

Homeless Link

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for organisations working with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in England. We aim to develop, inspire, support, and sustain a movement of organisations working together to achieve positive futures for people who are homeless or vulnerably housed.

Representing over 900 organisations across England, we are in a unique position to see both the scale and nature of the tragedy of homelessness. We see the data gaps; the national policy barriers; the constraints of both funding and expertise; the system blocks and attitudinal obstacles. But crucially, we also see – and are instrumental in developing – the positive practice and ‘what works’ solutions. As an organisation we believe that things can and should be better: not because we are naïve or cut off from reality, but because we have seen and experienced radical positive change in the way systems and services are delivered – and that gives us hope for a different future.

What Does it Mean to be Strengths-Based?

An organisation that is strengths-based adheres to the following principles:

Strengths: We focus on strengths, potential, and goals.

Relationships: We are person-led and work alongside people in partnership.

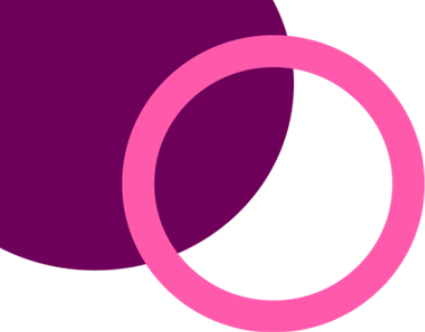
Consistency: Everything about our organisation reflects our commitment to a strengths-based approach.

Communities: We play an active part in the wider community.

Why Become Strengths-Based?

A strengths-based approach is a way of working that focuses on people's strengths, interests and goals and that views them as equal partners in their own support. It involves re-framing the work of organisations to focus on an individual's identified goals, with a considerable focus on building positive relationships between people working in organisations and those accessing them.

At every level, from service design to individual interactions, we need to listen to the people we are working with and change how we respond accordingly. We often try to design solutions at a large scale from the top, but we are working to support individuals with unique circumstances. Whilst we want to make sure that much-needed facilities and services are available, we also need to ensure that they are flexible enough for each person to forge their own path through them as needed.



On a more psychological level, being strengths-based is key to supporting recovery from trauma. We know that experiencing complex life events is traumatic; a series of adverse experiences that usually involves a loss of control over your own situation. To help regain a sense of control over your life means being listened to, heard and believed, having choice and the ability to make decisions and being an equal partner in any services or treatment that you seek or receive.

If we want to give people the opportunity to recover and move on we have to do things differently. It makes sense to re-shape service offers around the requests and goals of individuals accessing them.

Ultimately being strengths-based can be transformative for services and more significantly, the people who access them. Individuals can achieve things that were previously thought impossible, maintaining stable housing, starting work or volunteering and leading happy lives.

Stages to Becoming Strengths-Based

Organisations that make a commitment to become strengths-based will differ in terms of their choice of implementation, strategy or approach. We recognise that the process is not linear and that each organisation will be at a different stage and for this reason, we are offering a multi-stage, flexible approach.

Review Stage

We will begin by completing an organisational diagnostic review, to understand your ambitions for becoming strengths-based and what stage of implementation your organisation is at. We will then advise on which aspects of the various learn, embed, and reflect stages below would be most beneficial to best suit the needs of your service.

Learn Stage

After we have completed an organisational diagnostic; we will make recommendations to suit the needs of your organisation. This could include activities such as a tailored presentation which can be delivered to senior management, your board of trustees or other relevant stakeholders. The presentation will introduce the theories and principles behind a strength-based environment. We may also suggest training courses for your organisation to upskill staff, increase knowledge and confidence in working in strength-based ways.



Embed Stage

In the third stage of the process, we will work with you to embed your learning within your organisation this can take the form of a policy review and update; workshops with relevant staff, trustees, stakeholders and service users to understand what steps needs to be made to embed this way of working; focus groups can be delivered and bespoke frameworks can be created. Throughout the project there will be a dedicated member of staff responsible for managing and supporting your organisation and your journey.

Reflect Stage

After the project has taken place we may re-visit your organisation to offer support and advice as well as a reflective space to report on strengths and challenges of implementing strengths-based practice. We can also complete a survey to determine the progress made within your organisation, which may allow you to demonstrate to funders the growth you are making.

How Do I Know If This Is Right For My Organisation?

Fundamentally, being strengths-based requires you and your teams to have genuine belief in the strengths and potential of every single person accessing your service, to give them the opportunity to recover and move on from homelessness.

This belief is essential and will impact every interaction and decision that is made within an organisation. It informs how the organisation chooses to get to know the person and the type of information that is sought. It influences the steps that the individual and staff choose to take together, as well as the direction of the organisation, re-shaping service offers around the requests and goals of individuals accessing them.

At its heart, it is about holding a fundamental belief in the individual; not just that they can take a few steps forwards but seeing that person leading life in the fullest sense, on their ability to work towards their own recovery.

Input Needed From You

Following the initial review, and what is agreed with regards to which aspects of the various learn, embed, and reflect stages that would be most beneficial to you, we will work collaboratively with you to determine a work plan. This will outline the time input from us and yourselves and timescales. It is important that you have someone who has the capacity to drive this work forward.