

Homeless Link

National Homelessness Skills Framework

User Guide



Acknowledgements

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Introduction & overview of the framework

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness organisations. We work to improve services and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness and ensure that everyone has a place to call home and access to the support they need to keep it.

The homelessness sector is full of fantastic, committed people. However, we know that retention of people is difficult, as is recruitment. This is partly because there is nowhere to find out what a career in homelessness looks like, or an understanding of the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to underpin effective delivery. As part of our Voluntary and Community Frontline Sector (VCFS) grant from DLUHC, we have developed a National Homelessness Skills Framework to address this gap, designed to be a key resource to support the learning and development of the housing and homelessness workforce.

The framework aims to create a common skills language for current and prospective staff to help facilitate the recognition of transferable skills, knowledge and behaviours, and support career development, so that skills can be passported between services. This will help the sector to retain and gain qualified, knowledgeable staff, and therefore tackle homelessness more effectively.

Who is the framework for?

People who are new to the sector

For those looking to move into the homelessness sector, the framework provides a comprehensive overview of the key roles, with the essential skills, knowledge and behaviours required for each position. Individuals can consider if they have transferrable skills from previous employment/volunteering that could enable them to be successful in a new role in the homelessness sector.

People who are looking to develop their skills within the sector

For those already working frontline in the homelessness sector, the framework provides links to training and free resources to upskill staff. The role profile pages will also provide individuals with insight into different frontline roles, and where they can develop their knowledge and skills in certain areas.

Leaders and managers within homelessness services

The framework can be used by managers when supporting staff with their personal development plans during supervisions and appraisals. It could also be used during recruitment processes, to identify the key knowledge, skills and behaviours required for vacant roles to help with advertising and shortlisting applicants. Bear in mind, not everyone who applies for a role, will have all the essential knowledge, skills or behaviours, so you may wish to prioritise focussing on some of these during induction processes.

What is included in this framework?

Part 1 explained

In the first part of the framework, we outline different frontline roles, the types of services, and the essential and additional knowledge, skills and behaviours for that role.

For those looking to develop their career in the sector, once you have identified the essential and additional knowledge, skills, and behaviours for your role, you can refer to these in your conversations with your supervisor or manager and prioritise areas that you have as a strength, and areas that you would like to learn or develop.

Prioritise 1 or 2 knowledge, skills and behaviours that you need to develop over a certain amount of time, before identifying any more.

Part 1: Job Roles and services

- > Role description
- > Support included
- > Type of service
- > Essential knowledge, skills and behaviours
- > Additional knowledge, skills and behaviours
- > Link to development resources

Part 2 explained

Part 2 of the framework outlines “**essential**” knowledge, skills, and behaviours that are needed for frontline roles in the sector. These are described across 4 levels which will help you identify what you need for the role you hold, or what you need should you wish to develop and grow both in confidence and capability.

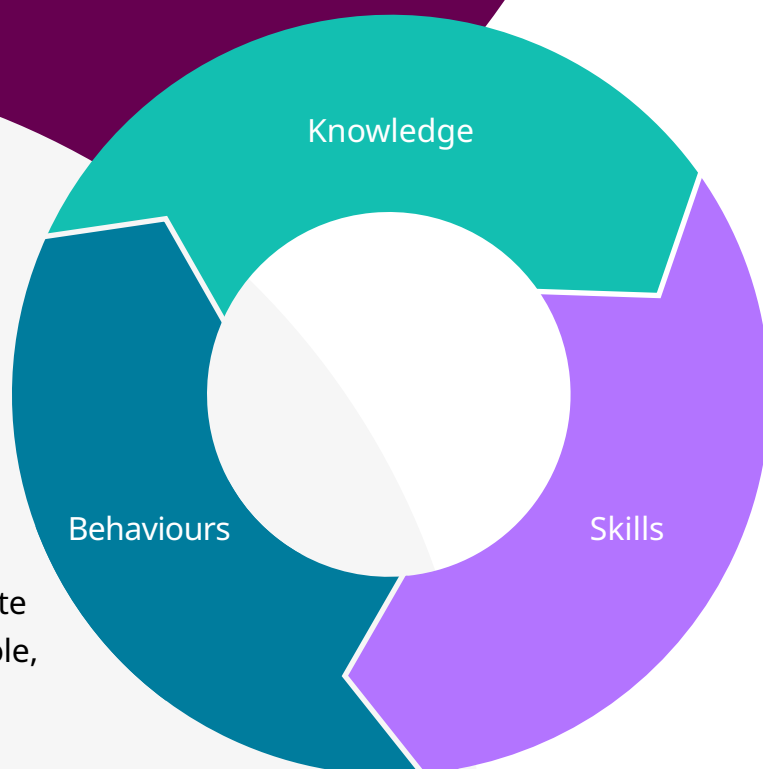
By “**essential**”, we mean that all frontline staff should have a basic understanding of these knowledge, skills, and behaviours. Those who are new to the sector should prioritise gaining a basic understanding of these when they start their role.

