



# Specialist Homelessness Sector Workforce Capability Framework

**June 2019**

This Workforce Capability Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector (SHS) clarifies the skills, knowledge and competencies required by practitioners providing high-quality SHS.

The Framework identifies five domains, and sixteen sub-capabilities that enable specialist homelessness practitioners to achieve person centred outcomes in partnership with consumers.

The Framework describes the capabilities required for the work of SHS practitioners, both today and into the future.

# Contents

Foreword .....	2
Introduction .....	3
Overview of the Specialist Homelessness Sector Workforce Capability Framework .....	3
Design principles.....	5
Purpose and how it can be used .....	5
SHS Workforce Capability Framework.....	6
<b>Figure 1: Domains and supporting capabilities for SHS practitioners.</b> .....	6
Domain One: Understand the contemporary homelessness context.....	8
1.1 Knows and applies the standards, rules and commitments under which SHS funded organisations operate.....	8
1.2 Is aware of available housing and support options for consumers.....	10
1.3 Establishes and maintains professional relationships and networks .....	11
Domain Two: Understand consumers and their needs.....	12
2.1 Understands the structural causes, pathways into, and impacts of homelessness.....	12
2.2 Understands and responds to needs of diverse groups.....	13
2.3 Applies person-centred models of practice .....	15
2.4 Promotes consumer participation .....	16
2.5 Listens actively.....	17
2.6 Communicates appropriately and effectively.....	18
Domain Three: Determine solutions.....	19
3.1 Identifies problems and finds solutions .....	19
3.2 Makes decisions appropriately .....	20
Domain 4: Deliver services.....	21
4.1 Uses internal systems and processes .....	21
4.2 Advocates and influences.....	22
4.3 Is outcomes focused.....	23
Domain five: Manages self.....	24
5.1 Manages time effectively.....	24
5.2 Is adaptable and flexible .....	25
5.3 Demonstrates resilience and self-care .....	26

# Foreword

The community services sector delivers essential services to improve the wellbeing, health and safety of vulnerable Victorians. These services span a range of settings and include Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Community Housing Organisations, Children and Family Services, Specialist Homelessness Services, and additional service provision in disability, family violence, mental health, and alcohol and other drugs.

Community service organisations are operating in a rapidly changing environment which requires their workforces to build capabilities and quality to enable and drive sector reforms. The workforce vision of the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) is for a strong and effective health and human services workforce that is respected and supported to excel in:

- their practice
- their partnerships
- service delivery and improvement
- their contributions to better outcomes for Victorians.

In response to the 10-Year Community Services Industry Plan and to support their sectors to meet complex challenges, sector peak bodies - the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Community Housing Industry Association Victoria and the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) - have worked in partnership with their respective members and the department to develop sector Transition Plans for the next four years. All three Transition Plans identified the requirement to develop and implement sector capability frameworks to support workforce capacity building.

The Workforce capability and training project (the Project) responds to Priority 2 in the *Community Services Industry Plan*, which calls for a statewide approach for building workforce capability to plan and respond more effectively to the challenges presented by the changing external environment. Funded by the department, the Project supports community service sectors to work together to identify the required workforce capabilities, to identify any gaps in current workforce capabilities and to deliver consistency in the respective workforce capability frameworks.

To support the Project the sector peaks leveraged collective resources and relationships and worked together to develop their workforce capability frameworks. Modelled on the department's *Housing Practice Capability Framework*, amongst others, the workforce capability frameworks developed by the sector peaks ensure a degree of consistency across the community services sector which will assist the identification of the core, shared and unique capabilities across workforces and provide evidence of any new, unmet capabilities within or across workforces.

The delivery of workforce capability frameworks through this Project and their implementation in the sector will assist organisations and workers to identify required workforce development, education and/or training for community service sector roles. The analysis of the workforce capability frameworks will inform future workforce policy direction and provide an evidence base to leverage opportunities for future training.

# Introduction

## Overview of the Specialist Homelessness Sector Workforce Capability Framework

The Specialist Homelessness Sector (SHS) has a proud history of supporting Victorians, at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The sector is recognised as a vital safety net for people experiencing the greatest disadvantage.

Homelessness services in Victoria work to provide:

- access to safe, secure and affordable housing;
- the support needed to help people overcome the barriers to keeping a home; and
- connections to the physical, personal and community resources that foster a sense of belonging.

Safe and secure housing is fundamental to health and well-being. It is foundational to people's capacity to participate in work and community activities, as well as underpinning the care of dependent children.

From the advent of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) in 1985, SHS have been funded, essentially to provide crisis and transitional housing and support responses. The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) funding from 2009, provided the opportunity for parts of the SHS to trial and demonstrate the effectiveness of the range of contemporary best practice including housing first, rapid rehousing and early intervention to prevent tenancy loss. The capacity to implement contemporary service models has also been augmented through important investments by Victorian governments.

The SHS is made up of approximately 131 organisations with CHP estimating there are approximately 2000 effective full-time positions funded by the department.

The SHS workforce is currently funded to provide three key functions:

**Initial Assessment and Planning (IAP)** – triaging people who present for support and providing immediate assistance (CHP estimates this makes up approximately five per cent of workforce);

**Support** – assistance for people to identify and access housing and other support and resources (approximately 90 per cent of workforce); and

**Tenancy Management** – property maintenance and rent collection activities related to Transitional Housing Management (approximately five per cent of workforce).

The SHS Workforce Capabilities Framework covers these three functions and is focused on staff who deliver direct service to consumers, up to and including advanced practitioners and Team Leaders. It is not designed to cover middle or senior management.

For SHS staff delivering Tenancy Management activities, the [Community Housing Workforce Capability Framework](#) developed by Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) is an excellent resource specifically addressing capabilities related to the management of social housing.

