



CRITICAL MASS

COLLECTING DATA THE SAME WAY:
HOMELESSNESS DAY CENTRES

OUR VISION

Our vision is that all homeless service providers collect the same, comparable, basic information about their clients' needs and demographics. By doing so, they will be able to:

- Show the level of client need in their service;
- Make the case for why their service is required;
- Identify areas for future service development; and
- Benchmark their service with others to drive improvement.

Collectively, having a consistent national data set will mean that homelessness service providers will be able to influence Government spending and ensure that vital investment is made into these essential services. This will be particularly important for forthcoming Spending Reviews when decisions will be made about future funding of local authorities and the services they commission. We have heard that one of the reasons that Supporting People was protected to the level it was in the last Spending Review was due to the quality of evidence. This dataset is no longer collected nationally, but the need to evidence hasn't diminished. If anything, the next Spending Review will be even tougher.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT FOR?

This document sets out what information homelessness day centres should be collecting about their clients' needs and demographics. It should be used by organisations providing frontline services for homeless people.

WHY DO WE NEED TO COLLECT INFORMATION ABOUT OUR CLIENTS?

Collecting information about your clients is essential for running a good service, providing appropriate client programmes, identifying areas for development, and engaging with commissioners and funders.

By showing the level of client need, you will be able to make the case for why your particular service is needed in your area.

HOW SHOULD I USE THIS DOCUMENT?

We recommend that all homelessness day centres collect the same information about their clients' needs and demographics. The fields, where appropriate, are the same fields used by Supporting People. Any changes to SP fields have been agreed within the national SP data fields and these have been amended. This allows day centres to demonstrate need and demographics that are comparable to accommodation-based services.

You should use the standard questions and answer options given in Appendix A in your service's data collection tool. This might be a bespoke online system, such as In-Form, or could be a simple spreadsheet that is used across your service.

It is important to you use the exact wording given for the standard questions and answer options in Appendix A so that the information is comparable between services.

ISN'T THIS JUST DUPLICATING THE DATA NEEDED FOR HOUSING-RELATED SUPPORT ('SUPPORTING PEOPLE')?

SITRA's Common Data Framework for housing-related support services is a really important way of collecting standard information across all the services that are funded by local authorities (what was 'Supporting People' funding). It is still one of the best existing data sources about our clients. It is used by services for all vulnerable groups, including older people, those with learning disabilities, and homeless people.

We believe that homelessness day centres also need to collect specific information about their clients because:

- Not all homelessness day centres are funded by the local authority or use the Common Data Framework; and
- Our clients often have very complex needs, and we need richer data about their situations than the Common Data Framework provides.

IS THIS THE ONLY CLIENT INFORMATION I NEED TO COLLECT?

No. We have included here the essential information about clients' needs and demographics. You should think of this as the minimum information you should be collecting – and feel free to collect more information if it's relevant to your service.

You will also need to collect:

- Basic client contact information (e.g. the client's name and phone number)
- Information about clients' outcomes
- Information about clients' support plans
- Any information relevant to managing client risks
- Any information required by your funder – this could be from the Common Data Framework if your funder is a local authority
- Any specific information relevant to your service – this might be detailed information about drug use, for example, if you are running a drugs service

WHAT ABOUT MEASURING CLIENT OUTCOMES?

It is really important to collect information about client outcomes. There are several ways of doing this, which include:

- Outcomes from the Common Data Framework (previously called Supporting People Short-Term and Long-Term Outcomes). These are outcomes that are comparable across lots of different housing-related support services. <http://www.sitra.org/1669/>
- Soft outcomes measures, which include systems like the Outcomes Star. There is guidance available to help you choose the right soft outcomes tool for your service. <http://homeless.org.uk/outcomes>
- Economics-based outcomes, which measure the cost-benefit of individual services for homeless people. We are currently developing a toolkit to help service measure their economics-based outcomes. <http://homeless.org.uk/critical-mass>

This document doesn't include information about outcomes, but you can get more information from the websites above.

