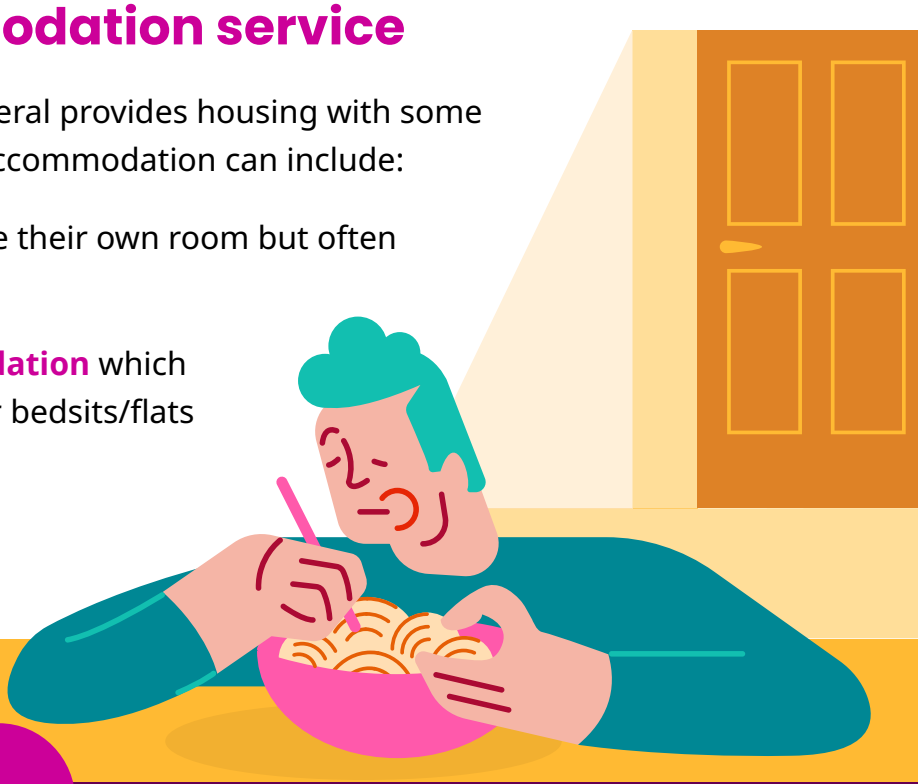
Day centre service

Homelessness day centres provide a space for people sleeping rough and for those experiencing homelessness to access practical support, often including food, showers, internet access, and phone charging. Day centres often also provide a range of other services, including support with finding accommodation, benefits, training and employment services and support to access physical & mental health services.

Supported accommodation service

Supported accommodation in general provides housing with some element of support alongside it. Accommodation can include:

- **Hostels**, where individuals have their own room but often share communal areas
- **Semi-independent accommodation** which could include shared housed or bedsits/flats





- **Night shelters** which are often communal sleeping spaces, with individuals having to leave during the day
- **Refuges**, which are provided specifically for women who have experienced domestic abuse.

Street outreach service

Outreach services specifically support people who are rough sleeping. Outreach workers meet with individuals where they are sleeping, providing support to find accommodation and linking people in with other support services.

Floating support service

Floating support services help people who are in accommodation to maintain their tenancy and live independently. These services often mean workers go to people's accommodation, rather than people coming to them.



Support Worker

Also known as: **Caseworker** **Key Worker** **Advisor** **Officer** **Floating Support Worker**

Description of role

Support Worker: Provides practical support and guidance to people experiencing homelessness. Support is mainly provided on a 1-2-1 basis, with support sessions often held in person. Holistic support is offered with referrals made to external organisations.

We recognise that there will be different levels of 'Support Workers' within the sector, with roles varying between different organisations. Consider the remit of your role / a role you want to go into when reviewing the knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Floating Support Worker: A type of Support Worker who helps individuals live independently in their homes, rather than supporting people who are rough sleeping or in a supported accommodation service. Focus is often on enabling individuals to maintain their tenancy (ensuring benefits are paid, income is received, bills are managed etc.) but also in providing holistic support.

Support can include advice on:

- Finding accommodation
- Improving physical & mental health
- Substance use
- Benefits & income
- Employment, training & education
- Accessing relevant immigration advice

The types of service relevant to this role:

- Day centres
- Supported accommodation
- Floating support service

Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Knowledge

Essential:

Data Protection

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Safeguarding

Additional:

Advocacy

Hoarding

Homelessness and Housing Law

Lone working

Mental health and the Mental Capacity Act

Modern slavery

Multiple disadvantage

Psychologically Informed Environments

Self-harm and suicide

Stress, vicarious trauma and managing wellbeing

Substance and alcohol use

Welfare benefits

Skills

Essential:

Communication

IT

Professional boundaries

Solutions focused

Team working

Time management

Additional:

Assessment and support planning

Managing challenging behaviour

Motivational interviewing

Partnership working

Risk assessment

Strengths-based practice

Trauma-informed care

Behaviours

Essential:

Empathy

Flexible

Honesty

Inclusive

Non-judgemental

Proactive

Reliable

Respectful

Willingness to learn

Additional:

Reflective

Self-awareness

Case study:

A day in the life of a Support Worker

A typical day as a Housing Support Worker involves reading new referrals, meeting with individuals to understand their needs and looking at what housing options are available. It may involve contacting the local authority if I believe the person is owed a statutory housing duty – I.e. that they should be placed in temporary accommodation. I will also make referrals to relevant services based on the needs of the individual. This will consider their age, cultural background, disabilities, and gender to ensure that the support they receive includes the opportunity to provide reasonable adjustments where needed.

The biggest challenge we face is being able to find affordable accommodation for individuals. Being honest about what people can realistically afford is important, so we are not over-promising or setting them up to fail.

In my job, I love being able to support people to successfully move either from the streets or from unsuitable environments into accommodation where they can thrive and gain important life skills. Supporting and watching people overcome hurdles they never thought were possible is the highlight of my job.

If you're thinking of joining the homelessness sector, go for it! It can be tough at times, but incredibly rewarding.

Case study:

A day in the life of a Youth Support Worker

Every day is different. The young people living in our supported accommodation have vastly different needs that are ever-changing. There may be days that are very quiet, and other days that require intense levels of support. At the beginning of each shift, we do a handover to discuss any concerns and anything that needs to be actioned. Each young person will have a designated support session weekly where we discuss their goals and the steps they need to take to achieve these.

Engaging with young people can be challenging, especially if they have lost trust in the people around them. Determination, showing the person that you are there for them and will not give up, as well as consistency and accountability can help to build this trust. Being flexible is also important, understanding that each individual is different and may need you to adapt the way you do things.

One thing I love about my job is seeing progress and witnessing a change in a young person. It is amazing when someone opens up to you about something they had previously kept from anyone really. Getting to know such a varied group of people means always learning with, for, and about them; accompanying the young person throughout their entire journey, from the time they arrive at the accommodation, until they transition to independence.

Working in this sector is really rewarding but it can be challenging. You need to come with an open mind and understand that everyone has their own timeline for progression, appreciating the 'smaller' positive moments.

Case study:

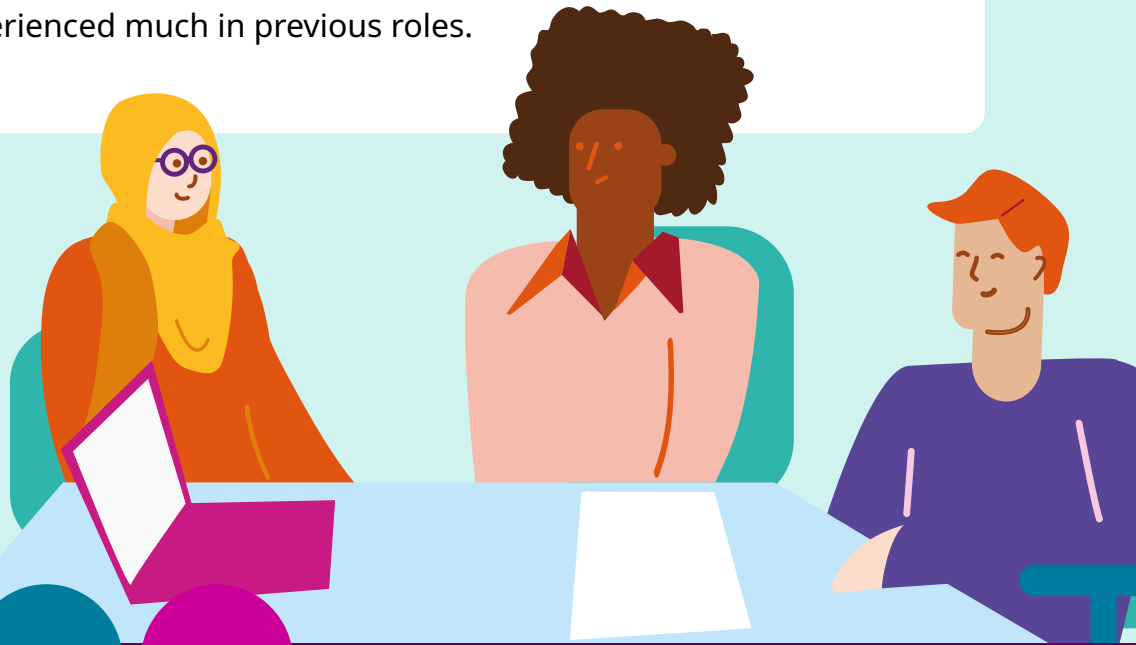
A day in the life of a Floating Support Worker

Every day is different in this job! My role is all about empowering a diverse range of individuals to live independently within their own home. We may meet for a coffee, take a walk, or I may visit them in their accommodation. Not every meeting has a specific plan, sometimes we just meet to chat about everyday things and to remind them that I am here to support them.