The [Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework](#) includes the SHS workforce in *Tier two: Workers in core support services or intervention agencies*. Considering the significant intersection between homelessness and family violence, practitioners and their managers might also consider the five capabilities outlined in [Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework](#):

- Engaging effectively with those accessing services
- Identifying and assessing family violence risk
- Managing risk and prioritising safety
- Providing effective services
- Advocating for legislative, policy and practice reform.

The [Specialist Homelessness Sector Transition Plan \(2018-2022\): Building a path to our future SHS \(the Plan\)](#), released in 2018, was designed to assist the SHS, both as organisations and as a workforce. The Plan builds on our sector's strengths and identifies the preparation needed to deliver the contemporary suite of services, to meet growing demand and complexity, and to achieve effective outcomes. A priority goal of the SHS Transition Plan was to develop a Workforce Capability Framework for the Specialist Homelessness Sector to clarify the skills, knowledge and competencies required by practitioners to provide high-quality specialist homelessness services.

The development of the SHS Workforce Capability Framework (the framework) has been informed by:

- Consultations undertaken throughout the development of the SHS Transition Plan
- Consultations with consumers
- CHP's Housing Focused Support Guides
- Contemporary research and evidence
- The [North and West Metropolitan Homelessness Local Area Service Network](#) and [Southern Homelessness Services Networks](#) consumer participation strategies
- Sector feedback on drafts of the Framework

The development of the framework was overseen by the department and the SHS Transition Plan Governance Structures - the Executive Advisory Group, the Workforce Development Working Group and the Organisational Readiness Working Group.

## Design principles

The SHS Workforce Capability Framework utilises five design principles: <sup>1</sup>

1. **Tailored** – the framework outlines capabilities that are specific to the role of practitioners working in the SHS, while also maintaining relevance for staff working across the community sector.
2. **Current and future work** – the framework describes the capabilities required for the work of SHS practitioners today and as anticipated over the next two to three years.
3. **Contemporary practice** – the framework describes the capabilities required to conduct work in line with contemporary practice.
4. **Best practice** – incorporates evidenced based capabilities and behaviours required to provide high quality specialist homelessness services.
5. **Aligned with reforms across the community services sector** – the capabilities identified are reflective of those needed to deliver ongoing reforms across the community services sector.

## Purpose and how it can be used

The framework can be used to:

- Clarify the expectations of practitioners
- Support the recruitment of new staff by articulating required knowledge, skills and attributes
- Identify and develop learning and professional development opportunities to enhance practitioner skills
- Support supervision and annual performance planning and reviews with staff
- Identify or assess the strengths or performance of an individual or a team, to enable the sharing of 'best practice' across the sector.

---

1. Adapted from: Department of Health and Human Services, 2018, Housing Practice Capability Framework, Department of Health and Human Services, Melbourne.

## SHS Workforce Capability Framework

To provide a high quality service to consumers, staff working in Victoria's Specialist Homelessness Sector (SHS) must:

1. Understand the contemporary homelessness context
2. Understand consumers and their needs
3. Determine solutions
4. Deliver services
5. Manage self<sup>2</sup>

Each domain comprises several capabilities that enable specialist homelessness staff to achieve the objectives of that domain of work (Figure 1). The domains and capabilities combine to form the capability framework for the SHS in Victoria. '

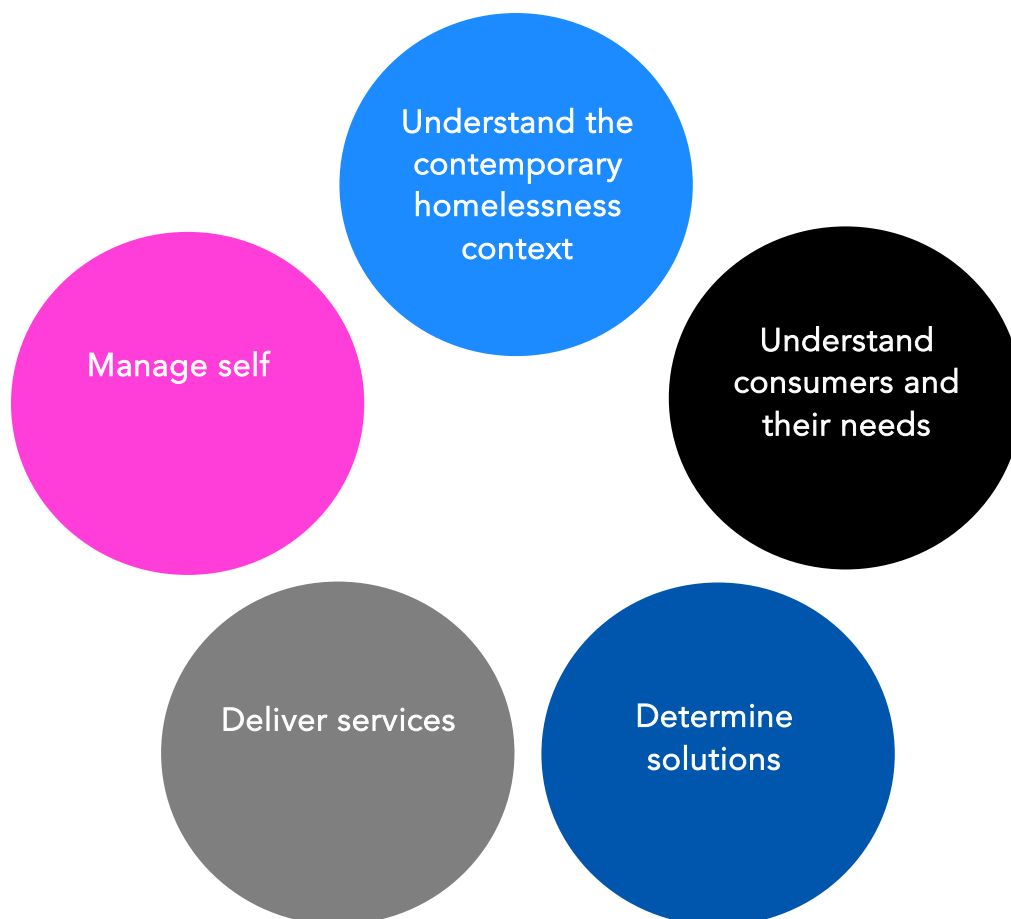


Figure 1: Domains and supporting capabilities for SHS practitioners.

