



Research into staffing within the Northern Ireland Homelessness Sector

Invitation to tender

January 2022

1. Introduction

Homeless Connect invites tenders from experienced organisations or individuals to carry out research into staffing issues across the voluntary, community and social enterprise homelessness sector in Northern Ireland.

Funded by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and shaped by the Homelessness Sector Operational Group convened by Homeless Connect, the aim of this research is to generate comprehensive, up to date and reliable data and information on staffing within the homelessness sector in Northern Ireland.

Our aim is that this research will:

- inform our understanding of the staffing situation in the sector
- identify actions to support staffing in the sector.

2. Background

Homeless Connect (working name for Council for the Homeless in Northern Ireland) has 60 members the majority of which are providing support to people experiencing homelessness across Northern Ireland annually.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, Homeless Connect convened and coordinated a Homelessness Sector Operational Group (HSOG) comprising senior representatives of key homelessness providers operating across Northern Ireland and the NI Housing Executive.

Members of this group have identified ongoing staffing challenges within the sector, and in particular challenges around staff recruitment and retention and the negative impact this then has on service provision in the short and medium term and ultimately on outcomes for service users.

Discussion amongst providers suggests several interrelated factors contributing to these challenges, with the impact of the pandemic further exacerbating them. These include staff pay and terms and conditions, increasing complexity and nature of the work, relative attractiveness of other roles in other sectors in comparison. Ongoing discussions have highlighted the need for actions to be taken to deal with the issue across a number of timescales.

3. Research Objectives

The proposed research objectives are set out below (subject to the final research plan agreed with the successful tenderer) and as guided by a research advisory group comprising representatives of Homeless Connect, HSOG and other providers.

1. Gather information on staffing within the sector including for example:
 - Number of staff employed
 - Demographics – gender, age, community background, other categories
 - Tenure of employment – permanent, temporary, fixed term, length of service

- Job roles
 - Pay grades
 - Skill levels – highest/lowest level of qualification
 - Supervision and support
 - Training and development – opportunities to develop skills/qualifications
2. Gather information and opinion from staff employed in the sector including for example:
- Job satisfaction – some assessment including the impact of the pandemic
 - The reasons people are working in the sector
 - What is good about working in the sector and what could be better
 - Skills and qualifications issues
 - Career prospects and future intent with respect to employment in the sector
 - Suggestions and ideas for change and improvement
3. Gather information and opinion from sector employers including for example:
- Employer perspectives
 - Staff vacancies- number & unfilled posts &/or some assessment of time taken to fill posts
 - Staff training and support needs versus what is available
 - Staff pay and terms and conditions – key factors in setting and role of benchmarking, use of salary scales
 - Changes in nature of the work and how that relates to current and future staffing requirements
 - Consideration of the impact of the pandemic on staffing issues
4. Gather information and opinion from commissioners, funders and other stakeholders including for example:
- NI Housing Executive
 - DoH and/or health trusts and Public Health Agency
 - Department for Communities
 - Assembly All Party Group on Homelessness
 - Consideration of similar/related research elsewhere in Ireland and Great Britain and engagement with Homelessness membership groups there to garner information and opinion.
5. Analysis of information gathered
- Comparative analysis with other sectors facing staffing/recruitment or related challenges
 - Presentation of data gathered in accessible format and at one or more events.
6. Develop through a participative process a series of recommendations for positive change and improvement
- Development of recommendations to support staff recruitment, retention and professional development within the homelessness sector in NI across short-, medium- and long-term timescales.

4. Research methods

We anticipate the appointed researchers will use a mixed method approach as suggested below, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research methods to give an in-depth exploration of the current issues being faced by the sector. The research should gather data and information as set out above and ensure it is representative of the different providers in the sector such as those providing temporary accommodation and floating support.

We anticipate both a literature review and direct engagement with other contacts will be carried out to determine what current evidence exists, what is the situation UK/Ireland wide and how this compares to NI.

Quantitative methods	Stakeholders/ data sources
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frontline Staff• Managers• Providers
Desk research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NIHE data, PHA data, DoH data, funders
Qualitative methods	
Focus groups developed from survey findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frontline Staff• Managers
One to one interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NIHE• CEO from providers

5. Research Advisory Group

A research advisory group will be established to input into the overall design and provide feedback on the methods being chosen and research questions. This group will also help further develop the key recommendations from the research findings. The advisory group will be convened by HomelessConnect with the researchers required to engage and input to an estimated four meetings.

6. Timescales

Action	Timescale
ITT issued	Week commencing 10 January 2022
Closing date for tender submission	12 noon Monday 31 January 2022
Tender review	Week commencing 31 January 2022
Appoint researchers	By 4 February 2022
Research carried out	February to early April 2022
Final research report presented and agreed	By end of April 2022

7. Budget

The maximum sum available for this work is £18,000 inclusive of VAT.

Tenders must be submitted exclusive of VAT but including any expenses which, must be detailed separately.

Tenderers should price accordingly to gain a competitive advantage.

8. Ownership

The completed work will be owned by Homeless Connect and the appointed researchers will not share the products of the research without the express prior written permission of Homeless Connect.

9. Tender submission

Bids must be submitted as follows to admin@homelessconnect.org including Staffing Research in the subject line and no later than 12 noon on Monday 31 January 2022 and must include the following.

1. A detailed written proposal including timetable setting out how the research objectives detailed above will be delivered, to include any data protection safeguards, as appropriate.
2. A detailed timetable setting out the number of days/hours work required for key elements of the work, who will carry out the work and their daily rate
3. A detailed budget (exclusive of VAT) for the cost of the work bearing in mind the maximum budget available.
4. A statement setting out previous knowledge, skill and experience of the team with this type of work including details of other contracts completed in the last two years
5. CVs of all members of the proposed research team
6. Details of business continuity arrangements to allow timescales to be adhered to in the event of interruption

Please note that in the current circumstances we anticipate that all meetings and focus groups will be held online, and the appointed researchers are expected to have their own software to enable this.

Where any face-to-face meetings are proposed these will be agreed with and accommodated by Homeless Connect.

10. Tender evaluation

Proposals will be scored according to the following criteria

Criteria	Marks available
Previous experience of team	30
Methodology	60
Price	10
Total	100

Please note that Homeless Connect is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender.

Tenders that do not comply with the tender submission requirements will neither be accepted nor considered.

Further information about our work is available at www.homelessconnect.org