Support can include building an individual's confidence, improving life skills, arranging bills, and generally supporting them to manage their daily life. I also apply for grants to support people into new tenancies and provide them with essential items to make it a home, making sure our services are accessible to everyone.

My favourite part of my job has to be the people I support. I love the interaction – everyone has a story to tell, and I love listening to them. I love that we don't just 'do', we work with individuals to find ways forward with them and for them.

My experience in this sector is extremely positive. Every day I get up and I am happy to come to work. That for me speaks volumes and it is something I have not experienced much in previous roles.



Outreach Worker

Description of role

A type of support worker who supports people who are currently sleeping rough, meeting them where they are, rather than in a building-based service. A holistic support package is offered, with a focus on moving people away from the streets. Outreach workers are encouraged to follow **Homeless Link's principles for rough sleeping outreach**.

Support can include advice on:

- Finding accommodation
- Reconnecting individuals to their home area (within outreach teams, there can be 'Assessment and Reconnection Workers' whose sole job is to do this).
- Improving physical & mental health
- Substance use
- Benefits & income
- Employment, training & education
- Accessing relevant immigration advice
- Transitioning from sleeping rough to having accommodation (within Outreach teams, there can be 'Inreach Workers' whose sole job is to do this)

The type of service

- Street outreach service

Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Knowledge

Essential:

Data Protection

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Safeguarding

Additional:

Advocacy

Hoarding

Homelessness and Housing Law

Lone working

Mental health and the Mental Capacity Act

Modern slavery

Multiple disadvantage

Psychologically Informed Environments

Self-harm and suicide

Stress, vicarious trauma and managing wellbeing

Substance and alcohol use

Welfare benefits

Skills

Essential:

Communication

IT skills

Professional boundaries

Solutions focused

Team working

Time management

Additional:

Assessment and support planning

Managing challenging behaviour

Motivational interviewing

Partnership working

Risk assessment

Strengths-based practice

Trauma-informed care

Behaviours

Essential:

Empathy

Flexible

Honesty

Inclusive

Non-judgemental

Proactive

Reliable

Respectful

Willingness to learn

Additional:

Reflective

Self-awareness

Case study:

A day in the life of an Outreach Worker

When I'm doing an early-morning shift, I start my day at 5am. I dress for the weather conditions – mostly walking boots, a waterproof and hat, and then head out with a colleague of mine. We receive regular reports from members of the public via StreetLink about individuals they have seen sleeping rough, so for these referrals, and for known rough-sleeping hotspots, we put together a route to locate, verify and support people sleeping rough in our area. We never know what we will face – each shift is a challenge, whether it's the weather conditions, or because we may have to wake up vulnerable and frightened people. Many of the people who are sleeping rough in our area are living with complex mental and physical health conditions, and some may be dependent on alcohol and drugs – all exacerbated by living on the streets. We work collaboratively with other homelessness services and charitable organisations to ensure people are getting the best support.

Sometimes, it can take a long time for someone to engage with our outreach service. For example, after seeing an individual in the same place over 40 times, with the offer of support refused, one day, this individual asked for our contact details and said he wanted support with housing. After linking this individual in with various services, we were able to support him to move into his own accommodation, with support from a mental health nurse. Being consistent and going at a person's own pace is so important in outreach work – it's not about forcing a person to make changes, it's about being there when they are ready.

Housing First Worker

Description of role

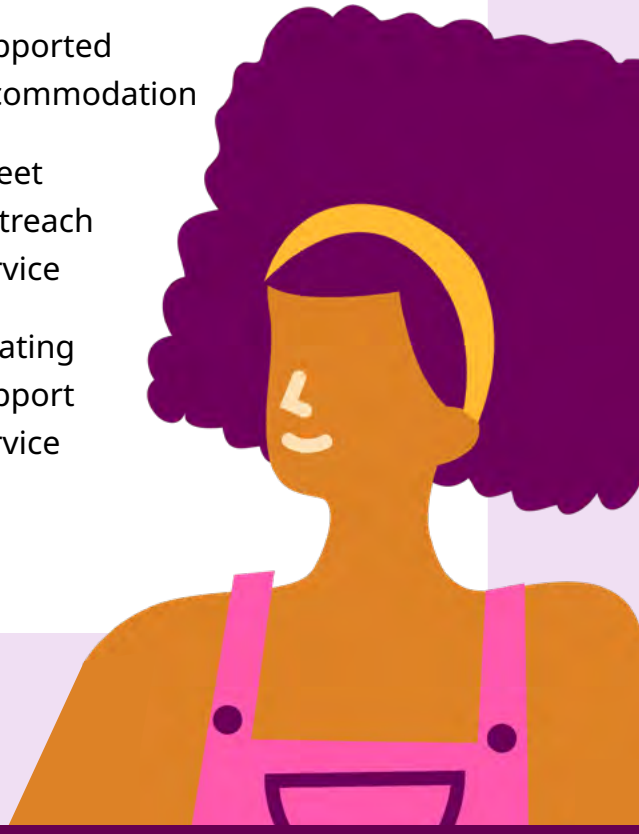
The Housing First Worker is responsible for coordinating and providing personalised, trauma-informed support. A type of Support Worker, but for individuals with multiple complex needs, providing support in line with **Housing First principles**. The focus is to provide intensive support and practical help to individuals to help them to maintain their tenancies and work with them to clarify their goals. Housing First Workers have much smaller caseloads of individuals to support, and their role may involve working with people on their journey from rough sleeping (via outreach work) through to finding accommodation.

Support can include:

- Wrap around intensive trauma-informed support.
- Risk assessments and safety plans
- Connecting in with other agencies
- Accommodation support (practical help as well as benefits advice)
- Out of hours telephone support.

Type of service:

- Supported accommodation
- Street Outreach Service
- Floating Support Service



Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Knowledge

Essential:

Data Protection

Equity, diversity and Inclusion

Safeguarding

Additional:

Advocacy

Hoarding

Homelessness and Housing Law

Lone working

Mental health and the Mental Capacity Act

Modern slavery

Multiple disadvantage

Psychologically Informed Environments

Self-harm and suicide

Stress, vicarious trauma and managing wellbeing

Substance and alcohol use

Welfare benefits

Skills

Essential:

Communication

IT skills

Professional boundaries

Solutions focused

Strengths-based practice

Team working

Time management

Trauma informed care

Additional:

Assessment and support planning

Managing challenging behaviour

Motivational interviewing

Partnership working

Risk assessment

Behaviours

Essential:

Empathy

Flexible

Honesty

Inclusive

Non-judgemental

Proactive

Reliable

Respectful

Willingness to learn

Reflective

Additional:

Self-awareness

Case study:

A day in the life of a Housing First Worker

Every day as a Housing First worker is completely different. One day could involve supporting someone to probation, the doctors, drug & alcohol services, food banks, the job centre (to name a few!). I tend to visit at least one of my clients each day, either for a pre-arranged appointment, or I will visit their accommodation to have an informal check-in. When we meet, we talk about how they are feeling and if there is any support they need.

If an individual has just moved into a property, we can support them financially with items for their home, as well as apply for grants from local charities and councils. Sometimes I have to attend multi-disciplinary meetings (where different professionals, from different sectors come together) to discuss an individual that we are all supporting.

This job can be challenging, as often, the people we are supporting can cancel appointments last minute, or not be at home or the place where you have agreed to meet. Sometimes appointments can take a lot longer than you expect them to so it's difficult to plan, but this becomes easier as you build relationships with people. There can be times when the job is emotionally challenging, but having a good team around you makes all the difference.

What I love about my job is that you are on a journey with people, and it's possible that in the time you work with them, they manage to turn their life around completely. Even the small wins feel great, for example, supporting someone to the GP for the first time in years and helping someone re-connect with family members. I also really encourage my clients to be part of our co-production meetings so they can help shape their support by providing feedback. This job isn't for everyone, but for me, it's incredibly rewarding.

Complex Needs Worker

Also known as: **Navigator**

Description of role

A type of Support Worker, specifically supporting individuals experiencing homelessness who have complex needs and experience multiple disadvantage. For example, individuals who have mental health and substance use needs.