---

2. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018, Housing Practice Capability Framework, Department of Health and Human Services, Melbourne.

Table 1. Domains and supporting capabilities for SHS practitioners.

Supporting capabilities						
<b>Understand the contemporary homelessness context</b>	Knows and applies the standards, rules and commitments under which SHS funded organisations operate	Is aware of available housing and support options for consumers	Establishes and maintains professional relationships and networks			
<b>Understand consumers and their needs</b>	Understands the structural causes, pathways into, and impacts of homelessness	Understands and responds to the needs of diverse groups	Applies person-centred models of practice	Promotes consumer participation	Listens actively	Communicates appropriately and effectively
<b>Determine solutions</b>	Identifies problems and finds solutions	Makes decisions appropriately				
<b>Deliver services</b>	Uses internal systems and processes	Advocates and influences	Is outcomes focused			
<b>Manage self</b>	Manages time effectively	Is adaptable and flexible	Demonstrates resilience and self-care			

The framework has three proficiency levels. Each level of proficiency assumes competence at the preceding level.

Foundational – practitioners new to the SHS

Emergent – more experienced practitioners

Leading – advanced practitioners including team leaders.



# Domain One: Understand the contemporary homelessness context

Consumers accessing the SHS come to a service seeking expert advice and assistance about housing situations that they are unable to resolve by themselves. Consumers may be experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis for the first time, or may have had repeat experiences of housing instability. Practitioners must be able to confidently assist consumers to navigate a service system with which they may be unfamiliar, or even deeply suspicious due to the experiences they have had in the past when seeking support. To competently meet the needs of consumers accessing the SHS, and to work towards the achievement of positive outcomes, a practitioner working in the SHS needs to:

- know and apply the standards, rules and commitments under which SHS funded organisations operate
- be aware of the services available and referral pathways
- establish and maintain relationships with relevant service providers and community organisations.

## 1.1 Knows and applies the standards, rules and commitments under which SHS funded organisations operate

Practitioners in the SHS have an understanding of the policy and context of the SHS. They are familiar with Human Services Standards, relevant legislation and policies and guidelines that underpin their work. They utilise this knowledge to make informed decisions in their practice in order to deliver high quality and ethical services to consumers.

Table 2. Knows and applies the standards, rules and commitments under which SHS funded organisations operate

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has basic knowledge of Human Services Standards, relevant legislation, policies and guidelines that relate to providing Specialist Homelessness Services</li> <li>• Identifies personal knowledge gaps and demonstrates readiness to access additional information or seek guidance</li> <li>• Is willing to be directed to relevant information or professional development opportunities that relate to changes in Human Services Standards and relevant legislation, policies and guidelines that relate to providing Specialist Homelessness Services</li> <li>• Has a clear understanding of internal organisational policies and procedures</li> <li>• Seeks advice in relation to safely balancing the interests of the consumer, organisation and community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a sound understanding of Human Services Standards, relevant legislation, policies and guidelines that relate to providing Specialist Homelessness Services</li> <li>• Has a good understanding of complex guidelines and applies with discretion</li> <li>• Is aware of any relevant changes to Human Services Standards, relevant legislation, policies and guidelines that relate to providing Specialist Homelessness Services</li> <li>• Is confident in aligning own practice to support internal organisational policies and procedures</li> <li>• Safely balances the interests of the consumer, organisation and community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possesses detailed subject matter on Human Services Standards, relevant legislation, policies and guidelines that relate to providing Specialist Homelessness Services and draws on this detailed knowledge to create unconventional solutions to complex problems</li> <li>• Provides advice and guidance to staff on matters of Human Services Standards and relevant legislation, policies and guidelines that relate to providing Specialist Homelessness Services, particularly in complex and ambiguous circumstances</li> <li>• Aligns practice guidance and tools to respond to changes to Human Services Standards, relevant legislation, policies and guidelines that relate to providing Specialist Homelessness Services and is aware of additional training requirements of staff</li> <li>• Acts effectively as a point of contact for stakeholder management when complex or challenging matters arise</li> <li>• Mentors and monitors staff to safely balance the interests of the consumer, organisation and community and ensures staff are working in safe environments</li> </ul>

## 1.2 Is aware of available housing and support options for consumers

To assist consumers to gain and maintain housing, practitioners are required to have a well-developed knowledge of the potential housing and various support options available both within and external to their own organisation.

Table 3. Is aware of available housing and support options for consumers

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates an understanding of and can articulate to consumers the opportunities and limitations of services offered by own organisation</li> <li>• Demonstrates an understanding of and can articulate to consumers other support services that are available in that region</li> <li>• Demonstrates an understanding of and can articulate to consumers the various housing options that are available</li> <li>• Facilitates links with mainstream and specialist community services e.g. mental health, disability, drug and alcohol, family violence</li> <li>• Has a clear understanding of eligibility guidelines in own program and external programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates strong familiarity with and can articulate to consumers the opportunities and limitations of services offered by own organisation</li> <li>• Demonstrates strong familiarity with and can articulate to consumers and facilitate access to other support services that are available in their region</li> <li>• Demonstrates strong familiarity with housing options and can articulate to consumers the opportunities and challenges across each area</li> <li>• Provides active referrals to a range of community services organisations e.g. mental health, disability, drug and alcohol, family violence</li> <li>• Identifies and advocates for positive consumer outcomes within the constraints of available resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops innovative programs and adapts existing program requirements to best respond to the housing and support needs of consumers</li> <li>• Supports other staff members in identifying relevant housing and support options</li> <li>• Shares best-practice examples across staff and organisation</li> <li>• Provides expert advice to staff around working within the constraints of available resources, to identify and advocate for positive consumer outcomes</li> </ul>

## 1.3 Establishes and maintains professional relationships and networks

To ensure consumers receive supports to assist them to resolve homelessness and maintain housing, practitioners establish and maintain strategic professional relationships and networks. Practitioners utilise these relationships and networks to support consumers to access appropriate services, provide appropriate referrals, seek secondary consultation and work collaboratively with other service providers.