WHAT CAN I DO NEXT WITH THE STANDARD CLIENT DATA I HAVE COLLECTED?

We can provide you with support on how to collect client information, how to understand what it means, and how to use it to influence in your local area.

LIST OF STANDARD CLIENT QUESTIONS

We recommend that all homelessness day centres ask these questions of clients. The full answer options are provided in Appendix A below.

1. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. What nationality are you?
2. What is your ethnic group?
3. In which year did you first arrive in the UK?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is the client's date of birth?

2. NEEDS QUESTIONS

HEALTH

6. Do you have any mental health needs?
7. Do you get support with your mental health, e.g. from a worker, medic or support service?
8. Do you have any physical health problems?
9. Are you receiving support or treatment to help you with your physical health problem?

SUBSTANCE USE

10. Do you take any drugs or are you recovering from a drug problem?
11. Do you have or are you recovering from an alcohol problem?
12. How often do you have an alcoholic drink?

EMPLOYMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS

13. What is your current economic status?
14. When did you leave your last paid job?

OFFENDING

15. Have you ever had any involvement with the police?
16. Have you ever been convicted of an offence?

HOUSING SITUATION

17. What was your last settled home?
18. In what type of accommodation were you immediately prior to coming to this support service?
19. Where was your previous accommodation located?

APPENDIX A: STANDARD CLIENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWER OPTIONS

1. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

NATIONALITY

WHY?

A client's nationality refers to the country or nation to which they belong. It is important that projects capture this information because it allows them to determine whether clients have certain entitlements, such as recourse to public funds. The list below is a standard set of 208 nationalities.

WHAT?

1. What nationality are you?

Afghanistan	China	Guinea	Malawi	Pakistan	Suriname
Albania	Columbia	Guinea-Bissau	Malaysia	Palau	Swaziland
Algeria	Comoros	Guyana	Maldives	Palestine	Sweden
Andorra	Congo	Haiti	Mali	Panama	Switzerland
Angola	Congo (Republic of)	Holland	Malta	Papua New Guinea	Syrian Arab Republic
Antigua and Barbuda	Cook Islands	Honduras	Marshall Islands	Paraguay	Taiwan
Argentina	Costa Rica	Hungary (A8)	Mauritania	Peru	Tajikistan
Armenia	Cote d'Ivoire	Iceland	Mauritius	Philippines	Tanzania
Australia	Croatia	India	Mexico	Poland (A8)	Thailand
Austria	Cuba	Indonesia	Micronesia	Portugal	Timor-Leste
Azerbaijan	Cyprus	Iran	Moldova (Republic of)	Qatar	Togo
Bahamas	Czech Republic (A8)	Iraq	Monaco	Romania (A2)	Tonga
Bahrain	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Ireland (Republic of)	Mongolia	Russia	Trinidad & Tobago
Bangladesh	Denmark	Israel	Montserrat	Russian Federation	Tunisia
Barbados	Djibouti	Italy	Morocco	Rwanda	Turkey
Belarus	Dominica	Jamaica	Mozambique	Saint Kitts and Nevis	Turkmenistan
Belgium	Dominican Republic	Japan	Namibia	Samoa	Tuvalu
Belize	Ecuador	Jordan	Nauru	San Marino	Uganda
Benin	Egypt	Kazakhstan	Nepal	Sao Tome and Principe	UK
Bhutan	El Salvador	Kenya	New Zealand	Saudi Arabia	Ukraine
Bolivia	England	Kiribati	Nicaragua	Scotland	United Arab Emirates
Bosnia	Equatorial Guinea	Korea	Niger	Senegal	Uruguay
Botswana	Eritrea	Kosovo	Nigeria	Serbia	USA
Brazil	Estonia (A8)	Kuwait	Niue	Seychelles	Uzbekistan
Brunei Darussalam	Ethiopia	Kyrgyzstan	Norway	Sierra Leone	Vanuatu