Support can include advice on:

- Finding and maintaining accommodation
- Improving physical & mental health
- Substance use
- Benefits & income
- Employment, training & education
- Accessing relevant immigration advice

Type of service

- Day centre
- Supported accomodation
- Floating support service



Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Knowledge

Essential

Data Protection

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Safeguarding

Additional

Advocacy

Hoarding

Homelessness and Housing Law

Lone working

Mental health and the Mental Capacity Act

Modern slavery

Multiple disadvantage

Psychologically Informed Environments

Self-harm and suicide

Stress, vicarious trauma and managing wellbeing

Substance and alcohol use

Welfare benefits

Skills

Essential

Communication

IT skills

Professional boundaries

Solutions focused

Strengths-based practice

Trauma informed care

Team working

Time management

Additional

Assessment and support planning

Managing challenging behaviour

Motivational interviewing

Partnership working

Risk assessment

Behaviours

Essential

Empathy

Flexible

Honesty

Inclusive

Non-judgemental

Proactive

Reliable

Respectful

Willing to learn

Reflective

Additional

Self-awareness

Case study:

A day in the life of a Complex Needs Worker

I hold a caseload of around 15 people who I support to find accommodation and other support services that they can trust and use. I work to people's strengths through building a relationship with them to find out how they want to be supported – not everyone wants me to attend their appointments with them! Part of my role is to identify barriers to accommodation or support for individuals and advocate for them, making sure their voice is heard, as well as building networks with other agencies. I try to be flexible in my approach – a lot of people aren't interested at first in my support, so when they do reach out for help, I make them a priority.

As a Complex Needs Worker, I have supported a diverse range of individuals with varying needs. For example, I supported an individual who had complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, was autistic and was registered blind. He was very easily triggered and spent around 5 years moving areas and between different homelessness services. I had to ensure that my support and interactions accommodated his specific needs, for example, being in a calm, quiet area for appointments, to ensure he wasn't triggered. Sometimes, due to complexities, 'outcomes' can take months, if not years – this role definitely requires tenacity and resourcefulness.

My favourite part of my job is that I have to dig deep with individuals and find ways of communicating with people who don't always want to communicate with me. It can be very challenging, but mentally stimulating and fulfilling at the same time.

For people who are thinking of joining the homelessness sector, be aware that you will witness huge shortfalls in the quality of services that people need, but you will also meet some wonderful people. It's important to practice self-care, take breaks when you need, and learn to have boundaries. Every day you will learn something new; always have a student mind and be open to being wrong.



Activities Coordinator

Also known as: **Learning Development Worker** **Client Services Coordinator** **Meaningful Activities/Inclusion Worker**

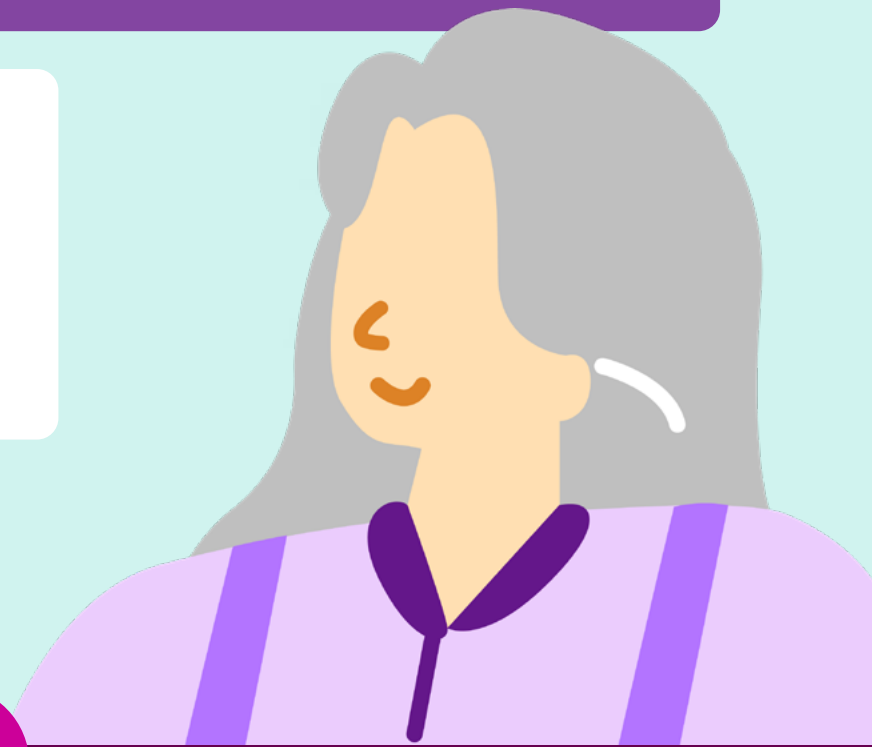
Description of role

The role involves engaging with individuals experiencing homelessness or in supported accomodation to take part in activities as a way of developing skills and improving wellbeing. Within building-based services, this role can be varied and can have certain specialisms. For example:

- Wellbeing
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Education, training & employment
- Horticulture
- Cooking/nutrition
- Art

Type of service

- Day centre
- Supported accommodation



Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Knowledge

Essential

Data Protection

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Safeguarding

Additional

Advocacy

Lone working

Mental Health and the Mental Capacity Act

Stress, vicarious trauma and managing wellbeing

Substance and alcohol use

Skills

Essential

Communication

IT skills

Professional boundaries

Solutions focused

Team working

Time management

Additional

Managing challenging behaviour

Motivational interviewing

Risk Assessment

Strengths-based practice

Trauma-informed care

Behaviours

Essential

Empathy

Flexible

Honesty

Inclusive

Non-judgemental

Proactive

Reliable

Respectful

Willing to learn

Additional

Reflective

Self-aware

According to the role advertised, a specialism/ training may be required e.g. nutrition qualification/ health and safety for cooking classes.

Case study:

A day in the life of an Activities Coordinator

My days are usually made up of drop-in sessions for our clients and coordinating volunteers to help in the space. I arrange and prepare targeted activities for clients, for example, women's groups, men's wellbeing hubs and sessions with external services like art classes, yoga, English as a second language classes, and sessions with different cultural groups.

At times, it can be challenging getting clients to attend sessions and be motivated to take part in activities, especially when they feel that it won't change their situation. Reminding individuals of the positive steps they have taken so far is really important; and that attending sessions can help to build confidence. Being motivated in this job can really support clients to be motivated too.

Working with different individuals and having days that differ is the best thing about my job. I love it when a client gets something out of an activity or session, and I can see their motivation and mood lift.

Working in the homelessness sector is very fulfilling and you will learn a lot along the way.

Drug and Alcohol Worker

Description of role

A type of Support Worker, specialising in supporting individuals to address their substance use, either through harm reduction, or through linking in with services for treatment or support. There may also be 'harm reduction' specific roles.

Support can include:

- Providing harm reduction advice
- Referrals into treatment services
- Referrals for other identified support needs including mental health.

Type of service

- Day centre
- Supported accomodation
- Street outreach service
- Floating support service

Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Knowledge

Essential

Data Protection

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Safeguarding

Substance and alcohol use

Additional

Advocacy

Homelessness and Housing Law

Lone working

Mental health and the Mental Capacity Act

Modern slavery

Multiple disadvantage

Stress, vicarious trauma and managing wellbeing

Self-harm and suicide

Welfare benefits

Skills

Essential

Communication

IT skills

Professional boundaries

Solutions focused

Team working

Time management

Additional

Assessment and support planning

Managing challenging behaviour

Motivational interviewing

Partnership working

Risk assessment

Strengths-based practice

Trauma-informed care

Behaviours

Essential

Empathy

Flexible

Honesty

Inclusive

Non-judgemental

Proactive

Reliable

Respectful

Willingness to learn

Additional

Reflective

Self-aware

Case study:

A day in the life of a Drug and Alcohol Worker

It's difficult to put into words what a typical day might look like in my role. On a day-to-day basis, I facilitate support sessions (individually and in groups) relating to recovering from drug and/or alcohol use. Partnership working with external drug and alcohol services is also a daily task to ensure our clients can access all the support that is available.

I also offer advice and information to colleagues about harm reduction, provide updates on dangerous drugs circulating within the area, and support the team to ensure that service provision is trauma informed. For example, ensuring that the interactions and environment where support takes place, does not re-traumatise people.

Many of the people I support have, in the past, had negative experiences with statutory services which can reduce their level of trust in people perceived to be in a position of authority. I try to challenge any existing or perceived power dynamics by being creative in the way I work with clients, creating an atmosphere where people can come along to a meeting and not feel like they are meeting an authority figure, but just another person who is authentic and does not judge or discriminate.

As someone who has lived experience of alcohol dependency, and someone who has long considered himself an 'addict', the best part of my role is reassuring the people I support that labels that society often give people do not define them. The greatest joy of my role is to see people begin to realise their built-in value and be a part of that person's journey towards recovery.

I would encourage anybody who is thinking about joining the homelessness sector to do so. Although there are many challenges of working in this sector, you will meet some of the most authentic, talented, and caring people.

Peer Worker

Also known as: **Peer Recovery Worker**

Description of role

A type of Support Worker who uses their own lived experience (of homelessness, mental health etc.) to support someone who has the same support need. Holistic support is provided.

