2022 Workforce Survey
Key findings

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2022 Workforce Survey

Overview:
- May – June 2022
- 1,300 respondents
- Mix of location, role, length in role, organisation type

1. Why a career in the sector
2. What it's like working in the sector
3. Benefits and challenges of working in the homelessness sector
4. Skills & expertise needed
5. Current and projected challenges with recruitment and retention
6. How organisations have tried to address these challenges (and what's worked)
7. What staff want to help their own career progression
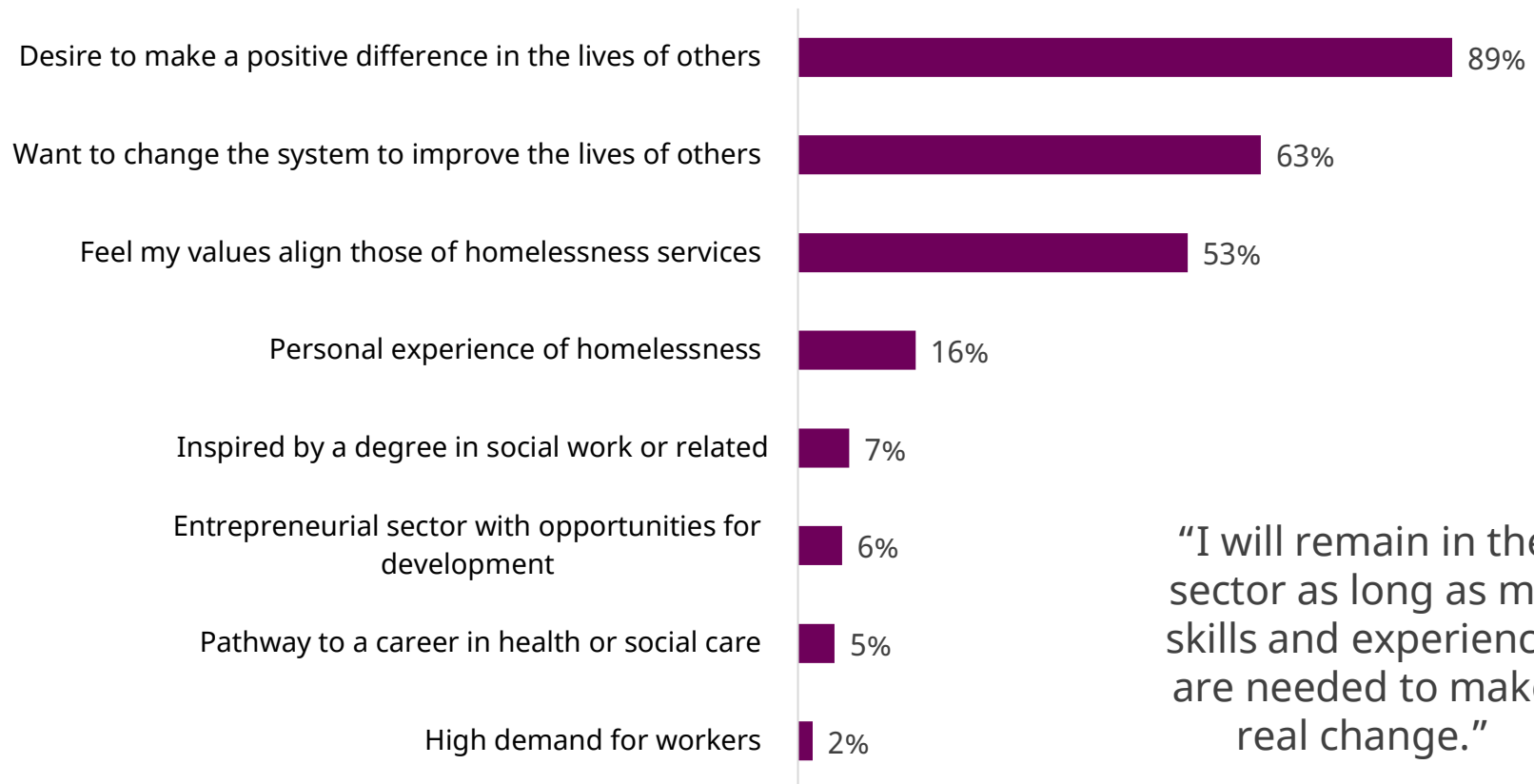
2022 Workforce Survey

Participants' roles:

- 40% frontline workers, as well as...
- Service managers (18%)
- Senior managers (15%)
- Corporate / Central service, volunteers, trustees, and 'other'