“**Additional**” knowledge, skills and behaviours are then outlined; by this, we mean areas for development whilst you are in your role. Links to resources and courses are provided.

Knowledge is information and understanding you’ve gathered through continued experience, observation and learning, both formally and informally.

Skills are the ability to use your knowledge effectively within your role.

Behaviours are the way you demonstrate your skills and knowledge within your role, and can be underpinned by your values.



Levels explained

Rather than stating explicitly which level is required for each knowledge and skill for each individual role, the levels can be used in a number of ways:

- **For those currently working in a frontline role or those who are new to the sector,** the levels should aid a process of self-reflection, where the individual considers what level they may currently be at, and what level they would like to get to.
- **For managers and leaders within homelessness services,** you may wish to set the specific level for each role, dependent on what the organisation needs. Setting these levels could aid performance development of current staff, and set the level of expectations when recruiting.



Level 1: Having an awareness of the knowledge topic, the skill or the behaviour. At this level you are expected to have some understanding and some experience of doing the activity or demonstrating the knowledge and will be able to carry out straightforward relevant tasks to the required standard under supervision.

Level 2: Being more capable of using the knowledge or demonstrating the skill or behaviour and applying it to your role. At this level you will use the knowledge, carry out the skill, or demonstrate the behaviour confidently and consistently without much supervision. You may have some tools that will help you in applying them to your role.

Level 3: Having a more accomplished level of understanding and practice of the specific knowledge, skill, or behaviour. At this level, you will be able to use them in more specialist or non-standard situations, confidently and consistently. You will have a range of alternative examples of the knowledge, skill and behaviour and use these approaches to guide and advise, or support others. You will be able to adapt and use this knowledge, skill, or behaviour appropriately for the person/people you are with or situation you are in.

Level 4: Being in a position of expertise or authority in the field of knowledge or skill and be considered as a role model in the behaviour. At this level you will have a lot of experience and expertise and you may have developed your own tools and practices of using and sharing the knowledge, skill or behaviour across the sector. You may be someone who leads the way in how the knowledge, skill or behaviour is applied across different roles and situations.

How it works:

A practical guide to using this framework

- 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.



How was the framework developed?

To ensure the framework is reflective of the sector, a diverse range of voices have been consulted, including learning and development specialists, people with direct experience of homelessness, and service managers and frontline staff from the homelessness workforce.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion

Homeless Link is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion, as shown in our **strategy** and relevant policies. We agree that we must recognise and value difference and recognise and redress inequity and disadvantage.

This skills framework is aligned to our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), for several reasons but mainly because:

- we seek to ensure that anyone seeking or using services provided across the homelessness sector, staff and volunteers have a voice and are included, valued and have equitable access, and equal opportunities to achieve
- by promoting inclusivity, we recognise and value the diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives of everyone working in the sector and people using services
- by advocating and demonstrating the EDI principles, we are demonstrating our commitment to fairness and social justice, which in turn builds trust with homelessness organisations and fosters positive relationships with the people they support.

To ensure the framework is inclusive and accessible to all, we commissioned an EDI partner, EMBED. We worked closely with EMBED to ensure that:

- **The content is inclusive:** by designing the content of the skills framework in a way that effectively supports the development of transferable skills, knowledge, and behaviours and focuses on the outcome of supporting people who are experiencing homelessness or who are vulnerably housed.

- **The communication is inclusive:** by receiving expert guidance on the communication style and tone to ensure the framework is inclusive and welcoming for everyone within language and imagery used.
- **The framework is accessible:** by recognising the varying needs of people working in the sector, including, for example, neurodiversity, and developing the framework to make it user-friendly for all.

Homeless Link's position on a career in homelessness

Our goal is to end homelessness. We believe that by ensuring the homelessness workforce have the right knowledge, skills and behaviours, we will improve recruitment, development and career progression. This in turn means people facing homelessness will get the best possible support and stand the best chance of moving away from homelessness for good.

We believe that having lived experience of homelessness brings insight and empathy to frontline service delivery. Drawing on the knowledge of experiencing homelessness brings a unique perspective to helping and empowering those currently facing homelessness. Therefore, we encourage people with lived experience of homelessness to consider a role in the sector.

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

Homeless Link, Minorities House, 2-5 Minorities, London EC3N 1BJ

www.homeless.org.uk

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