Support can include advice on:

- Finding accommodation
- Improving physical & mental health
- Substance use
- Benefits & income
- Employment, training & education
- Accessing relevant immigration advice

Type of service

- Day centre
- Supported accommodation
- Street outreach service
- Floating support service

Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Knowledge

Essential

Data Protection

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Lived Experience

Safeguarding

Additional

Advocacy

Homelessness and Housing Law

Lone working

Mental health and the Mental Capacity Act

Modern slavery

Self-harm and suicide

Stress, vicarious trauma and managing wellbeing

Substance and alcohol use

Welfare benefits

Skills

Essential

Communication

IT skills

Professional boundaries

Solutions focused

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Time management

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Assessment and support planning

Managing challenging behaviour

Motivational interviewing

Partnership working

Risk assessment

Strengths-based practice

Trauma-informed care

Behaviours

Essential

Empathy

Flexible

Honesty

Inclusive

Non-judgemental

Proactive

Reliable

Respectful

Willing to learn

Additional

Reflective

Self-aware

Night Support Worker

Description of role

A type of Support Worker who purely does night shifts. Focus is often on responding to any incidents or anti-social behaviour, emergencies or health & safety concerns.

Support can include advice on:

- Maintaining accommodation
- Improving physical & mental health
- Substance use
- Benefits & income

Type of service

- Supported accommodation



Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Knowledge

Essential

Data Protection

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Safeguarding

Additional

Lone working

Mental health and the Mental Capacity Act

Self-harm and suicide

Stress, vicarious trauma and managing wellbeing

Substance and alcohol use

Skills

Essential

Communication

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Professional boundaries

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Managing challenging behaviour

Motivational interviewing

Risk assessment

Strengths-based practice

Trauma-informed care

Behaviours

Essential

Empathy

Flexible

Honesty

Inclusive

Non-judgemental

Proactive

Reliable

Respectful

Willing to learn

Additional

Reflective

Self-aware

Case study:

A day in the life of a Night Support Worker

At the start of a typical night shift, I look through my emails and the handover from the day staff to catch up with what has happened during the day. I then walk around the hostel to check there are no health and safety or structural issues that need reporting, as well as any challenging behaviour that needs responding to.

Throughout the night, there are multiple things I have to deal with, for example, booking new individuals into the hostel, often as an emergency, engaging with residents, dealing with visitors etc. I have to be prepared to engage with emergency services, if necessary, if there are any incidents.

This job can be challenging as you don't know what you might have to deal with in a night until it happens; it's very unpredictable but it's all about maintaining the hostel rules and communicating effectively with residents.

I love the variety and the nature of what the job offers. No two nights are the same. I really enjoy working with the young people to achieve their goals and supporting them to move forward positively. I love meeting people from different backgrounds and understanding how their culture has shaped their life experiences. I would strongly recommend people to work in the homelessness sector; it's incredibly fulfilling.

Housing Management Worker

Also known as: **Rent Officer** **Income Officer** **Housing Officer**

Description of role

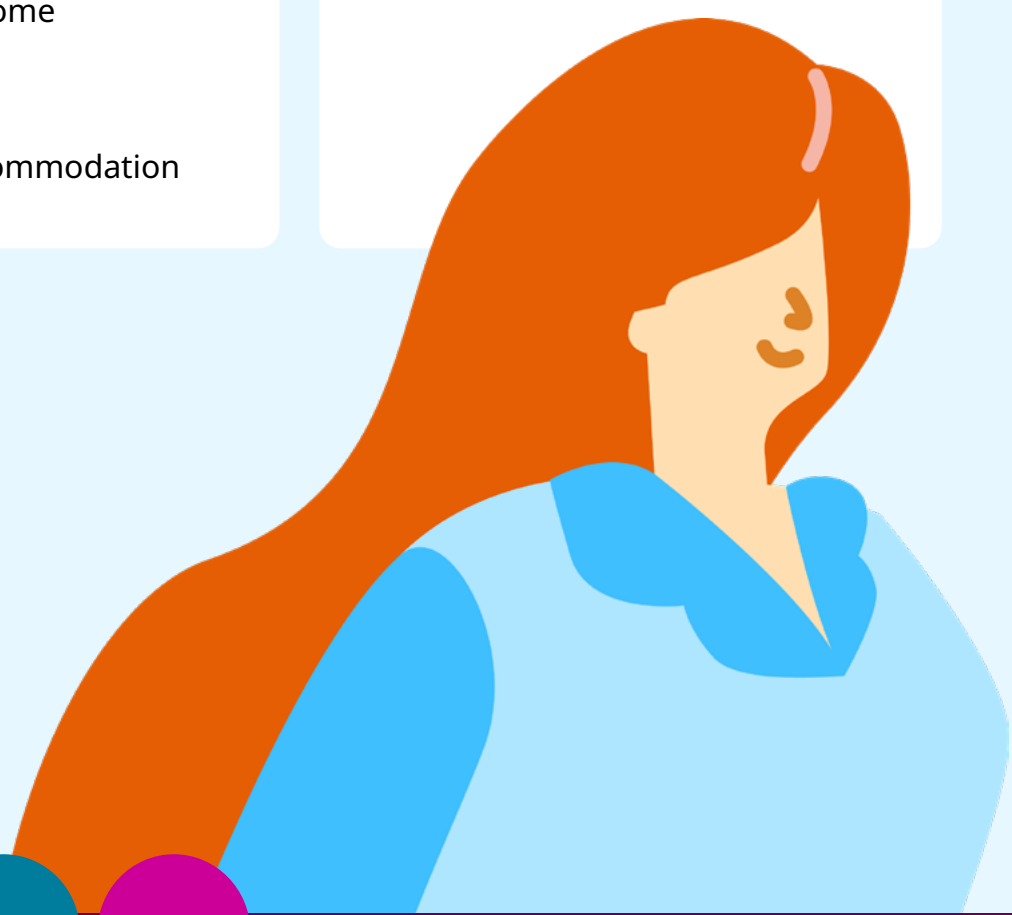
This role's focus is on ensuring individuals in supported accommodation are maintaining their rent payments, including service charges and housing benefit, to avoid arrears.

Support can include advice on:

- Benefits and income
- Budgeting
- Maintaining accommodation

Type of service:

- Supported accommodation



Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Knowledge

Essential

Data Protection

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Safeguarding

Welfare benefits

Additional

Advocacy

Homelessness and Housing Law

Lone working

Mental health and the Mental Capacity Act

Self-harm and suicide

Stress, vicarious trauma and managing wellbeing

Substance and alcohol use

Skills

Essential

Communication

IT skills

Professional boundaries

Solutions focused

Team working

Time management

Additional

Assessment and support planning

Managing challenging behaviour

Motivational interviewing

Partnership working

Risk assessment

Strengths-based practice

Trauma-informed care

Behaviours

Essential

Empathy

Flexible

Honesty

Inclusive

Non-judgemental

Proactive

Reliable

Respectful

Willing to learn

Additional

Reflective

Self-aware

Case study:

A day in the life of a Housing Management Worker

Typically, my role requires me to visit a number of our supported accommodation projects to support the residents in addressing a variety of issues, including rent, housing benefit and property management related tasks. I also support residents to consider amicable ways of resolving interpersonal conflicts that have arisen due to residing in shared accommodation, as well as being responsible for any more serious incidents which occur.

One of the biggest challenges of my role is working within often conflicting systems and policies which create barriers for our residents in accessing various support functions. For example, many individuals in low-support projects are eager to start working. However, due to the high rent amounts and government policies on benefit eligibility, we are often forced to advise them only to seek part-time work or volunteering to ensure funding like Housing Benefit remains in place.

In my role, I get to meet lots of different people from different cultures and experiences which I really enjoy. I can also be creative in the way I support individuals, thinking about how best to address their support needs, and encourage them to take ownership of their support.

Part Two: Knowledge, skills & behaviours

Part 2 of the framework outlines "essential" and "additional" knowledge, skills, and behaviours that are needed for frontline roles in the sector.

By **"essential"**, we mean that all frontline staff should have a basic understanding of these knowledge, skills and behaviours. Those who are new to the sector should prioritise gaining a basic understanding of these when they start their role.

"Additional" knowledge, skills and behaviours are then outlined. By this, we mean areas for development whilst you are in your role.

All knowledge and skills are described across 4 levels. You should reflect on what level you believe you are, and where you would like to get to, using the links to our learning and development options and free resources as a means of developing.

For some of the more specialist roles, there may be a requirement from the organisation that you are a certain level for some of the knowledge and skills. It is important to discuss this with your manager or during the recruitment process to manage your expectations.



Essential knowledge for frontline roles

Data Protection

Understanding and adhering to the regulations set within the Data Protection Act 2018, and the principles and requirements when dealing with personal data. It is crucial in ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of individuals accessing homelessness services.

Level 1: Is aware of the relevance of Data Protection in protecting personal data and can demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles of confidentiality in the day-to-day job. Recognises the importance of safeguarding individual privacy in the context of homelessness services.