Time in role:

- 36% been in their role 5+ years
- 28% for 2 to 4 years
- 18% 1 to 2 years
- 18% <1 year

1. Why...
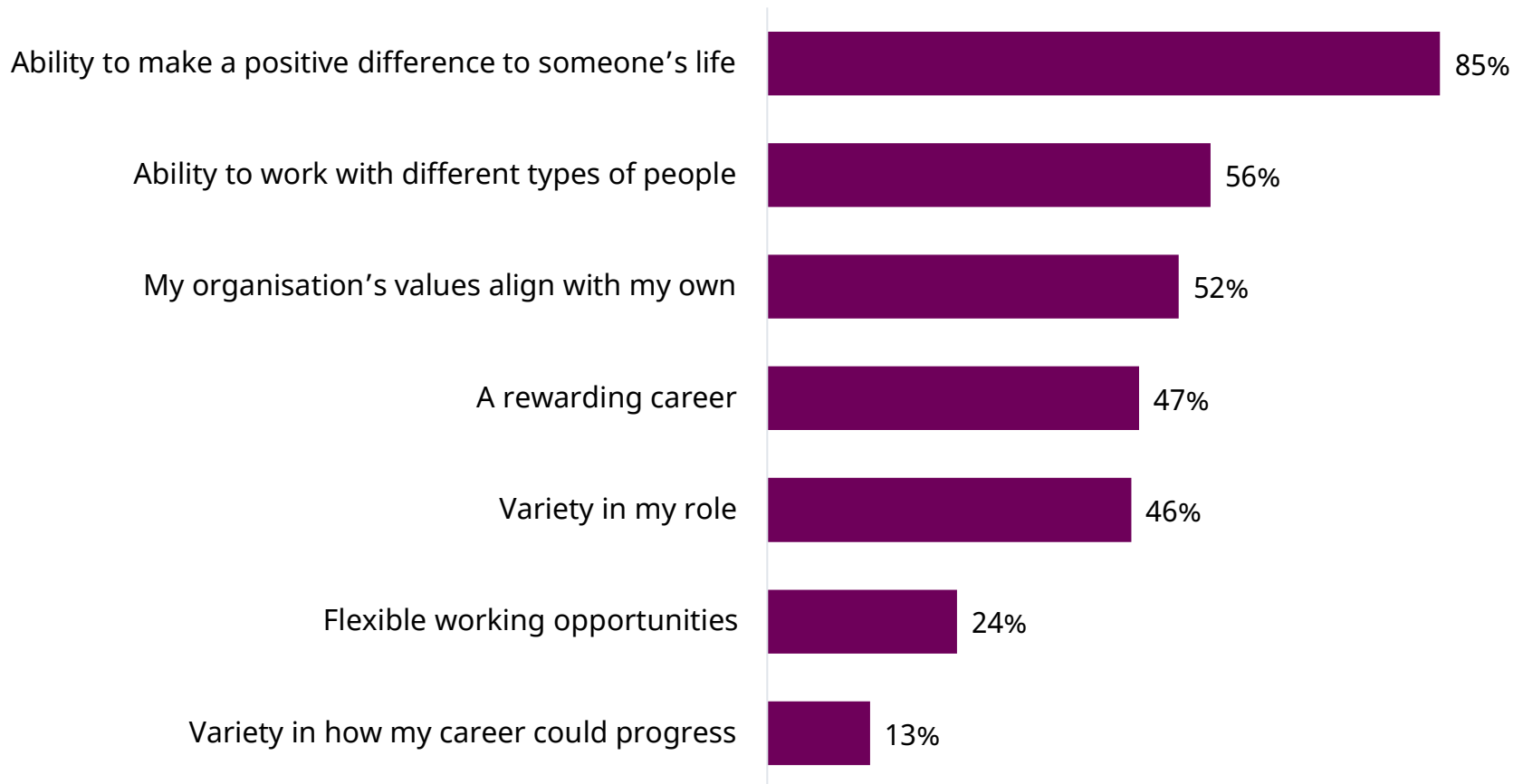## do people choose a career in the homelessness sector?

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Category	Percentage
Desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others	89%
Want to change the system to improve the lives of others	63%
Feel my values align those of homelessness services	53%
Personal experience of homelessness	16%
Inspired by a degree in social work or related	7%
Entrepreneurial sector with opportunities for development	6%
Pathway to a career in health or social care	5%
High demand for workers	2%

