



# How we talk about homelessness

Eastern Region Homes for Cathy

# **Taster session overview**

## **Framing homelessness research and what the research told us -**

- Recap shared sector understanding of homelessness
- What the UK public thinks about homelessness
- Our most effective values and metaphors for reframing homelessness

## **Questions and reflections**

## **Break out discussion session**

## **Exercises to try in your own time**

# Crisis Framing Homelessness Project



What's the one thing you want people to know about homelessness?

Do you feel heard?

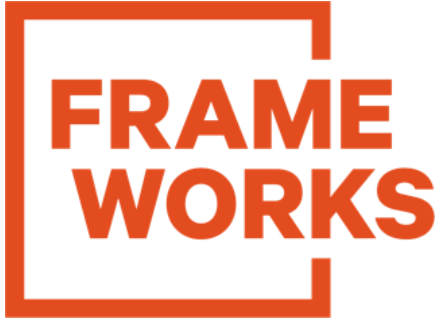
What might be getting in the way of people hearing your message?

Research insights

Principles and ideas to experiment with and build on

No hard and fast rules or exact forms of words

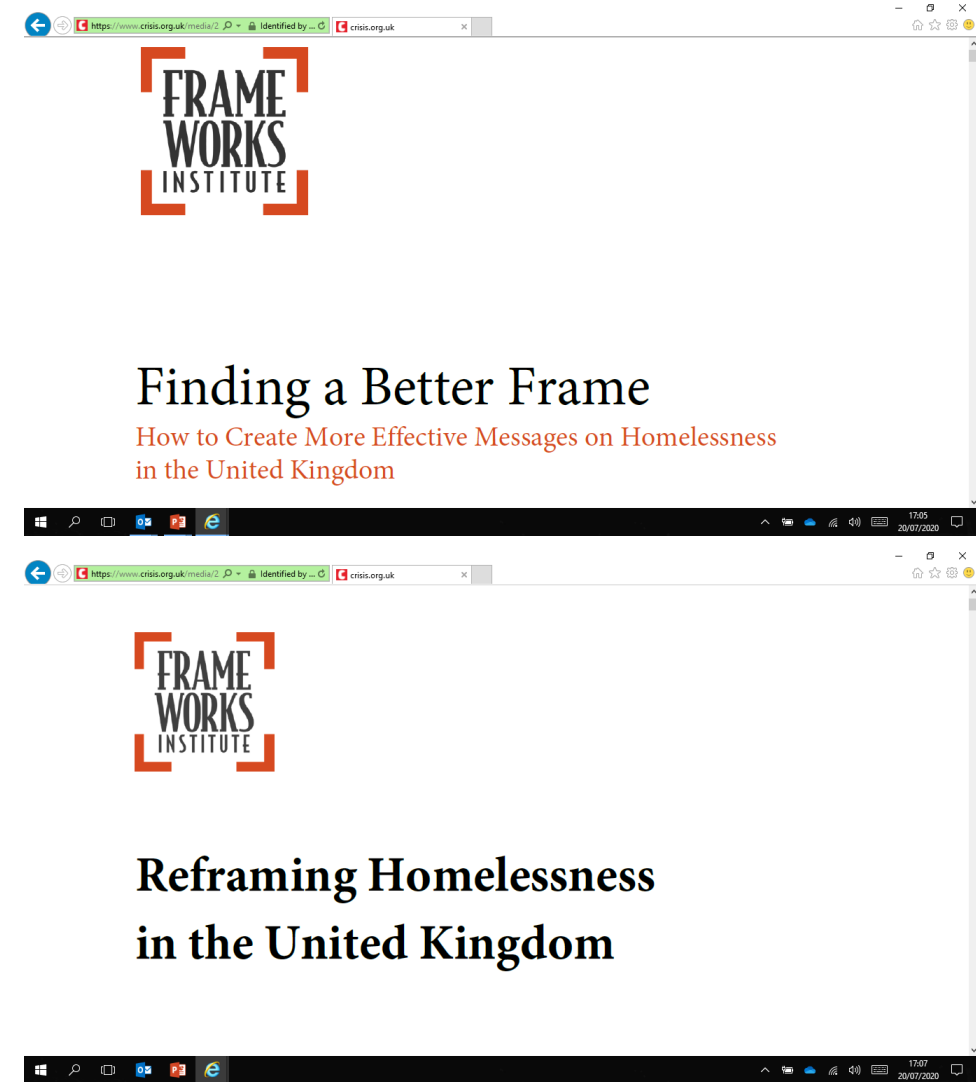
A framing outlook/ framing lens



**The FrameWorks Institute research looked at:**

#1 Sector view; sector materials; media stories; public thinking

#2 Tested frames to shift public thinking towards the sector view and to build commitment to end homelessness



10,000 members of  
UK public

## Recap the shared sector story

**What is homelessness:** A lack of affordable, safe, secure accommodation - the lack of a home.

**Homelessness can be:** Hidden (sofa surfing) or visible (rough sleeping), it can be short or long term.

**Some groups are more at risk than others:** Young people, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, LGBT people, people with disabilities, and people leaving care or prison are all at higher risk.

## Recap the shared sector story

**Systems causes:** Poverty is one of the biggest drivers of homelessness. Unaffordable rents, a lack of social housing, a lack of adequate welfare support for people at risk. Violence and trauma. Mental health and physical health. Relationships breaking down.

**Societal consequences:** Homelessness doesn't just affect an individual or the people immediately around them, it has wider negative effects on communities, services, the economy, society.