Level 2: Can talk about what Data Protection is confidently with stakeholders and can positively apply the confidentiality principles to day-to-day responsibilities. Recognises the risks and challenges related to not adhering to data protection and uses their knowledge and skills to maintain a high level of confidentiality standards.

Level 3: Confident in Data Protection and confidentiality, and is able to apply them to complex work situations. Contributes to the development of best practice and has a comprehensive understanding of individual and organisational rights, roles and responsibilities related to data protection.

Level 4: Acts as the expert in Data Protection and confidentiality. Provides mentorship and training, acting as a champion for sector wide best practices in data protection. Advocates for more people to be aware of and actively engage in data protection and confidentiality. Uses judgement and confidence in addressing complex confidentiality challenges.

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Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

EDI in the homelessness sector involves fostering fair and inclusive practices to create a culture where everyone feels respected, valued, and supported. It encompasses ensuring equal access to services, breaking down barriers, and addressing discrimination, harassment, victimisation and disadvantage.

Level 1: Understands the concepts of EDI and recognises protected characteristics. Treats colleagues and people facing homelessness with respect, regardless of background or identity. Follows EDI policies and procedures and seeks to increase knowledge and understanding.

Level 2: Demonstrates an understanding of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and disadvantage faced by minority or disadvantaged groups. Applies EDI principles to their work. Considers diverse needs, uses person-centred approaches, and ensures support and services are accessible.

Level 3: Possesses advanced understanding of EDI across the sector. Adapts EDI principles in navigating complex situations and role models inclusive language and behaviour. Provides education, guidance, and support to others. Acts as an ally for marginalised groups, advocates for improvements in accessing services, and leads EDI discussions.

Level 4: Provides leadership on systemic inequality within the sector and leads initiatives to advance EDI considerations into services. Advocates to make services and support more accessible and inclusive, involving people with lived experience.

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Safeguarding

Knowledge and understanding of safeguarding policies and procedures, and the practices around safeguarding that protect vulnerable individuals from harm, abuse or exploitations. It involves awareness of potential risks and the signs of vulnerability and taking proactive action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those in need.

Level 1: Understands the importance of protecting vulnerable adults, including those facing homelessness from harm. Is able to recognise the term safeguarding as well as being able to identify signs of vulnerability and can apply the policies and procedures in the job.

Level 2: Understanding of safeguarding principles and can apply this into a variety of situations at work, including an ability to apply the policy and procedures into daily activities. Understanding of the signs and risks and seeks guidance and support with safeguarding issues.

Level 3: Proficient in safeguarding knowledge and handles complex scenarios. Actively contributes to the development and improvement of safeguarding practices using risk assessments to reduce potential harm. Is in a role of authority for addressing safeguarding concerns and promotes a culture of safety.

Level 4: A designated safeguarding lead who demonstrates an advanced understanding of safeguarding principles and can apply it to a range of challenging situations. Mentors and trains others in safeguarding practices and supports with the development and improvement of sector wide safeguarding policies.

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Essential skills for frontline roles

Communication

Communication is the broad term for sharing information, ideas, or thoughts clearly and effectively, adapting your style to different audiences. Communication is important to build professional relationships and ensure mutual understanding. It can be both verbal and non-verbal communication, some of which are defined as separate skills and behaviours.

Level 1: Individuals at this level demonstrate developing communication skills such as good verbal and written communication. Knows the importance of thinking about the audience with whom they are communicating and will understand the importance of communication in professional settings.

Level 2: Good command of communication skills, both verbally and written to effectively express ideas and information. Able to adapt their communication style according to whom they are communicating with. Through effective communication, will be able to build clear professional relationships.

Level 3: Mastering communication skills and is able to clearly and persuasively convey complex messages and ideas. Can adapt their communication style to various audiences and contexts in the homelessness sector. Fosters positive relationships in a way that ensures mutual understanding through effective communication.

Level 4: Excelling in communication skills in expressing ideas and information but also in active listening, empathy and non-verbal communication. Will have self-awareness of the way others perceive their communication style and will be role models, guiding others to enhance their range of communication skills. Will be influential in using communication for positive change and collaboration.



IT

The ability to effectively use computers and navigate systems and software tools relevant for the role. This includes performing tasks on the computer, managing data, and efficiently communicating digitally.

Level 1: At the early stages of developing IT skills but will have a basic understanding of using the computer and can perform simple tasks and navigate standard tools and software with some guidance, such as Microsoft Office.

Level 2: Has developed some proficiency in IT skills, working independently to perform routine computer tasks. Is confident or working towards being confident in navigating software applications commonly used in the role and can manage basic data entry or retrieval.

Level 3: Having mastered IT skills, individuals at this level will be able to efficiently use a wide range of software and application tools, using them to analyse and interpret data and troubleshoot common IT issues. Adept to new technologies and programmes and may also guide others in using IT effectively.

Level 4: Individuals applying IT skills at this level will be experts in one or more tools or programmes and will be able to demonstrate an advanced level of its use, either in their own work or in training others. Uses technology to streamline processes and may lead initiatives to introduce new IT systems into work practices.



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Professional boundaries

Establishing and maintaining clear, ethical, and professional boundaries when providing support and services to individuals facing homelessness. This involves respecting privacy and ensuring the wellbeing and safety of both service professionals and the people they support.

Level 1: Working towards an understanding and awareness of the importance of professional boundaries. Understands the basic principles to establish and maintain ethical and professional conduct with individuals they support in the relevant homelessness service. Will show consideration of privacy when working with data and individuals using their services.

Level 2: Consistently establishes and maintains clear, ethical, and professional boundaries. Effective at balancing empathy and professionalism when working with and supporting those facing homelessness. Understands the impact of maintaining boundaries on privacy and wellbeing.

Level 3: Not only upholds professional conduct but also proactively fosters an environment of respect and ethical practice within the service. Offers guidance to others in maintaining healthy boundaries and leverages their knowledge and experience to illustrate the impact on safety and wellbeing for those seeking such guidance.

Level 4: Demonstrates a high level of self-awareness in managing and maintaining professional boundaries. Uses and adapts approaches when faced with different situations and will proactively identify and address challenges to professional boundaries with and across the team and service. Acts as a role model for maintaining professional boundaries.



Solutions focused

The ability to focus on finding effective solutions to a problem, rather than focussing on the problem itself. Being able to support individuals to move forward positively and learn what could be done differently using their existing skills.

Level 1: Beginning to understand the concept of solution-focused thinking. Can identify problems and will need or seek support to generate effective solutions. Can show a basic awareness and understanding of the importance of problem-solving in homelessness support.

Level 2: Will apply solution-focused thinking while delivering services to those facing homelessness. Individuals at this level will have the ability to analyse a problem and generate possible solutions. Works well with others to focus on a suitable outcome.

Level 3: Can analyse complex problems and generate innovative solutions to address challenges they face in the homelessness sector. Shows leadership in helping to create a culture of solution-focused thinking within the service and will support others in applying a solution-focused mindset.

Level 4: Individuals at this level excel at solution-focused thinking, using it to proactively identify areas that can be improved and seeking innovation for the homelessness sector. At this level, an individual demonstrates a high level of confidence and competence in solution-focused problem solving at a service and sector level.

Team working

Collaborating and working together with colleagues towards shared goals. It involves effective communication, active participation, and the willingness to contribute to group success. Within team working there is respect of diverse perspectives and using the strengths of the group to achieve common goals.

Level 1: At the early stages of developing team working skills but understands the importance of working as a team and collaboration. Builds knowledge of how the team and its individual parts work to support the homelessness service and will be able to demonstrate ways in which they collaborate to achieve team objectives.

Level 2: Can effectively collaborate with the team and actively contributes to team discussions and the sharing of ideas. Understands the value of teamwork and can demonstrate this by supporting others as the team strives to achieve common goals in the context of the homelessness service they provide.

Level 3: Mastering teamworking skills and actively leads and facilitates team activities and tasks. Encourages open communication and fosters a positive team culture. Helps and supports others in effective teamworking and recognises and resolves tension or conflict in the team.

Level 4: Excels at own collaborative working but also contributes to setting, shaping and communicating team strategies. Creates a culture of teamwork and collaboration, demonstrating a high level of confidence and competence in team leadership.

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Time management

The ability to set realistic goals, prioritise tasks, organise time to increase productivity and efficiency and use methods to track and meet deadlines. This helps balance the demands of the job in a timely way.

Level 1: Has a basic understanding of time management principles and can set goals, prioritise some tasks and organise work with some supervision support to meet the majority of deadlines.

Level 2: Is more proficient at time management. Individuals at this level will set realistic goals as part of their daily routine and are able to organise their day and prioritise the tasks to accomplish the goals. In doing so will demonstrate ways in which they are efficient with their time.

Level 3: Masters goal setting and consistently achieves goals using strategies and techniques to remain focussed and meet tight deadlines even when goals are more complex in nature. Supports others to achieve their goals by sharing advice and time management tools.