"I will remain in the sector as long as my skills and experience are needed to make real change."
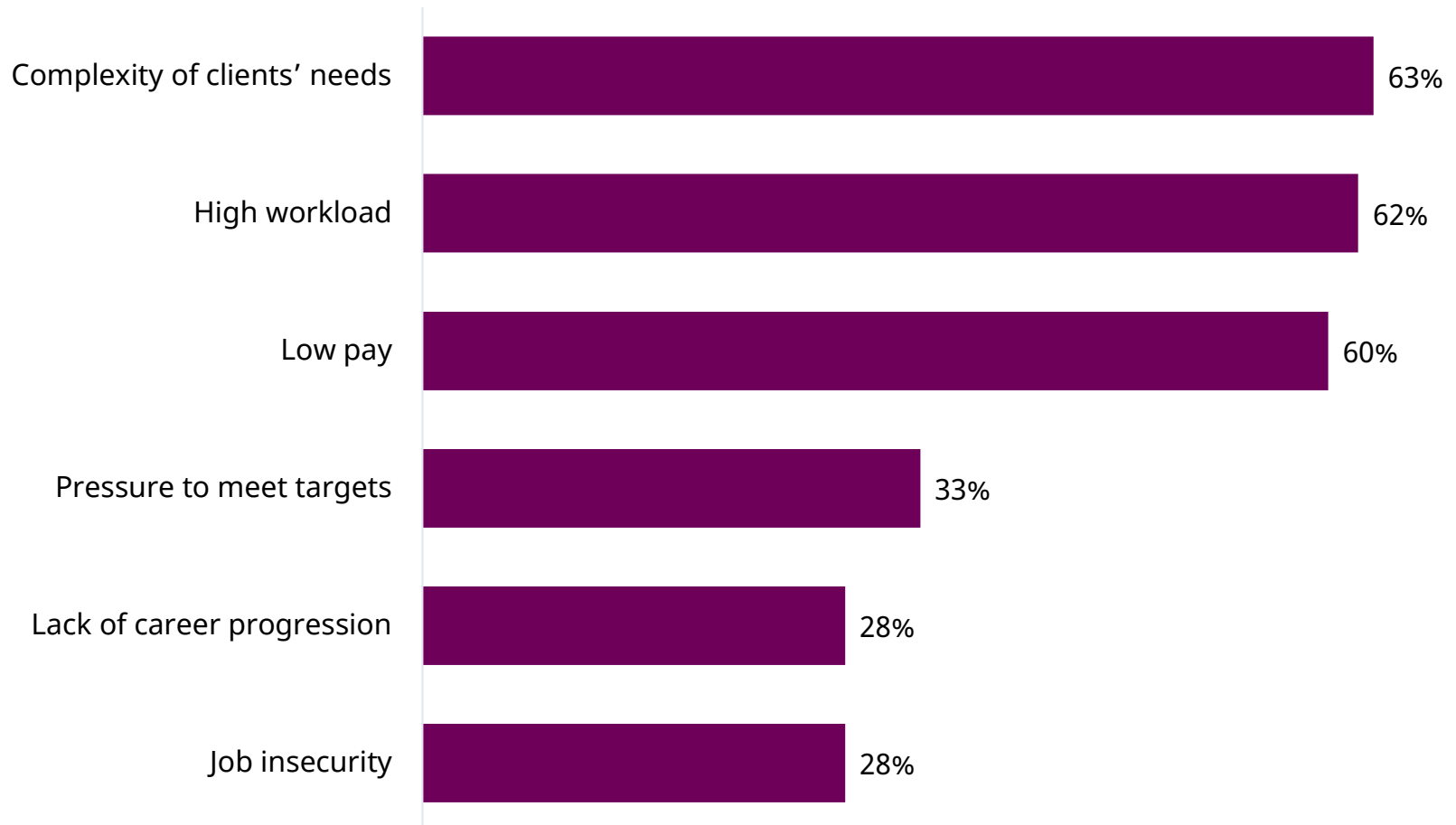
2. What...
is it like working in the homelessness sector?