Bulgaria (A2)	Fiji	Laos	Northern Ireland	Singapore	Venezuela
Burkina Faso	Finland	Latvia (A8)	Not known	Slovakia (A8)	Vietnam
Burma	France	Lebanon	Not known - Outside UK	Slovenia (A8)	Wales
Burundi	Gabon	Lesotho	Oman	Solomon Islands	Yemen
Cambodia	Gambia	Liberia	Other area/Not known - Africa	Somalia	Yugoslavia
Cameroon	Georgia	Libya	Other area/Not known - Asia	South Africa	Zambia
Canada	Germany	Liechtenstein	Other area/Not known - Australasia	Spain	Zimbabwe
Cape Verde	Ghana	Lithuania (A8)	Other area/Not known - Europe	Sri Lanka	
Central African republic	Greece	Luxembourg	Other area/Not known - North America	St. Lucia	
Chad	Grenada	Macedonia (Republic of)	Other area/Not known - South America	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	
Chile	Guatemala	Madagascar	Other area/Not known - South East Asia	Sudan	

ETHNICITY

WHY?

Ethnicity refers to membership of an ethnic group, often with a common language or common culture. It is different from nationality although certain ethnicities may be associated with particular nationalities. The ethnicity categories below are the same as those used in the 2011 Census in England.

If projects record ethnicity, they can gain a better understanding of their clients and, by comparing with English Census data, identify similarities and differences between clients and the general population in their area. By understanding client ethnicity, project managers will also be able to tailor their provision better to meet the needs of clients, such as culturally appropriate services.

WHAT?

2. What is your ethnic group? [SP field]

A. White
• British
• Irish
• Gypsy or Irish Traveller
• Any other White background
B. Mixed / multiple ethnic groups
• White and Black Caribbean
• White and Black African
• White and Asian
• Any other Mixed / multiple ethnic background
C. Asian or Asian British
• Indian
• Pakistani
• Bangladeshi
• Chinese

• Any other Asian background
D. Black or Black British
• African
• Caribbean
• Any other Black / African / Caribbean background
E. Other ethnic group
• Arab
• Any other ethnic group
F. Refused

YEAR OF FIRST ARRIVAL IN THE UK

WHY?

This question should only be asked of clients whose nationality is not British or Northern Irish. Knowing when citizens of other countries came to the UK provides information about certain entitlements, such as recourse to public funds.

WHAT?

3. In which year did you first arrive in the UK?

GENDER

WHY?

By knowing the gender of clients, projects will be able to tailor provision to meet the differing needs of men and women, such as bed spaces or health needs. Transgender clients may also have particular needs which can be recorded by the project.

WHAT?

4. What is your gender? [SP field]

Male / Female / Did not answer

Transgender: Yes / No / Don't know / Does not wish to disclose

AGE

WHY?

It is useful to know a client's age as this provides information about their entitlement to certain services (such as a government benefits or pension). Clients in differing age groups are also likely to have different employment, health, or emotional and personal support needs.

WHAT?

5. What is the client's date of birth?

DD/MM/YYYY

From this, you should use your data collection tool to calculate:

- Client's age at first entry to the service
- Client's current age

2.CLIENT NEEDS DATA

HEALTH NEEDS

WHY?

Asking clients standard questions about their health allows projects to make sure that they are providing appropriate services that meet clients' needs.

Mental health difficulties and physical health difficulties require different responses from project staff and health professionals. Services are also commissioned separately for mental and physical health, and so they are asked here as separate sets of questions. The questions below are taken from Homeless Link's Health Needs Audit and have been used by a range of projects already. They seek to understand clients' health difficulties that may not meet diagnostic thresholds but are nevertheless significant for that client.

WHAT?

MENTAL HEALTH

6. Do you have any mental health needs?

Yes / No / Declined to answer (go to Q8)

7. Do you get support with your mental health, e.g. from a worker, medic or support service?

Yes

No

PHYSICAL HEALTH

8. Do you have any physical health problems?

Yes / No / Declined to answer (go to Q10)

9. Are you receiving support or treatment to help you with your physical health problem?

Yes

No

SUBSTANCE USE

WHY?

