

CARING FOR PEOPLE

Homelessness charity worker

Housing advisers help homeless and badly housed people by offering advice, support and shelter. The number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation has more than doubled since 1997, making this job more vital than ever. Many workers have daily direct contact with clients, while larger charities also have more office-based functions, like admin, finance, office management, fundraising, policy, research and lobbying. There's no standard route into this field, but skills like project management, good communication, teamwork, customer service and report writing are all useful. Most of all, you need a passion for helping people, and to be able to deal with problems quickly and sensitively.

Degree needed

No degree is necessary and there is no standard route into this field. Employers value transferable skills such as experience in project management, good communication, team working, customer service and report writing.

Work experience in different sectors can help demonstrate these. For some roles you will need to understand issues such as housing law and the benefits system.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) also runs general courses on working in the charity sector. Its foundation course includes a work placement at a charity.

Good courses

There is no course you need to have completed to work in this field.

Advice and information on how to start a career in housing is available from Learndirect and the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).

Shelter trains professionals working in housing and related fields through its programme of legal briefings and short courses.



Ian Morris at work
Homelessness charity worker, Homeless International



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Facts and figures

Starting salary

Basic administration roles pay up to £17,000, while area managers and senior fundraisers earn over £27,000.

Working hours

35 hours a week.

Days' holiday per year

Usually 30 days.

Skills and experience

In larger charities, some people without direct experience start in an administrative role, and move across to become case workers when they have learnt to apply their knowledge and experience.

Would suit

A good communicator with a passion for helping people and an ability to deal quickly and sensitively with problems.

Likely employer types

- Local organisations such as night shelters or housing advice centres
- Large national charities such as Shelter or Centrepoint

How many jobs available?

Vacancies are often advertised on the Shelter website at www.shelter.org.uk. There is no definitive figure on the demand for workers.

Number of people employed in this field

Shelter, which is one of the largest organisations working with homeless and badly housed people, employs about 170 housing advisers. There are many smaller housing advice organisations throughout the UK.



Meet the expert
Ian Morris,
Homeless International

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Did you know?

The number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation has more than doubled since 1997, making the job more vital than ever.

More information

- For details of NCVO's training courses, and general information about working in the charity sector, visit www.workingforcharity.org.uk
- For details of NCVO's resources, visit www.ncvo-vol.org.uk
- Homelessness charity Shelter provides information on current paid and unpaid vacancies www.shelter.org.uk
- National charity Crisis offers many volunteering opportunities www.crisis.org.uk

"We work to help people find homes - with government groups and partner organisations like banks, lawyers and technicians. We tap into so many roles, and it's great to know that we're helping some of the world's most disadvantaged people."

Some careers are more than just a job... Find out more at AskWhatIf.co.uk