Table 4. Establishes and maintains professional relationships and networks

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works to develop relationships with other service providers and specialists</li> <li>• Has an understanding of relevant information sharing legislation and seeks advice and support from a supervisor to comply</li> <li>• Participates in multi-service discussions about consumer support needs</li> <li>• Utilises professional networks and follows established protocols</li> <li>• Actively participates in case conferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies gaps in services and finds ways to bridge this gap</li> <li>• Proactively and appropriately shares with and requests relevant information about consumers in line with legislative requirements and organisational policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Facilitates coordination between services</li> <li>• Develops and maintains own professional networks</li> <li>• Can run/chair case conferences, assign responsibilities and monitor if agreed actions have been completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops strong working relationships with external service providers as a representative of the organisation</li> <li>• Provides expert advice to staff around sharing and requesting information about consumers in relation to information sharing legislation and practice guidelines</li> <li>• Takes a lead in service coordination through relationship building and proactive information sharing for the benefit of consumers</li> <li>• Is skilled in running/chairing case conferences, assigning responsibilities and monitoring if agreed actions have been completed</li> <li>• Strategically develops and maintains professional networks and practice protocols to strengthen programs and service offered to consumers</li> <li>• Provides mentoring and guidance on contemporary homelessness practice across the organisation</li> <li>• Recognises when service partnerships should be formalised to improve service responsiveness to consumers</li> </ul>

# Domain Two: Understand consumers and their needs

To appropriately engage and support consumers accessing the SHS, practitioners must have a detailed understanding of the people they are supporting and effective methods of providing support. A practitioner successful in this domain:

- understands the structural causes, pathways into, and impacts of homelessness
- understands and responds to the needs of diverse groups
- applies person-centred models of practice
- promotes consumer participation
- listens actively
- communicates appropriately and effectively.

## 2.1 Understands the structural causes, pathways into, and impacts of homelessness

A well-developed understanding of the pathways into and impacts of homelessness underpins the services delivered by practitioners in the SHS. Practitioners use this knowledge to support and tailor their engagement with consumers and to determine the most appropriate housing and support options.

Table 5. Understands the structural causes, pathways into, and impacts of homelessness

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the relationship between homelessness, disadvantage and wellbeing and competently responds</li> <li>• Is aware of pathways into homeless</li> <li>• Understands the impact of trauma</li> <li>• Understands the importance of safe and stable housing</li> <li>• Prioritises housing while working to resolve a period of housing crisis or homelessness</li> <li>• Supports stabilisation and resettlement in housing</li> <li>• Participates in local initiatives that respond to the structural causes of homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a comprehensive understanding of disadvantage and decreased wellbeing</li> <li>• Competently considers and attempts to reduce the interplay between structural causes of and personal pathways into homeless when delivering services</li> <li>• Provides services in a trauma informed manner</li> <li>• Ensures consumers have access to community resources that support resettlement and stabilisation</li> <li>• Actively engages with local initiatives that respond to the structural causes of homelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides mentoring to staff around reducing the impact of disadvantage and decreased wellbeing when delivering services</li> <li>• Provides mentoring to staff around reducing the interplay between structural causes of and personal pathways into homeless when delivering services</li> <li>• Creates trauma informed environments for consumers and staff</li> <li>• Designs or actively seeks out programs or partnerships that support the provision of housing and resettlement and stabilisation</li> <li>• Develops and leads local initiatives that respond to the structural causes of homelessness</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Understands and responds to needs of diverse groups

Homelessness is an experience that can affect anyone, with some groups and communities more likely to be affected than others. Children, victim survivors of Family Violence, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other sexual and gender minorities (LGBTIQ+) consumers, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Australians, migrants, refugees and consumers with a disability are all at increased risk of experiencing homelessness. In addition, these groups will often have support needs about which SHS workers may require additional knowledge or need access to networks to support the provision of effective intervention.

These consumers may also require additional support to disclose their needs or require additional assistance in understanding their rights. Effectively responding to diverse groups may require workers to communicate in ways that are different to usual, to support consumers to be engaged and to appreciate some aspects of their situation. Finally, families containing or comprised of diverse consumer groups may be relatively disempowered and/or have some challenging family dimensions, and staff may need to tactfully challenge some behaviours to support less empowered members of the family.

Table 6. Understands and responds to needs of diverse groups

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognises that some diverse groups and communities may have additional needs</li> <li>• Recognises that some members of diverse groups and communities may have difficulty in fully understanding their situation</li> <li>• Understands that consumer needs can vary within the family unit and recognises each family member</li> <li>• Recognises that diverse groups and communities are likely to have links to other support services and incorporates these into case-planning and service delivery</li> <li>• Has knowledge about intersection with elements of legislation in relation to diverse groups and communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactively supports consumers in diverse groups and communities to discuss their additional needs and works towards achieving satisfactory outcomes in these areas</li> <li>• Uses a variety of effective communication strategies and resources to facilitate consumers' understanding their situations, and demonstrates to consumers that their voice has been heard</li> <li>• Demonstrates a commitment to service delivery to each consumer as an individual and takes time to facilitate each member of the family unit to identify support goals, appropriate to that person's situation and informed by best practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works to strengthen processes within organisation/s to ensure diverse groups and communities receive equitable service, embeds this within own practice and supports colleagues to meet the needs of these groups</li> <li>• Uses a broad range of resources and networks to collaborate with and empower diverse groups and communities to build shared understanding and buy-in for outcomes</li> <li>• Works to facilitate each family member feeling empowered to contribute to outcomes</li> <li>• Acts confidently, but tactfully as an advocate for needs of dependent children or those with disability</li> </ul>