Level 4: At this level individuals will have more ambitious or strategic goals and will be in a position of working with a team to optimise their collective productivity. Successfully uses innovation and connections to manage organisational goals that often pose time-bound challenges.

Essential behaviours for frontline roles

How we behave is important, especially when supporting people who are vulnerable. We have highlighted a set of behaviours that we feel are important to frontline work. You may wish to develop these based on your own values.

Empathy

Demonstrating a deep understanding of and sensitivity to the emotions, experiences, and needs of individuals facing homelessness, and the ability to provide compassionate support and care.

Flexible

Being adaptable and open to different approaches and solutions in response to the diverse and evolving needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and the ever-changing dynamics of the sector.

Honesty

The ability to communicate truthfully and transparently, even when addressing difficult or sensitive issues, and to act with integrity in every part of our role. As well as being truthful and sincere, it is also about being respectful in our communication and actions. It is a core value of the homelessness sector, as it fosters trust, accountability and integrity among your colleagues, the people using your services and any other stakeholders.

Inclusive

Creating an environment that embraces diversity and ensures that individuals from all backgrounds, cultures, and identities are welcomed and treated equitably in accessing and receiving services.

Non-judgemental

The ability to withhold personal judgments or biases when interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness, acknowledging their unique circumstances and challenges without criticism.

Proactive

Taking the initiative to identify and address the needs of individuals facing homelessness before they escalate, and actively seeks opportunities to improve their situations and access to services.

Reliable

The commitment to consistently deliver on promises, follow through on responsibilities, and maintain a high level of dependability in providing services to individuals experiencing homelessness.

Respectful

Treating all individuals with dignity, regardless of their identity and circumstances, and honouring their autonomy, choices, and perspectives in a non-discriminatory and culturally sensitive manner.

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Additional knowledge for frontline roles

Advocacy

Advocacy can be described as defending and representing the people we support through our services whilst aiming to promote their wellbeing, rights and needs. This is achieved by utilising active and reflective listening and by showing empathy.

Level 1: Understands that advocacy is about being a trusted supporter to the individual. Practices active listening and builds trust to create safe spaces for individuals to express themselves. Works alongside partner organisations and other support agencies to ensure individual voices are heard.

Level 2: Demonstrates active listening with competence and confidence and uses this to understand the needs of the individual, using skills such as validating feelings, reading non-verbal cues and being sensitive to autonomy on making decisions. Ensures individuals and groups have a voice into decisions that affect them.

Level 3: Uses reflective practice for continuous learning and self-improvement to inform new or improved advocacy strategies. Uses a trauma-informed approach to advocate for people and sees opportunities to support people to self-advocate where appropriate. Considers opportunities to raise public awareness of the causes and consequences of those facing homelessness, challenging stereotypes and misconceptions.

Level 4: Positively influences policies and procedures or key decision makers to recognise the power imbalances that exist within and across society. Uses networks to link co-production groups and promotes advocacy as a key component in all services.

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Hoarding

Hoarding is a mental health condition and can be defined as the persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their actual value. There are a number of reasons why someone may hoard, however hoarding is a very personal way of dealing with trauma and support needs to account for the complexities and challenges.

Level 1: Understands what hoarding is and that it is a mental health condition. Has a knowledge of hoarding behaviours and an appreciation that working with individuals with this mental health condition requires long term support. Applies a non-judgemental and supportive communication style when working with and supporting individuals.

Level 2: Understands the psychological and emotional aspects of hoarding including the difficulty in parting with possessions and the potential consequences for individuals facing homelessness. Can spot the signs of hoarding behaviours and recognises interventions that are more likely to support someone who is hoarding, preventing it to get worse or to avoid re-occurrence of hoarding.

Level 3: Identifies the right agencies to support individuals who display hoarding behaviours and works in a collaborative way. Is knowledgeable of evidence-based practices for assessing and supporting hoarding behaviours. Effectively applies interventions and safeguarding measures when working with someone who displays hoarding behaviours including collaboration with mental health professionals and community resources.

Level 4: Has ownership over the organisation's responsibility for supporting individuals with hoarding behaviours and demonstrates an understanding of the complex underlying factors and barriers for support. Develops and implements an escalation policy across the sector and advocates for policy changes and provides training and education to others in the field.

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Homelessness and Housing Law

Knowledge of Housing Law and homelessness legislation involves understanding the legal frameworks and regulations related to homelessness housing rights and the provision of housing services. This includes relevant laws, policies and procedures that impact individuals experiencing homelessness, as well as the rights and responsibilities of homelessness service providers.

Level 1: Can recognise the importance of a Housing Law legal framework and its relevance to policies in addressing homelessness. Has a general awareness of the basic legal rights of individuals facing homelessness and their practical implications.

Level 2: Maintains an understanding of specific housing laws and how they impact on someone experiencing homelessness, applying the knowledge of housing rights in everyday situations. Recognises the legal responsibilities of service providers.

Level 3: Well versed and confident in Housing Laws and policies, and is able to apply them to complex work scenarios. Contributes to the development of best practices and actively keeps up to date with Housing Law and its implication on services provided.

Level 4: Acts as the go-to expert in Housing Law and its application to service delivery and support provision. Contributes to the development of best practices in legal compliance and will use it to demonstrate exceptional judgement and confidence in dealing with complex legal challenges. Actively engages in shaping housing policy discussions.

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Lone working

The understanding and practice of navigating the challenges and responsibilities associated with working alone in the homelessness sector. Using this knowledge to ensure safe and effective approaches to service delivery both for yourself and others in your team.

Level 1: Has a general awareness of what lone working is and the associated risks of working alone. Understands the importance of basic safety measures. Adheres to and uses communication tools when working alone.

Level 2: Understands what lone working is including the legal consideration. Will apply the organisation's policy and procedures by assessing risks associated with lone working and follow guidance and procedures for communication while lone working.

Level 3: Has a comprehensive understanding of lone working and the legal frameworks and emergency response. Uses strategies as part of their position of responsibility to assess and mitigate risks of lone working (for themselves or for others) and is proficient in crisis interventions and deescalation techniques. Has strong connections with local resources and adapts existing policies and procedures to new information and best practice.

Level 4: Contributes to the sector-wide best practice of lone working influencing policy and procedures. Has the responsibility of training, supervising and monitoring lone working and will proactively seek to reduce the risks and increase the safety of lone workers.

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Mental health and the Mental Capacity Act

The understanding of the relationship between mental health needs and homelessness, how mental health needs can contribute to homelessness, and the challenges individuals face when trying to access and maintain stable housing solutions. This includes an understanding of the Mental Capacity Act.

Level 1: Has a basic awareness of mental health needs and the legal framework associated with mental capacity. Understands the mental health challenges many have when faced with homelessness and can recognise the impact on housing stability. Knows of mental health services and the importance of supportive environments and knows the basics of the Mental Capacity Act.

Level 2: Along with an understanding of mental health, will be familiar with mental health service systems as well as the legal framework associated with mental capacity. Has an understanding of the principles of the Mental Capacity Act and can apply knowledge to support individuals in accessing appropriate care and decision-making processes.

Level 3: Applies an advanced knowledge of mental health and homelessness, mental health services and the legal framework associated with mental capacity when navigating the mental health systems and conducting capacity assessments.

Level 4: Integrates expert knowledge of mental health and homelessness as well as mental health service systems and legal and ethical considerations into practices seamlessly. Advises on more complex capacity related issues.



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Modern slavery

Modern slavery is a serious crime where an individual is exploited by others, for personal, or commercial gain. Whether tricked, coerced, or forced, the individual loses their freedom. Modern slavery takes many forms including human trafficking, forced labour, and domestic servitude. Often those experiencing homelessness are targeted by perpetrators of modern slavery, and individuals who have fled their traffickers, are often left destitute.

Level 1: Understands modern slavery in the context of homelessness and can identify the different types of exploitation and the signs. Knows how to respond to immediate safeguarding concerns.

Level 2: Demonstrates a deeper understanding of modern slavery and human trafficking. Is aware of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) service and the formal Home Office recognition and can identify those eligible for referral. Uses this understanding to inform workplace practices and choices while supporting individuals facing homelessness. Shows an awareness of the impact of exploitation on the individual's wellbeing and autonomy.

Level 3: Uses the understanding of the NRM to a greater depth to ensure that the service is meeting their minimum requirements of support for individuals. Understands the barriers victims of modern slavery face to disclose, including cultural influences, fear of power dynamics, or authority. Knows when and how to intervene or provide support such as advocacy, referral to services, and information or reporting to the appropriate authorities.

Level 4: Is a subject matter expert in this topic and keeps abreast of legislative changes. Influences organisational policies and practices to prioritise the understanding, prevention and response to modern slavery. Proactively drives initiatives or campaigns that raise the awareness of modern slavery. Collaborates with multi-agency partners to advocate for changes that address modern slavery and the support of people inherently more vulnerable to it.

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Multiple disadvantage

As defined by our partners MEAM, people facing multiple disadvantage experience a combination of problems and for many, their current circumstances are shaped by long-term experiences of poverty, deprivation, trauma, abuse and neglect. These structural inequalities intersect in different ways, manifesting in experiences of homelessness, substance use, mental ill health and contact with the criminal justice system.