It is rewarding: **89%** agree

Frontline / support staff are appropriately paid: **16%** agree

Enough opportunities to progress your career: **34%** agree

Being under-staffed impacts our ability to provide
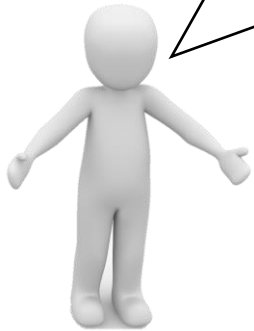meaningful support to people sleeping rough: **78%** agree

3. Why…
do people stay in the sector?

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Reason	Percentage
Ability to make a positive difference to someone's life	85%
Ability to work with different types of people	56%
My organisation's values align with my own	52%
A rewarding career	47%
Variety in my role	46%
Flexible working opportunities	24%
Variety in how my career could progress	13%

3. Why...
might people leave the sector?

Category	Percentage
Complexity of clients' needs	63%
High workload	62%
Low pay	60%
Pressure to meet targets	33%
Lack of career progression	28%
Job insecurity	28%

3. Why…
might people leave the sector?

I don't expect I will have the chance to become a homeowner and raising a family on a low income is something that has contributed to my decision not to start one yet.

The cost of living crisis made me take a look at my role and pay and realise this isn't sustainable, I have more to offer and I can do good elsewhere for more money.

In the last 3 years I've had my contract extended 6 times. It's due to run out again in 2 months. It's very stressful not being on a long term contract and our service has lost staff because of it.

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3. Why...
might people leave the sector?

A feeling that the work undertaken isn't valued, [and] the work can often feel like it is a sticking plaster when much more is actually required to address the issues. Lack of recognition in both pay and training opportunities.

I feel at times that the homelessness sector relies entirely on the good will and passion of our people - this is not sustainable

4. What…
skills do staff need?

4. What...
expertise do staff need?
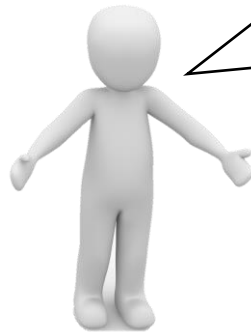
5. How…
hard is it to find & keep staff?

Hard to find high quality staff: **61%** agree

Easy to keep high quality staff: **19%** agree

The pandemic has not affected recruitment & retention: **21%** agree

5. How...
hard is it to find & keep staff?

We have had a higher than average turnover of staff over the past few years. Support Workers generally stay around a year - it takes around this amount of time to get someone well developed and skilled in their role. ... I am in a constant cycle of recruitment which is time consuming and takes me away from other elements of my role. It impacts on the other team members as they have to work with bank/agency staff who are less experienced and therefore they end up having to do more. It impacts on [clients] as they ... don't have consistent support. ... We have noticed significantly lower levels of interest in roles in our team over the past couple of years. ... The impact of all of this is stress for those that are here and risk of burnout.

5. How...
hard is it to find & keep staff?

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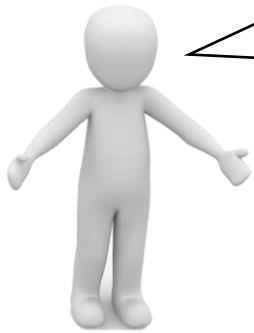
> There is a lack of experienced staff as many exited the sector during the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequently, due to the relentless demands placed on staff. We are having to recruit staff with transferable skills but having to train them from scratch which takes both time and ... resources which are spread very thinly.

> I think a lot of ... frontline workers who worked through Covid19 are 'burnt out' including myself. We constantly changed our services to meet demands always putting clients first and with retention of staff at a level I have never seen before ... staff who stayed have picked up extra work as a result I feel i have nothing left to give.

