

Position Description

Position Title:	Housing First Practice Lead - MakeRoom
Team:	Housing and Homelessness
Employment Status:	Fixed Term, 12 months
Reporting to:	Manager – Supported Housing

About Unison

Unison is a not-for-profit organisation that works to reduce disadvantage and social exclusion by creating communities that thrive. We improve housing outcomes by leveraging our culture, partnerships, experience and our approach to innovation to create secure, sustainable homes and facilitate support and choice for people to positively engage in their community.

We believe that affordable housing is the foundation on which to build a life of value but that a good life takes more than just housing. A good life takes place in a community. Unison also assists over 3,500 people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness each year.

Position overview

Unison's Housing and Homelessness Team comprises departments supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes Initial Assessment and Planning (IAP) services, transitional housing, and affordable short, medium and long-term tenancy support. You will find Unison's Housing and Homelessness Teams staffed in all of Unison's site offices across Melbourne's suburbs, Geelong and Werribee.

Unison is dedicated to ending homelessness for individuals with complex needs through the application of Housing First principles. International evidence strongly supports the effectiveness of Housing First programs in achieving this goal. In partnership with cohealth, Unison delivers supportive housing for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Housing First Practice Lead role is critical in ensuring the integration of Housing First principles within our supportive housing models. The successful candidate will work closely with managers, staff and delivery partners to embed these principles across our service delivery model, enhancing the quality and effectiveness of our programs.

Position responsibilities

- Provide Housing First support and guidance to both Unison (housing) and cohealth (supports) staff based at MakeRoom.
- Provide high-quality training to staff on the skills and methodologies essential for delivering Australian Housing First principles, trauma-informed care, harm reduction and housing stabilization techniques.
- Lead efforts to refine practices, incorporating feedback from clients, staff, and stakeholders. Ensure that the Housing First approach is adapted and improved based on real-world experience and aspiration to improve model fidelity.
- Ensure that support plans are tailored to each individual's needs, preferences, and circumstances, aligning with the Housing First model. Clients should be empowered to make decisions about the level and type of support they receive.
- Ensure that housing remains stable by working closely with the tenant, support worker and tenancy worker, mediating any issues that arise.
- Lead responses to crises that may threaten housing stability, such as rent arrears, behavioural issues, or tenancy conflicts, ensuring quick and effective resolutions to prevent evictions.
- Support staff in applying harm reduction approaches for clients who may use substances, focusing on improving safety rather than imposing abstinence. Ensure that housing is not conditional on behavioural changes.
- Encourage staff to engage with clients voluntarily and creatively, providing support without coercion, and respecting clients' autonomy in decisions related to their health and housing.
- Assist to create a trauma-informed environment for both staff and clients, ensuring that physical, emotional, and psychological safety is prioritized.
- Provide reflective supervision to staff, helping them process their work with clients, reduce burnout, and maintain empathy in challenging situations.
- Provide secondary consultation to staff and managers, ensuring the consistent application of Housing First principles.
- Assist in the development of the practice manual for MakeRoom (and other guidance material) to ensure Housing First Principles are represented throughout the service delivery model.
- Ensure that services are culturally safe and appropriate, recognizing and addressing the unique needs of diverse communities.
- Promote and model Unison's values and Code of Conduct in all interactions with colleagues, renters, clients and the broader community.
- Be flexible and undertake any other duties as reasonably directed.

Key selection criteria

- Proven experience in delivering Housing First programs.
- Demonstrated expertise as an advanced homelessness practitioner with a deep understanding of Housing First principles and their practical application.
- Strong commitment to and understanding of Housing First programs and principles.
- Exceptional ability to deliver training and presentations, with a focus on Housing First methodologies.

- In-depth knowledge and experience in trauma-informed practice, with the ability to integrate this into service delivery.
- Ability to provide culturally safe and appropriate services, acknowledging and respecting the unique needs of various communities.
- Strong understanding and adherence to ethical standards in social work and housing services.
- A non-judgmental approach to working with individuals who may be using drugs or alcohol, ensuring that their needs are met with compassion and understanding.
- Ability to show initiative and work autonomously, with a high level of enthusiasm, resilience and positivity.

Safety and wellbeing

Staff may be required to interact with Unison's tenants and members of the public across Unison's locations in emotionally heightened situations, and therefore need to represent Unison professionally and calmly, and apply safe work practices outlined in Unison's safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.

Smoking, vaping, e-cigarettes, alcohol or illicit drugs are not permitted to be consumed on any of Unison's premises by staff.

Employment conditions

All staff must be able to perform their duties in varying conditions and locations across Unison's sites.

Unison is committed to protecting children and vulnerable people who have contact with our service. It's an inherent requirement of employment for all staff to have a current Working With Children Check and relevant, clear Police Check.

Equal employment opportunity

Unison is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and supportive workplace that reflects the community we serve. People who may be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, are culturally, linguistically, LGBTQI+, age, gender or ability diverse, or have a disability, are encouraged to apply for positions at Unison as part of our Reconciliation Action Plan and Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.