Level 1: Understands that people facing homelessness are often confronted with multiple barriers simultaneously and need a comprehensive and holistic approach to support that is coordinated. Has an appreciation that structural inequalities exist making it harder for people facing homelessness to access the right support to lead fulfilling lives. Is aware of other local services to connect with.

Level 2: Connects with local services, supporting people to navigate systems and services. Understands that changing systems is more than just providing support and will be able to demonstrate this in partnership work. Recognises the signs of trauma and uses the knowledge to inform how to apply it in the role.

Level 3: Recognises the importance of co-production with other services and the requirement of a coordinated and flexible response that promotes equality for all. Actively seeks out ways to be more flexible through working with experts by experience. Understands that certain groups of people will be more likely to experience structural inequalities and will use trauma-informed approaches when assessing the impact of equality (or inequality) of access to support.

Level 4: Advocates for individuals facing multiple disadvantage, and recognises the systemic barriers they experience. Confidently challenges the services that might inadvertently create barriers. Has confidence and an ability to work with the whole system to create a coordinated response. Reviews own policies and practices so that services can work in a flexible, person-centred way.

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Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE)

PIE is an approach to the development, delivery and evaluation of services, taking into account the emotional and psychological needs of individuals using them. This approach centres the psychological safety and security for people accessing and working in services, encouraging a more reflective way of working.

Level 1: Is aware of the PIE framework and the 5 elements. Understands that the goal of PIE is to improve the psychological and emotional wellbeing of people accessing or working across services. Understands the relationship between a person's previous and current experiences. Demonstrates flexibility in building relationships and communicating.

Level 2: Uses the 5 elements of PIE to inform ways of working such as using reflective practice to understand barriers into services. Feels empowered to make improvements to physical environments and incorporates mechanisms that assess how safe individuals feel accessing and working in services.

Level 3: Can conduct a PIE assessment or review of the services to better understand what works well and what more can be introduced. Integrates the principles, understanding and approaches to working in a psychologically informed way into all policies, procedures and activities. Supports colleagues in their approach to develop a better understanding of PIE.

Level 4: Shows leadership and champions change to achieve and maintain PIEs as well as considering colleague's workplace wellbeing. Takes an evidence-generated approach to understanding what works, what ongoing learning is required and assessments that can evidence the progress made to people facing homelessness and to staff.

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Self-harm and suicide

The understanding, recognition and effective response to signs of self-harm and suicidal thoughts or actions among individuals experiencing homelessness. Awareness involves the knowledge, skills and resources to promote safety and provide appropriate support.

Level 1: Understands what self-harm and suicide or suicidal thoughts are, recognising the nuances between suicidal thoughts (ideation) and suicidal actions (behaviour) and how the characteristics and interventions differ. Has a basic understanding of the risks of self-harming behaviours and is able to identify some warning signs.

Level 2: Has an awareness of how and when to recognise individuals who are more at risk of self-harming and suicidal thoughts. Recognises the importance of collaborative approaches, including safety planning. Uses different approaches to communicate with and actively listen to individuals.

Level 3: Demonstrates a greater set of developed interpersonal skills and tools and uses different non-directive and person-centred approaches when working with people who struggle with suicidal thoughts. Makes clear links to trauma-informed practice and uses it as core principles while working with people.

Level 4: Advocates for increased awareness and resources for mental health services and supports initiatives aimed at safety and prevention. Raises awareness across communities, partners and services about the prevalence of self-harm and suicide and the importance of early intervention and support. Develops clear policies and procedures that outline how staff can access support when working with individuals who self-harm or experience suicidal thoughts or actions.

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Stress, vicarious trauma and managing wellbeing

The understanding of the impact of stress and trauma on individuals. An ability to use strategies to maintain personal wellbeing and foster a healthy and supportive environment for both staff and individuals using the service.

Level 1: Has an awareness of the impact of stress and trauma on individuals and can recognise the importance of personal wellbeing. Recognises the need for a healthy and supportive environment and may use some strategies to manage stress based on own experiences.

Level 2: Understands stress and the trauma related to stress and what can cause stress in the homelessness sector. Applies basic strategies for managing stress and fostering a supportive environment. Recognises the importance of self-care and wellbeing for both staff and volunteers as well as those accessing homelessness services.

Level 3: Proficient at identifying and understanding stress indicators and applying strategies for managing stress, vicarious trauma and wellbeing. Actively contributes to the development of best practice and demonstrates how to maintain a healthy work environment.

Level 4: Supports a broader range of approaches to wellbeing and provides mentorship and role models stress management and wellbeing. Contributes to ensuring workplaces and services provide effective stress management and associated support. Has confidence in addressing complex stress and wellbeing challenges in services for those facing homelessness.

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Substance and alcohol use

The understanding of the complexities of substance and alcohol use including the physical and psychological effects on individuals using. Applies this knowledge when supporting individuals through harm reduction and treatment services.

Level 1: Has a basic awareness of substance and alcohol use among individuals experiencing homelessness. Understands common substances and their classifications and recognises when an individual may need support. Grasps the general impact of substance use on housing stability and mental health. Shows awareness of harm reduction as a concept.

Level 2: Has a foundational understanding of substance and alcohol use and applies knowledge to recognise common patterns of substance use. Can identify health risks and basic harm reduction strategies and shows cultural sensitivity in recognising diverse factors influencing substance use.

Level 3: Shows a deeper understanding of substance and alcohol use as well as harm reduction strategies and available treatment. Can conduct screening and assessments to inform severity and impact of substance use. Uses motivational interviewing effectively and as part of job role will tailor support interventions to diverse cultural concepts.

Level 4: Has expertise in substance and alcohol use knowledge and contributes to the development of best practices, mentors others, and has a deep understanding of legal and ethical considerations. Is able to manage and support simultaneous diagnoses and integrate support and approaches to address both substance use and mental health needs. Has an awareness and understanding of legal and ethical considerations related to confidentiality and consent when working with, supporting and treating individuals.

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Welfare benefits

An understanding of the financial assistance and support systems provided by government agencies or other grant funded organisations. Applies knowledge to support individuals facing homelessness to access crucial financial support.

Level 1: Has a basic awareness of the benefits system programmes. Can signpost people to access services as well as explain at an introductory level what benefits exist.

Level 2: Understands welfare benefits, their purpose, eligibility criteria and different benefit programmes. Understands to a basic level, the application of welfare programmes and can assist individuals wishing to seek welfare benefits to a baseline level.

Level 3: Has a deeper understanding of welfare benefits and can assist individuals to navigate more complex cases as well as assist with advocacy and support. Collaborates with partner organisations and other agencies to provide wraparound and enhanced support. Uses knowledge of welfare benefits to offer contributions to improve the service to those facing homelessness.

Level 4: Contributes to ensuring best practice is applied when supporting those navigating and seeking welfare benefits. Keeps abreast of changes in the welfare system and how it impacts the homelessness sector and will play a key role in ensuring updates or information are communicated to their colleagues.

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Women experiencing homelessness

Women experience homelessness differently to men, often facing multiple disadvantages that exacerbate this experience. Women are highly vulnerable to the effects of homelessness and may find it difficult to access appropriate services. Understanding women's experiences of homelessness is vital to delivering effective, person-centred support.

Level 1: Understands the need for a different approach to homelessness support for women or female identifying people. Recognises that women often face multiple disadvantages and are highly vulnerable to homelessness.

Level 2: Possesses a deeper working understanding of gender-specific factors contributing to women's homelessness. Identifies some of the challenges women face in accessing homelessness services. Appreciates the importance of applying 'gender informed' approaches and recognises own unconscious bias, respecting women's safety needs.

Level 3: Has an in-depth knowledge of intersectional factors contributing to women's homelessness and their unique needs and experiences. Understands the interdependencies of issues such as sex work and domestic abuse and applies gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approaches in supporting women experiencing homelessness.

Level 4: Demonstrates expertise in supporting women experiencing homelessness. Possesses an advanced knowledge of the complex interplay between gender, homelessness and social inequality. Critically analyses and addresses systemic barriers to women accessing housing and support services. Actively contributes to research, policy development, and advocacy efforts aimed at addressing women's homelessness.

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Young people experiencing homelessness

In the context of homelessness, the age bracket for 'young people' is 18 to 26. Support in this area is specific to young people, with specialist approaches that are tailored to their needs. Throughout, the support is designed to empower young people, address their immediate needs and advocate for systemic changes to prevent and alleviate youth homelessness.

Level 1: Understands youth development and the developmental stages and needs of young people. Recognises the need for specialist support for young people facing homelessness and applies youth engagement in practice. Has an appreciation of the causes and contributing factors to youth homelessness.

Level 2: Provides tailored support by using a range of practical skills such as harm-reduction approaches, crisis intervention techniques and advocacy strategies. Has a deeper understanding of the vulnerabilities and challenges young people face and the pathways into homelessness and exclusions for young people.