5. What...
about the future?

It will become more difficult to recruit high quality staff: **59%** agree

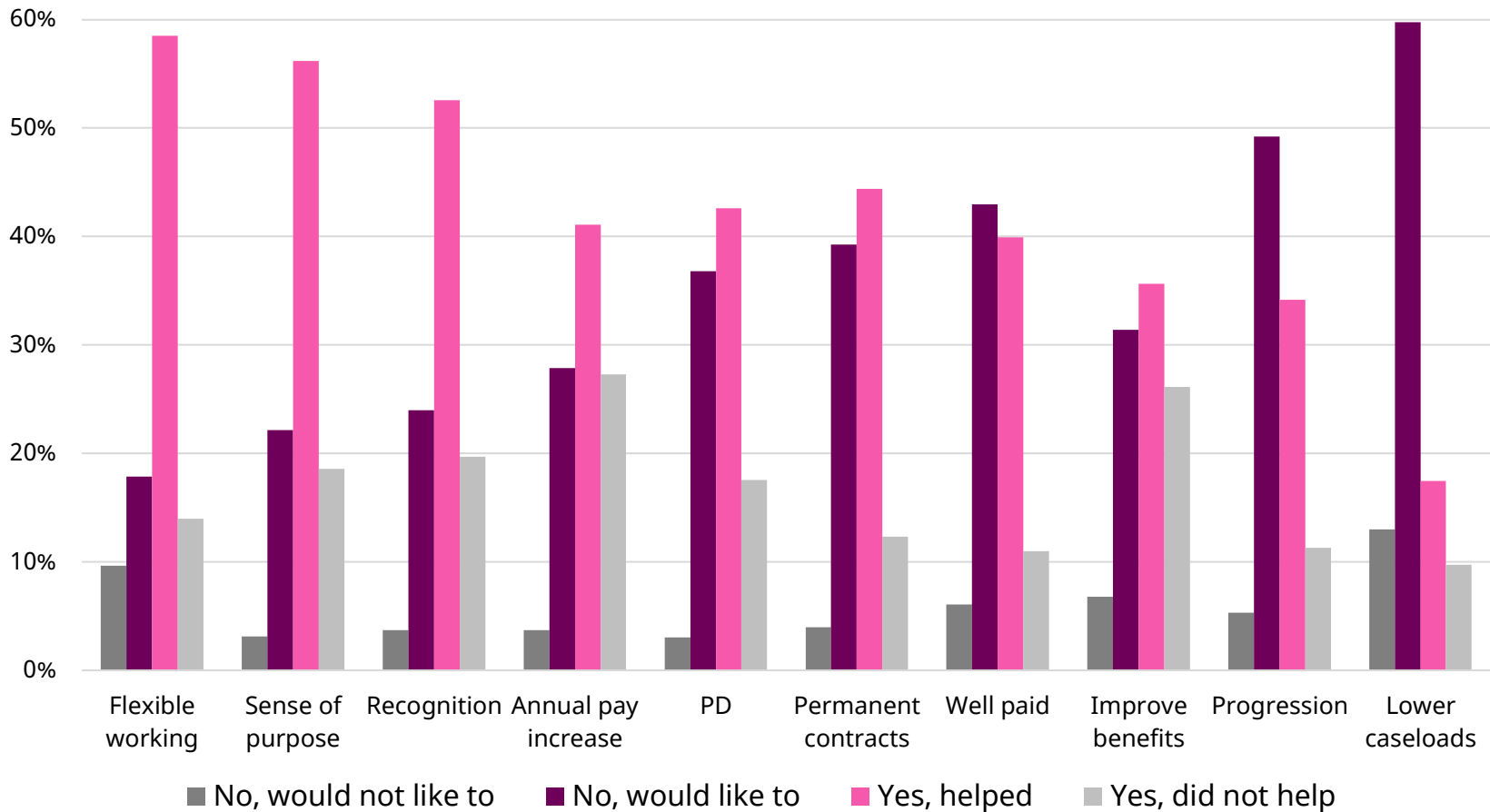We will be able to retain high quality staff: **37%** agree