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
--------------	----------	---------

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands that additional training may be required to effectively provide best practice support to diverse groups and communities</li> <li>• Is aware that reflective practice can facilitate diverse groups and communities receiving good support</li> <li>• Is aware of additional assessments and other resources that may help to identified needs of diverse consumers and communities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates commitment, in partnership with consumers, to collaborating across services and external stakeholders who are providing support to diverse groups and communities</li> <li>• Demonstrates working knowledge of legislation and policy relating to diverse groups and communities</li> <li>• Demonstrates commitment to professional development, with a focus on improving service to diverse groups and communities</li> <li>• Consistently utilises assessments tailored to the needs of diverse groups and communities where appropriate</li> <li>• Continually updates knowledge about available resources relevant to working with diverse consumers and communities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works to strengthen relationships between support services working with diverse groups and communities and proactively seeks collaborative networking opportunities</li> <li>• Maintains links with relevant peak bodies and training organisations to actively seek out and promote professional development opportunities related to working with diverse groups and communities</li> <li>• Works to strengthen processes within organisation/s to facilitate all members of the presenting family unit, including children, receiving appropriate assessment and are having their individual needs met</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|

## 2.3 Applies person-centred models of practice

Person-centred models of practice locate consumers as experts in their own lives. They enable consumers to participate in key decisions and in the design and delivery of SHS services. Practitioners in the SHS deliver person-centred models of practice by ensuring unique, flexible and timely responses to each consumer's needs.

Table 7. Applies person-centred models of practice

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducts needs, risk and vulnerability assessments in line with legislative requirements and organisational policies and procedures to identify consumers' strengths, and immediate safety, housing and support needs</li> <li>• Is aware of holistic services, beyond that provided by own organisation, in partnership with the consumer</li> <li>• Understands the need for cultural competency and works towards building an understanding of how to speak and work with diverse consumers and seeks secondary consultation as required</li> <li>• Understands that consumers are experts about their own lives, and uses this information when undertaking assessment and exploring housing and support options</li> <li>• Understands the need to create unique, flexible and timely responses to each consumer's needs</li> <li>• Works with other services and practitioners to respond to all important elements of the consumer's life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads practice in relation to needs, risk and vulnerability assessments in line with legislative requirements and organisational policies and procedures</li> <li>• Works collaboratively to coordinate services to provide an integrated service, in partnership with the consumer</li> <li>• Confidently considers situations, activities, decisions and outcomes from the perspective of how people from different ethnic, religious or social identifications might see them</li> <li>• Locates consumers firmly as experts about their own lives, and uses this to role model to other practitioners this way of engaging with and supporting consumers</li> <li>• Creates unique, flexible and timely responses to each consumer's needs</li> <li>• Provides holistic and integrated responses considering all important elements of the consumer's life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops and embeds processes that support consistency and good practice in assessment</li> <li>• Actively seeks out and delivers holistic and integrated responses considering all important elements of the consumer's life</li> <li>• Provides advice and guidance to other staff about culturally competent practice</li> <li>• Develops and embeds practice which centres consumers as experts, and supports workers to partner with consumers</li> <li>• Supports other staff to create unique, flexible and timely responses to each consumer's needs</li> <li>• Develops holistic models of practice within an organisation, and promotes integrated responses to housing crisis and homelessness to other staff</li> </ul>



## 2.4 Promotes consumer participation

It is increasingly recognised that consumers must be at the heart of all service design and delivery decision making, if the SHS is to implement effective interventions to produce outcomes which meet consumer needs. Practitioners seek to enhance consumer participation in the design, delivery, review and governance of services in order to improve service quality, engagement and satisfaction.

Table 8. Promotes consumer participation

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands and uses the principles of consumer participation and encourages engagement in system and service design</li> <li>• Enables consumers to partner in planning</li> <li>• Responds to feedback from consumers about services offered and provided by the organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the principles of consumer participation and creates opportunities for consumers to engage in system and service design</li> <li>• Creates opportunities to provide consumers with options to make decisions and increase their sense of empowerment</li> <li>• Partners well with consumers and actively seeks feedback from consumers about services offered and provided by the organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops systems that actively encourage and promote consumer participation in system and service design</li> <li>• Consistently finds opportunities to partner with consumers to provide consumers with options to make decisions and increase their sense of empowerment</li> <li>• Develops mechanisms to capture and respond to formal and informal feedback from consumers about services offered and provided by the organisation</li> </ul>

## 2.5 Listens actively

Active listening skills allow consumers to tell their stories in an environment that is non-judgmental, compassionate and empathic. These skills allow consumers to have their experiences acknowledged and can, with the engagement processes, assist in building trust between the consumer and practitioner.