Level 3: Listens actively and interprets the real needs of the young person, utilising their input to offer relevant support strategies and services available. Empowers young people to advocate for their needs, providing them with the tools to build their confidence, communication and problem-solving skills to navigate challenges they face.

Level 4: Uses advanced knowledge to advocate for systemic changes that prevent and alleviate youth homelessness. Develops policies, procedures and early intervention strategies that address the specific needs of young people facing homelessness and helps work towards long-term solutions.

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Additional skills for frontline roles

Assessment and support planning

A process which involves having a conversation to identify an individual's needs and agreeing the steps to be taken to address them, including the support required, what services may be involved, and timeframes.

Level 1: Will begin to develop their understanding and practice of conducting assessments and support planning. Understands the importance of the assessment process, setting goals and forming a support plan.

Level 2: Will have developed proficiency in support by conducting assessments and identifying needs. Are competent in communicating accurately and completing accurate documentation records. Still needs some support for more complex cases.

Level 3: Mastering assessments and support planning. Takes the lead in the development and implementation of thorough assessments and comprehensive support plans.

Level 4: Will be experts in the field of assessments and support planning. Uses their deep understanding of the complexities of people experiencing homelessness to overcome challenges. Provides leadership and innovation to improve the safety and wellbeing of people using the services.

Click here for our learning and development recommendations

Managing challenging behaviour

A critical skill that requires a combination of empathy and effective communication. The components include appropriately responding to and addressing behaviours that may pose difficulties or risks to the person or the people around them. The skill requires you to maintain focus on the wellbeing and safety of individuals using techniques such as de-escalation, empathy, understanding and conflict resolution.

Level 1: At the early stages of developing skills in managing challenging behaviour. Able to identify and recognise types of challenging behaviours in complex individuals but may require guidance in responding appropriately. Are building a foundational understanding of de-escalation techniques and conflict resolution.

Level 2: Working with individuals who live in complex environments, individuals with this level of skill will be able to independently identify and respond to challenging behaviours using de-escalation techniques and conflict resolution strategies. Actively works towards maintaining the wellbeing and safety of all individuals involved.

Level 3: Having mastered this skill, individuals are able to handle a wide range of challenging situations with confidence, demonstrating advanced skills in de-escalation, empathy and conflict resolution. Supports others in their team or service to manage challenging behaviours.

Level 4: Experts in managing challenging behaviour through having a deep understanding of the psychological aspects of different behaviours, both those presented verbally and visually and those less easy to identify. Contributes to the development of organisational processes and strategies for managing people using the service who may present with challenging behaviours. Takes a leadership stance to guidance in crisis situations.

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Motivational interviewing

A valuable skill in this sector that empowers individuals to explore their own reasons for change. A communication and counselling technique involving specific approaches and strategies to strengthen an individual's internal motivation for positive behavioural change.

Level 1: New to the concept of motivational interviewing, will be learning about the skills required and will be beginning to use techniques to encourage individuals to explore change and reasons for change. Needs guidance and supervision at this level when practicing motivational interviewing with individuals using the service.

Level 2: Will have developed some proficiency in motivational interviewing and can effectively apply a range of techniques to explore and strengthen an individual's internal motivation for positive behavioural change. Works predominantly independently but may seek support and feedback for continuous learning.

Level 3: Having mastered motivational interviewing, are able to adapt their approach to a diverse range of situations and people, demonstrating advanced skills in communication and counselling. Can guide and mentor others, providing support in applying motivational interviewing techniques.

Level 4: Are experts in motivational interviewing and can use their deep understanding of the psychological aspects involved to tailor their approach to complex and challenging cases. Provides leadership and perhaps also training in implementing motivational interviewing at an advanced level.

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Partnership working

A collaborative approach to responding to challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness which involves coordination between different agencies. Skills incorporated will include networking, shared goal setting and resource pooling among other things depending on the role and area of service delivery.

Level 1: Uses a basic understanding of partnership working to collaborate and actively participate in partnerships to support individuals facing homelessness. Demonstrates ways in which they coordinate responses and works within established joint activities.

Level 2: Seeks new opportunities to collaborate with different agencies and participates in coordinated efforts to support those who face homelessness. Understands the importance of shared goals when working collaboratively with other partners and contributes ideas to initiate new collaborative working partnerships.

Level 3: Effectively engages in partnership working. Demonstrates a deep understanding of shared goals, contributing to planning and resource pooling. Confidently networks with various stakeholders and leads collaborative efforts with a shared interest in preventing and ending homelessness.

Level 4: Leads and facilitates comprehensive and coordinated responses through a vast network of collaborative partnerships. Initiates and sustains partnerships confidently, addressing the challenges and helping to optimise resources for the benefit of those facing homelessness.

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Undertaking risk assessments

A process which involves identifying triggers, warning signs, and providing accurate communication and documentation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of individuals experiencing homelessness, as well as staff.

Level 1: Are beginning to develop an understanding and practice of conducting risk assessments. Understands the importance of creating risk assessments.

Level 2: Has developed proficiency in conducting risk assessments, and will identify triggers and warning signs and use that information to plan collaboratively with individuals facing homelessness. Still needs some support for more complex cases.

Level 3: Mastering conducting risk assessments. Takes the lead in the development and implementation of thorough risk assessments, adapting to and considering any triggers or warning signs. Actively contributes to the improvement of processes around risk assessments.

Level 4: Are expert in the field of risk assessments. Uses their deep understanding of the complexities of people experiencing homelessness to overcome challenges. Provides leadership and innovation to improving the safety and wellbeing of people using the services.

You may wish to request training in First aid and MHFA (Mental Health First Aid)

Click here for our learning and development recommendations

Strengths-based practice

A skill that involves recognising and building on the strengths and capabilities of an individual, using empowerment and resilience and emphasising the potential for growth and experiencing positive change.

Level 1: Has a basic level of understanding of the concept of strengths-based practice. Will be developing this skill and will be able to recognise the strengths in others, and recognise that every person has strengths and abilities and looks to seek how they can be enhanced.

Level 2: Having developed proficiency in strengths-based practice, is able to effectively identify and leverage a range of strengths in an individual and use it to empower them and grow their resilience, seeing that individual has the power and ability to change their own circumstances. Seeks feedback to continue their learning in this skill area.

Level 3: Applies advanced techniques to recognise and build on individuals' strengths in diverse situations through consistency, relationships, and community. Using these skills to support individuals that face homelessness by helping them see what they are capable of and collaborating with the individual and other partner groups in an inclusive way.

Level 4: Expert level of skill in strengths-based practice and will use their deep understanding of the nuances involved to tailor their approach to complex and challenging cases. Will have formed solid partnerships with other organisations and community groups to advance the success of implementing a strengths-based approach to their work. Plays an integral role in developing strengths-based practice in their service and organisational strategies.

Click here for our learning and development recommendations

Trauma-informed care

The understanding of the impact, principles and application of trauma-informed care. Delivering services that promote safety and empowerment while being sensitive to individuals, helping to create a supportive and healing environment.

Level 1: Has a basic awareness of what trauma is and its impact on individuals. Understands the importance of safety and sensitivity in delivering services to those facing homelessness and recognises the principles of trauma-informed care at a basic level.

Level 2: Can identify different forms of trauma and their potential impact on an individual. Applies trauma-informed principles in day-to-day activities at work and can demonstrate an understanding of trauma-informed care such as safety, trustworthiness and transparency. Looking to implement reflective practice to continue personal learning in this knowledge area.

Level 3: Applies a trauma-informed care approach to address complex situations and challenges in the delivery of homelessness support and services. Champions best practice of trauma-informed care with colleagues and partners. Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding, including cultural awareness, gender considerations and re-traumatisation avoidance. Actively participates in reflective practice and encourages it across the service.

Level 4: Has expertise in trauma-informed care and can advise and guide, or train other services. Integrates legal and ethical considerations including confidentiality and informed consent, into trauma-informed practices. Will play a key role in organising and facilitating reflective practice groups or support those who choose individual reflection.

Additional behaviours for frontline roles

You may choose to develop the following behaviours, building your role to one that is more holistic and responsive to the needs and requirements of the people accessing your services.

Reflective

The capacity to regularly examine one's own actions, decisions, and experiences, with the goal of continuous self-improvement and a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness.



Self-awareness

Being aware of one's own emotions, biases, and values, and how they may influence interactions with individuals experiencing homelessness. Self-aware individuals can manage their reactions and responses effectively.

Click here to find a volunteering opportunity in your area

Volunteering

We recognise that volunteering provides invaluable first-hand knowledge and experience for many roles working within the homelessness sector. Volunteering (either in the homelessness sector or elsewhere) develops compassion and an understanding of the challenges people face. It also provides knowledge of the operations, programmes, and service delivery models across the sector. Volunteering experience shows commitment to the cause and brings a wealth of benefits when applying for, or progressing into frontline roles within homelessness organisations.



What We Do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it. Our social enterprise supports the homelessness sector through specialised software, engaging training, expert consultancy, and impactful events that also helps to fund our wider work to end homelessness for good.



Homeless Link

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