Gathering information from clients on their use of substances gives project managers the information they need to ensure they are providing suitable support services. It is important that questions about drugs and alcohol are asked separately, rather than as generic 'substance use', because they require different treatment pathways and may result in different health difficulties.

The questions below are taken from Homeless Link's Health Needs Audit.

WHAT?

10. Do you take any drugs or are you recovering from a drug problem? (Not including medication prescribed to you for a specific medical condition)

Yes, use drugs / No

11. Do you have, or are you recovering from an alcohol problem?

Yes

No

12. How often do you have an alcoholic drink?

never

- monthly or less
- 2-4 times per month
- 2-3 times per week
- 4 -6 times per week
- every day

EMPLOYMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS

WHY?

The questions below ask clients about their educational qualifications, the types of jobs they have done, and how long ago they worked. This information allows project managers to understand how far their unemployed clients are from the labour market, the level of skills they have, and therefore the types and extent of support they are likely to need. The categories used in these questions are taken from the Labour Force Survey, so projects can compare their data with national data on employment.

WHAT?

13. What is your current economic status? [SP field]
- a) Full-time work (24 hours or more per week)
 - b) Part-time work (less than 24 hours per week)
 - c) Govt training/Work Programme
 - d) Job seeker
 - e) Retired
 - f) Not seeking work
 - g) Full-time student
 - h) Unable to work because of long term sickness or disability
 - i) Child under 16
 - j) Other Adult
14. When did you leave your last paid job?
- a) Less than 3 months
 - b) 3 months but less than 6 months
 - c) 6 months but less than 12 months
 - d) 12 months but less than 18 months
 - e) 18 months but less than 2 years
 - f) 2 years but less than 3 years
 - g) 3 years but less than 4 years
 - h) 4 years but less than 5 years
 - i) 5 years or more
 - j) Never had a paid job

OFFENDING

WHY?

Clients with offending backgrounds may need specific support from project staff to address their offending or to engage effectively with probation. The questions below seek to capture not only any convictions clients may have, but their wider engagement with the police such as through informal reprimands or warnings. Project managers can use this information to provide appropriate services to clients with support needs around their offending, such as high-volume offending.

The categories used in these questions are the same used by the Ministry of Justice to report on crime, so projects can compare their client data with national data on offending.

These questions about offending are not intended to form part of the client's risk assessment which should be asking more specific questions about risk to staff and other clients.

WHAT?

15. Have you ever had any involvement with the police?

Yes / No

16. Have you ever been convicted of an offence?

Yes / No

HOUSING SITUATION

WHY?

Information on where clients have come from prior to entering the service can give project managers useful information about how settled their accommodation has been in the past. The 'last settled home' question seeks to capture information about the type of housing clients were in before they became homeless, and uses the categories from Homeless Link's prevention toolkit, PrOMPT (<http://homeless.org.uk/prompt>).

WHAT?

17. What was your last settled home?

- a) Private rented sector
- b) Social housing (council or HA)
- c) Owner occupier/joint owner
- d) With friends
- e) With partner
- f) Family home – parents
- g) Family home – extended family
- h) Foster care/looked after
- i) Overseas
- j) Other
- k) No answer

18. In what type of accommodation were you immediately prior to coming to this support service? [SP field]

- a) Local authority general needs tenancy
- b) Housing association general needs tenancy
- c) Private sector tenancy
- d) Private sector leasing
- e) Tied housing or rented with job
- f) Owner occupation (private)
- g) Owner occupation (low cost home ownership)
- h) Supported housing
- i) Direct access hostel
- j) Women's refuge
- k) Foyer
- l) Housing for older people
- m) Residential care home
- n) Hospital
- o) Prison
- p) Approved probation hostel
- q) Children's home/foster care
- r) Bed and breakfast
- s) Short life housing
- t) Living with family
- u) Living with friends
- v) Mobile Home/Caravan

- w) Any other temp accom
- x) Home Office Asylum Support
- y) Rough sleeping
- z) Other

19. Where was your previous accommodation located? [SP field]
[Name of local authority]