Table 9. Listens actively

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asks open ended questions that allow consumers the opportunity to express themselves</li> <li>• Actively works to avoid making personal judgements about a consumer and to avoid acting or communicating in a manner that expresses judgement</li> <li>• Understands the need to express empathy to consumers in complex or difficult circumstances</li> <li>• Understands the need to exercise patience when working with consumers</li> <li>• Works to identify when a consumer has crossed a boundary and active listening is no longer an appropriate course of action</li> <li>• Acknowledges the challenges faced by consumers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates time and space for consumers to speak and be heard and demonstrates non-verbally that they are listening</li> <li>• Works with a range of consumers from a range of backgrounds without making personal judgements</li> <li>• Regularly expresses genuine empathy to consumers</li> <li>• Works patiently with consumers in complex or challenging circumstances</li> <li>• Has a clear understanding of when a consumer has crossed a boundary and active listening is no longer an appropriate course of action</li> <li>• Provides feedback to consumers that demonstrates they are being heard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides guidance to other staff about expressing empathy, creating a 'space' for consumers to speak and demonstrating patience when working with consumers in complex or challenging situations</li> <li>• Expert at working with consumers in complex or challenging situations without expressing any judgement</li> <li>• Expert at expressing empathy for consumers in complex or challenging situations</li> <li>• Supervises and coaches staff to work in a non-judgemental manner</li> <li>• Supervises and coaches staff to actively listen and when to remove themselves from a situation</li> <li>• Supervises and coaches staff to listen actively</li> </ul>

## 2.6 Communicates appropriately and effectively

Appropriate and effective communication is the cornerstone of practitioners' interactions with consumers. Effective communication is used to engage consumers in a transparent and honest way, and provide advice and information that is easily understood.

Table 10. Communicates appropriately and effectively

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides information to consumers in clear and simple language that is easy to understand, is sensitive to the consumer's circumstances and is culturally appropriate</li> <li>• Writes in clear, simple language that avoids jargon to convey and obtain information, insights and ideas</li> <li>• Is transparent and manages consumers' expectations about what the organisation or service can and cannot offer</li> <li>• Always uses sensitive language</li> <li>• Uses calm communication to deescalate situations when a consumer is distressed</li> <li>• Can use interpreters as required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidently communicates complex information to consumers in a culturally appropriate way</li> <li>• Writes succinct, high quality communications that are tailored to the audience</li> <li>• Explains the service system to the consumer, and where this program fits within the service system in a way that consumers can understand</li> <li>• Skilfully and sensitively communicates with consumers in a heightened state of distress</li> <li>• Skilfully uses interpreters as required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is able to overcome communication barriers for consumers where they exist (e.g. language barriers, Acquired Brain Injury (ABI))</li> <li>• Produces high quality, influential written communications that are tailored to the audience</li> <li>• Skilfully communicates in a way that partners with consumers in the decision making journey to create reasonable expectations and promote understanding of the rationale for decisions and actions</li> <li>• Provides communication guidance to less experienced colleagues</li> </ul>

# Domain Three: Determine solutions

Practitioners in the SHS work with consumers to identify consumer preferences and needs. Practitioners use this knowledge, their understanding of the SHS and other service systems and their professional relationships and networks to determine the best solutions in any given situation. A practitioner successful in this domain:

- identifies problems and find solutions
- makes decisions in partnership and appropriately.
- 

## 3.1 Identifies problems and finds solutions<sup>3</sup>

To determine the most suitable solution and actions in partnership with a consumer, practitioners can define the presenting issue as understood by the consumer and identify possible underlying causes. Practitioners adopt a curious and inquisitive approach to understanding a consumer’s story, circumstances and history. Practitioners are also interested in finding out more about why things are the way they are and in finding creative and innovative solutions.<sup>4</sup> Solutions will be evidence informed, equally combining the best research evidence, consumer experience and practice expertise.<sup>5</sup>

Table 11. Identifies problems and finds solutions

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a mindset of curiosity and interest in understanding each consumer’s story and experience</li> <li>• Seeks advice from senior colleagues when faced with a challenging or unfamiliar situation</li> <li>• Works with consumers to obtain specific insights or pieces of information</li> <li>• Summarises the current situation logically, and poses possible solutions</li> <li>• Draws on available tools and supports to solve problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accesses knowledge and information from internal and external sources to understand the needs of each consumer</li> <li>• Skilfully undertakes assessment to identify and respond to underlying issues</li> <li>• Articulates issues logically and in partnership with the consumer and defines logical and appropriate pathways to resolution</li> <li>• Explores creative approaches, options and ideas with consumers to facilitate positive outcomes including alternative or unconventional approaches to get better outcomes for consumers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a range of sources to identify possible or emerging issues that may require intervention</li> <li>• Expertly asks non-confronting questions to understand underlying issues</li> <li>• Defines multiple pathways to resolution (as appropriate) including arriving at unconventional solutions where needed</li> <li>• Mentors others in developing partnerships, conflict resolution and problem solving</li> </ul>

3. Adapted from Department of Health and Human Services, 2018, Housing Practice Capability Framework, Department of Health and Human Services, Melbourne.

4. State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, ‘Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework Tool Kit’, Council to Homeless Persons, 2017, Accessed July 2019 < <http://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Workforce-Capability-Framework-tool-kit.pdf>>

5. Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, 2019, Child and Family Services, Workforce Capability Framework, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Melbourne.

## 3.2 Makes decisions appropriately

SHS practitioners operate in an environment that is challenging and often without obvious or ideal solutions. In partnership with the consumer, they exercise sophisticated decision-making and use their discretion, often in time-critical situations. They assess risks and act to mitigate identified risks.

Table 12. Makes decisions appropriately

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determines a course of action when faced with a choice between feasible alternatives with the support of a supervisor where necessary</li> <li>• Regularly engages in set processes and uses organisational tools to identify risk factors to the consumer, community and self</li> <li>• Adapts processes under supervision when timeliness of a decision is critical</li> <li>• Identifies complex factors (such as trauma, mental illness, family violence, AOD) that must be considered when recommending housing and support options for consumers</li> <li>• Regularly seeks guidance and feedback on own decisions from more experienced staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidently identifies and mitigates potential harm to the consumer, community and self</li> <li>• Comfortably exercises discretion to manage circumstances where a routine process or procedure will result in a negative outcome for a consumer</li> <li>• Accurately accounts for complex factors (such as trauma, mental illness, family violence, AOD) that must be considered when recommending housing and support options for consumers</li> <li>• Makes robust and considered decisions when recommending housing and support options for consumer even when under pressure</li> <li>• Seeks confirmation from senior staff when uncertain about a decision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertly identifies and mitigates risk towards the consumer, community and self</li> <li>• Exercises expert judgement in managing circumstances where a routine process or procedure will result in a negative outcome for a consumer</li> <li>• Provides guidance to other staff about how to accurately account for complex factors (such as trauma, mental illness, family violence, AOD) that must be considered when recommending housing and support options for consumers</li> <li>• Provides feedback to new staff about legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines that inform decision making</li> <li>• Provides mentoring and advice to other staff to support decision making as required</li> </ul>

# Domain 4: Deliver services

Once a practitioner begins working with a consumer, the practitioner must deliver a specialist homeless response in an efficient and effective way. A practitioner successful in this domain:

- uses internal systems and processes
- advocates and influences
- is outcomes focused.