Increasing cost of living will make it more difficult: **73%** agree
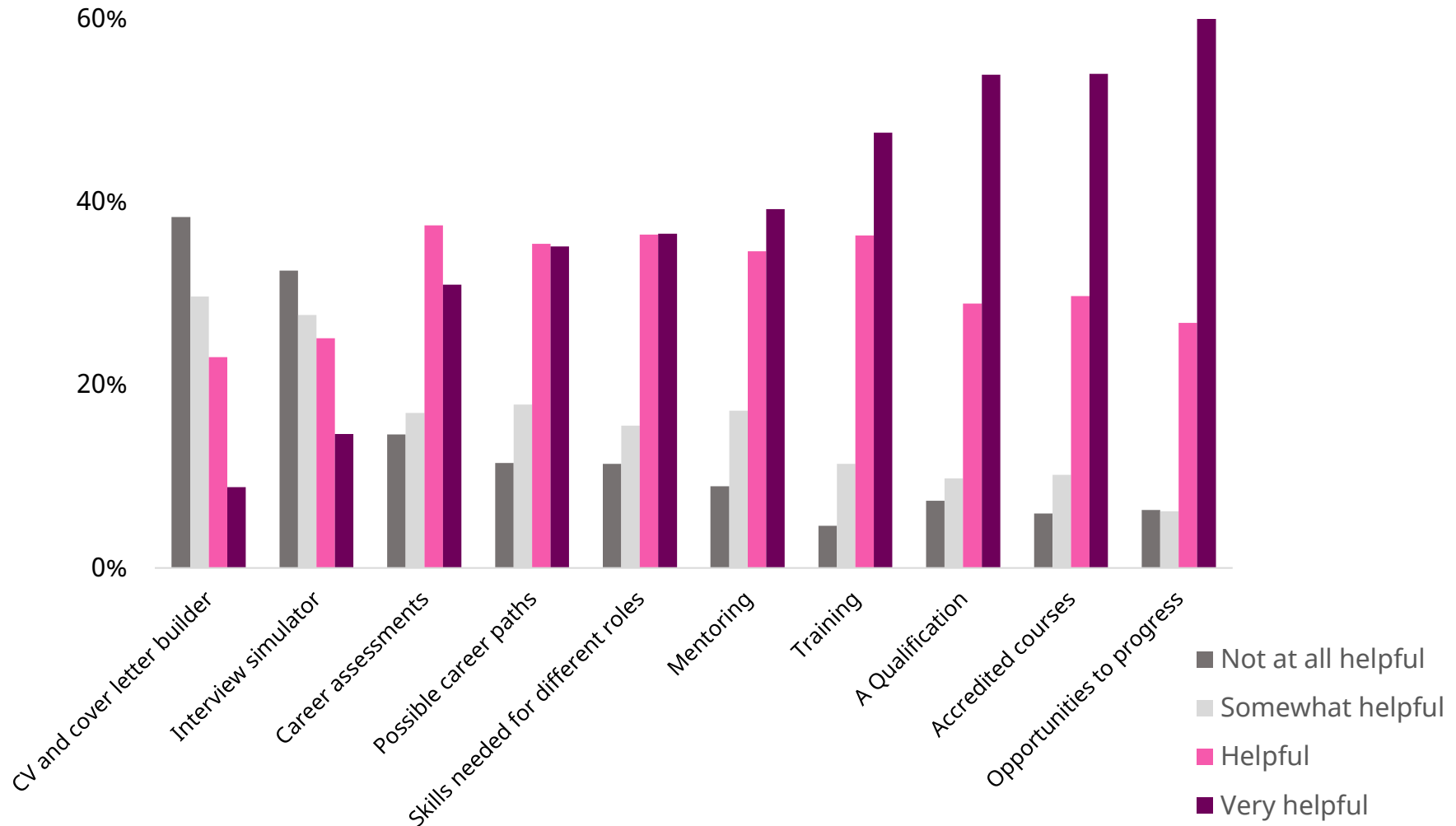
6. How...
are organisations trying to address these challenges?

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Legend: No, would not like to ■ | No, would like to ■ | Yes, helped ■ | Yes, did not help ■

7. What...
do people think will help their career progression

Chart showing responses for what people think will help their career progression. Y-axis ranges from 0% to 60%.

Categories (x-axis): CV and cover letter builder, Interview simulator, Career assessments, Possible career paths, Skills needed for different roles, Mentoring, Training, A Qualification, Accredited courses, Opportunities to progress

Legend:
- Not at all helpful (dark grey)
- Somewhat helpful (light grey)
- Helpful (pink)
- Very helpful (dark purple)

7. What...
do people think will help their career progression

Organisation increased progression opportunities: **45%**

...and it helped recruitment & retention: **75%**

More progression opportunities would help my career: **88%**

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Key takeaways

1. Sector workers are likely to come into the sector because of their values and desire to make a positive difference.

2. While people agree a career in homelessness is rewarding, the 'realities' of working in the sector are the biggest challenge, especially low pay and high workloads.

3. Many state they face chronic staff shortages, due to a combination of high turnover rates, an inability to provide permanent contracts because of the lack of long-term funding, and funding shortages.

4. Most agree that staff shortages and recruitment and retention challenges negatively impact their ability to support those experiencing homelessness.

5. The pandemic and cost of living crisis have made and are likely to continue to make these challenges worse.

6. There are a lot of strategies that organisations say have helped, especially flexible working, sense of purpose, and ensuring recognition for their work.

7. Sector workers want more opportunities for career progression, including opportunities to take accredited courses, earn a qualification, or receive more training.

Questions?

Ask now!

Or get in touch at

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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.

homeless.org.uk

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Extra slides

3. Why...
do people stay in the sector?

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%

Positive difference in the lives of others

Change the system

Values align

Personal experience

Degree in social work / other

Entepeneurial sector

Career in health / other

Demand

■ Frontline (n=363)   ■ Senior Manager (n=135)   ■ Service Manager (n=166)   ■ CEO (n=68)

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