## 4.1 Uses internal systems and processes

SHS practitioners use a range of internal and external systems and processes competently. These Client Management Systems include the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP), the Specialist Homelessness Online Reporting (SHOR) platform, the Victorian Housing Register and standard software packages such as Microsoft Office. In using each they are required to competently follow a broad range of established processes.\*

Table 13. Uses internal systems and processes

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is familiar with core reporting processes and data definitions across organisation and sources additional information when needed</li> <li>• Works accurately with core information platforms</li> <li>• Maintains accurate electronic records</li> <li>• Has awareness of the benefits and uses of digital tools and technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidently completes core reporting processes across organisation and supports other staff to record data in line with recognised data definitions</li> <li>• Extracts information and evidence from core information platforms</li> <li>• Records high quality data with awareness of the implications of poor data quality</li> <li>• Ready to adapt practices to maximise use of digital tools and technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes responsibility for ensuring the organisation meets core reporting requirements while ensuring quality of the reporting is maintained</li> <li>• Supports other staff to use core information platforms</li> <li>• Extracts and utilises data from core information platforms to identify trends and guide planning</li> <li>• Supports other staff in the uptake of digital tools and technologies</li> </ul>

\*These processes include opening and closing support periods, assessment, risk assessment and safety planning, case notes, information sharing, mandatory reporting, referrals, consumer feedback.

## 4.2 Advocates and influences

To achieve the best outcomes for consumers accessing services, practitioners utilise a rights-based, person-centred approach to resolving issues and advocating on behalf of consumers. This is underpinned by practice that aims to build consumers' skills in advocating for themselves.

Table 14. Advocates and influences

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asks thoughtful questions and engages respectfully to understand consumers' motivations and any presenting issues</li> <li>• Speaks with consumers in a manner that is positive and respectful</li> <li>• Uses language and practice that builds hope</li> <li>• Provides information to enable consumers to make informed choices and consider alternatives</li> <li>• Provides information to consumers about their rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• Encourages consumer to exercise their rights</li> <li>• Balances an optimistic and realistic outlook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops skills in motivational interviewing to encourage consumers to engage in additional supports and to modify problematic behaviours</li> <li>• Is purposeful in all communication with consumers</li> <li>• Works collaboratively with consumers to explore options and possible outcomes enabling them to lead decision making</li> <li>• Works with consumers to develop their knowledge and skills around their rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• Negotiates with and on behalf of consumers in areas of dispute to achieve mutually beneficial solutions where possible</li> <li>• Uses their professional relationships and networks to achieve the best outcomes for consumers</li> <li>• Delivers practice that encourages consumers to balance an optimistic and realistic outlook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skilfully utilises motivational interviewing to encourage consumers to engage in additional supports and modify problematic behaviours</li> <li>• Provides high level advocacy with and on behalf of consumers to achieve the best possible outcomes</li> <li>• Models practice and mentors consumers in exercising their rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• Guides other staff members in conducting rights-based, person centred advocacy for consumers.</li> <li>• Guides other staff members in working with consumers to allow them to be active decision makers in their housing journey</li> <li>• Models practice that encourages staff members to balance an optimistic and realistic outlook</li> </ul>

## 4.3 Is outcomes focused

Achieving improvements in consumer's lives is central to the work of the SHS. Practitioners work with consumers to identify and achieve particular outcomes. The accumulation of many individual participant outcomes contributes directly to program outcomes, and ultimately to broader population outcomes.

Table 15. Is outcomes focused

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Works with consumers to identify desired outcomes</li><li>• Ensures service delivery is focused on meeting the desired outcomes identified by consumers</li><li>• Ensures accurate data recording that can be aggregated into consumer outcomes reporting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expertly works with consumers to identify desired outcomes and steps to be undertaken to reach goals</li><li>• Confidently delivers services that monitor progress against desired outcomes identified by consumers</li><li>• Confidently records information and understands the link between data quality and outcome reporting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expertly understands the indicators associated with outcome measurement and tracks progress against desired outcomes identified by consumers</li><li>• Takes a lead role in overseeing data quality</li></ul>

---



# Domain five: Manages self

The work of SHS practitioners can be challenging and demanding as they are likely to be working with consumers who are experiencing difficult and complex life events. In this context, practitioners must manage numerous competing priorities, deliver time critical interventions and ensure they continue to deliver high quality services in an emotionally taxing environment. A practitioner successful in this domain:

- manages time effectively
- is adaptable and flexible
- demonstrates resilience and self-care.

## 5.1 Manages time effectively

In a resource constrained environment, practitioners in the SHS are often required to balance numerous competing priorities and deliver positive outcomes with limited capacity. To do this, they must efficiently prioritise, plan and coordinate activities and logistics.

Table 16. Manages time effectively

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comfortably uses the organisation's technology and tools to manage the allocation of time</li><li>• Undertakes a structured process to prioritise activities</li><li>• Recognises the difference between urgent and important activities so able to attend to both types</li><li>• Is aware of the likely duration for core tasks</li><li>• Is organised and diligent in completing tasks on time</li><li>• Seeks guidance about prioritising tasks when unexpected interruptions arise</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritises own tasks to ensure own workload is managed as effectively as possible</li><li>• Plans activities in advance to ensure deadlines are met and tasks are completed in the appropriate sequence</li><li>• Completes both day to day tasks and high priority tasks in a timely manner</li><li>• Reorganises activities when unexpected interruptions arise</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actively manages interruptions to ensure sufficient productivity of self (and others)</li><li>• Supports others to prioritise tasks to ensure workload is managed as effectively as possible</li><li>• Is able to perform at a high level under pressure such as during high demand and in challenging environments</li></ul>

## 5.2 Is adaptable and flexible

Given the dynamic and varied responsibilities, and the often-changing circumstances of consumers, practitioners must be adaptable in how they address and meet consumer needs and preferences. SHS practitioners are prepared to think flexibly and are comfortable with the knowledge that situations may change without notice and be able to work with that uncertainty and unpredictability.

Table 17. Is adaptable and flexible

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates an appetite to learn new skills</li> <li>• Demonstrates readiness to learn from others through asking questions, observation, mentoring and shadowing</li> <li>• Demonstrates readiness to assist or take on resolution of an urgent issue</li> <li>• Accepts new and different situations as a matter of course<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• Identifies opportunities to improve own efficiency<sup>7</sup></li> <li>• Takes on board feedback from peers and manager on work practices and performances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates an appetite for learning new approaches (to reflect organisation or team priorities)</li> <li>• Reflects on own approach to inform improved practices</li> <li>• Suggests alternative or innovative approaches to get better outcomes for consumers<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Uses discretion to adapt a previously decided pathway when new information reveals an alternative, and preferred, solution</li> <li>• Seeks out feedback from peers and manager regarding work practices and performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is willing to adapt practice and to explore alternative approaches to achieve positive outcomes for consumers</li> <li>• Encourages others to reflect on and learn from experiences</li> <li>• Actively seeks out alternate approaches or services to support consumers when the conventional options are not available or in the consumer's best interests</li> <li>• Encourages others to think 'outside the box' to get better outcomes for consumers</li> <li>• Role models receiving and giving useful feedback</li> </ul>

7. Victorian Public Sector Commission, 'Capability Dictionary (entry for adaptability)', *Victorian State Government*, Accessed July 2019 < <https://capability.vic.gov.au/>>

7. 'Victorian Public Service Enterprise Agreement', *Fair Work Commission*, 2016, Accessed July 2019 p.145 <<https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/documents/agreements/fwa/ae418873.pdf>>

8. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018, Housing Practice Capability Framework, Department of Health and Human Services, Melbourne.

## 5.3 Demonstrates resilience and self-care

Practitioners in the SHS must manage, support and respond to, challenging events in the lives of consumers. This emotionally taxing work can also have a cumulative effect on practitioners' well-being. To be successful in such an environment, practitioners bring a degree of resilience and an ability to implement self-care strategies. Resilience speaks to a practitioner's ability to maintain a positive attitude and continue to deliver consistently high-quality work despite the challenging environment.<sup>9</sup> Self-care is demonstrated when practitioners know the limitations of their roles, are committed to developing their skills and can access support through debriefing and supervision<sup>10</sup>.

Table 18. Demonstrates resilience and self-care

Foundational	Emergent	Leading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates professional boundaries</li> <li>• Applies tools and techniques for maintaining composure when dealing with challenging consumer interactions or exposure to vulnerability and disadvantage</li> <li>• Applies self-care tools and techniques for building resilience and ensuring own wellbeing</li> <li>• Has a clear understanding of own limitations and can identify when to seek support</li> <li>• Is aware of personal values and monitors impact on the quality of service delivery</li> <li>• Seeks support proactively</li> <li>• Identifies and diminishes risks to personal safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfortably works with consumers and in stressful environments, while appropriately applying techniques for maintaining own wellbeing</li> <li>• Implements self-care techniques to address feelings of being overwhelmed</li> <li>• Employs a range of self-care tools and techniques to prevent burn-out and enable quick recovery following challenging events</li> <li>• Seeks support proactively</li> <li>• Is aware of the impact of own life experiences and ensures that all consumers receive the same level of high quality service</li> <li>• Undertakes high level assessment of risk to personal safety and uses experience to mitigate risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is expert at utilising tools and techniques for maintaining wellbeing and self-care when dealing with consumers and stressful environments</li> <li>• Role models help-seeking behaviour</li> <li>• Supports other staff members to manage challenging situations and contributes to the development of processes and procedures for supporting staff wellbeing within the team</li> <li>• Demonstrates a high level of self-awareness and understanding of practice strengths and challenges, and supports other staff to develop improved self-awareness and insight in practice</li> <li>• Undertakes high level assessment of risk to personal safety and wellbeing and mitigates these risks</li> </ul>

10. Adapted from: Victorian Public Sector Commission, 'Capability Dictionary (entry for resilience)', *Victorian State Government*, Accessed July 2019 < <https://capability.vic.gov.au/> >

11. Cash R, O'Donnell M, Varker T, Armstrong R, Di Censo L, Zanatta P, Murnane A, Brophy, L, & Phelps A, 2014, Trauma and homelessness. Worker Guidebook. Prepared by the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health in collaboration with Sacred Heart Mission, Mind Australia, Inner South Community Health and VincentCare Victoria.

# Specialist Homelessness Sector Workforce Capability Framework

2019

## Acknowledgements

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of this land. We pay our respects to elders past and present.

We appreciate and celebrate diversity in all its forms and believe diversity of all kinds makes communities stronger and more effective.



Council to Homeless Persons  
2 Stanley Street  
Collingwood Victoria  
Phone: (03) 8415 6200  
Email: [admin@chp.org.au](mailto:admin@chp.org.au)  
Website: [chp.org.au](http://chp.org.au)