**Ending homelessness is possible:** If we make the right policy choices it is possible to stop homelessness from happening.

Affordable housing; housing first and housing led; adequate welfare; secure work.





**What do people think about  
homelessness?**

What do you think people will say?

What comes to mind when you think about homelessness?

# What people think about homelessness

**\*\*skip to minute 8:14 to watch public attitudes film**

# Mental shortcuts

- Homelessness = rough sleeping
- Homelessness happens because people make bad choices
- Homelessness affects 'other' people – middle-aged men, abused women, young runaways
- Solutions = *silence*.... or emergency measures, like hostels
- Services are there
- The Government is responsible, but the 'system is rigged'
- Universal forces – like the economy, and some people sit at the brink

# Three communications challenges.

- ▶ Narrow **definition** of homelessness.
- ▶ Individualism leaves **systems** in the background.
- ▶ **Prevention** is missing from people's thinking.
- ▶ ....leading to fatalism, with no sense of **efficacy**.



**Practice is fuelling a 'belief gap'**

**48%** of news stories about rough sleeping, 11% sofa surfing

**35%** of sector materials on rough sleeping, 14% sofa surfing

Only **20%** of media materials and **25%** of sector materials could be categorised as complete 'systems' stories

**69%** of sector materials and **75%** of media materials didn't give any societal level consequences



**Removal of homeless camps trebles as charities warn of 'out of control' crisis**

**Number of homeless children at Christmas to be highest in 12 years**

More than 4,000 children set to lose their homes between now and Christmas day, says Shelter

**Tory MP says homeless people 'choose to be on the streets'**



What can we do?  
Framing



# Framing is...

Using evidence to guide the language and image choices we make when telling stories:

**What to emphasise**

**How to explain things - to build understanding, empathy, emotional connection**

**What to leave unsaid**

...In order to equip people to think differently

Values

Metaphors

# Framing is...

Using evidence to guide the language and image choices we make when telling stories:

**What to emphasise**

**How to explain things - to build understanding, empathy, emotional connection**

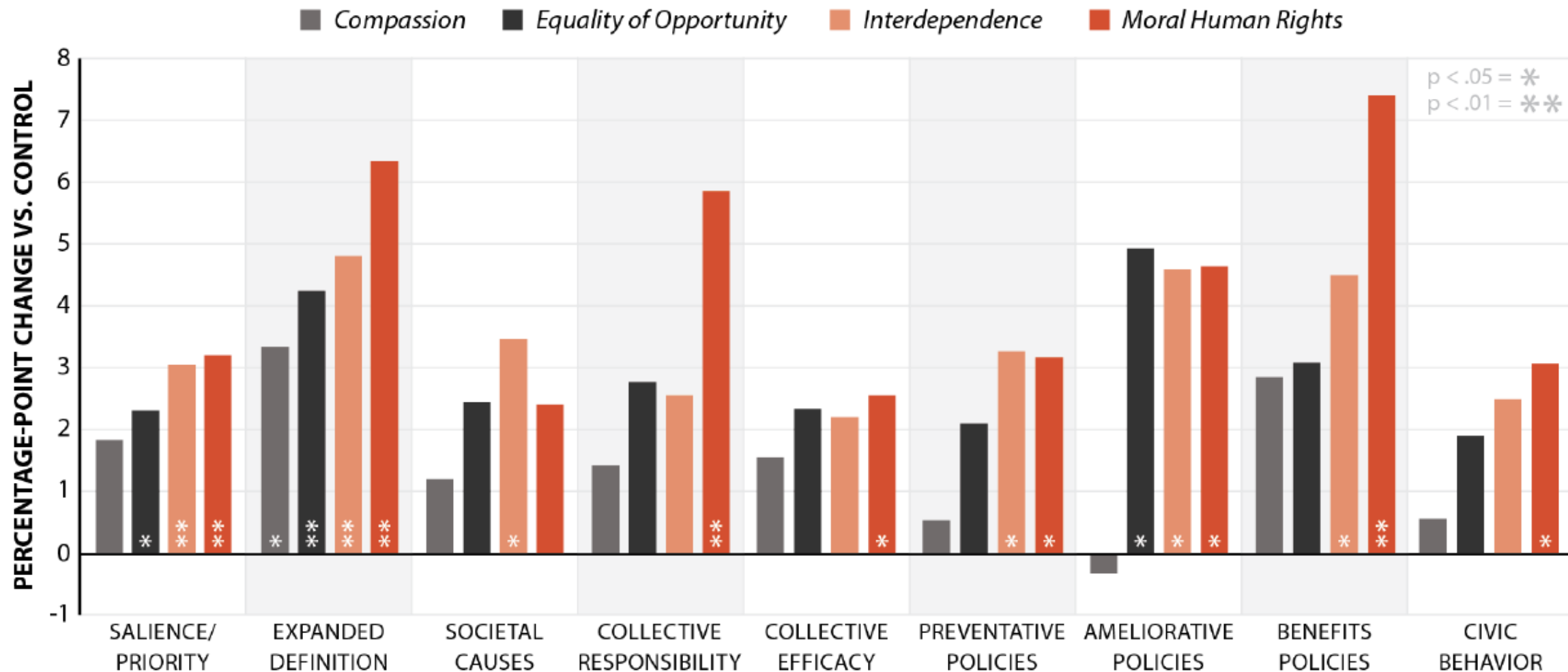
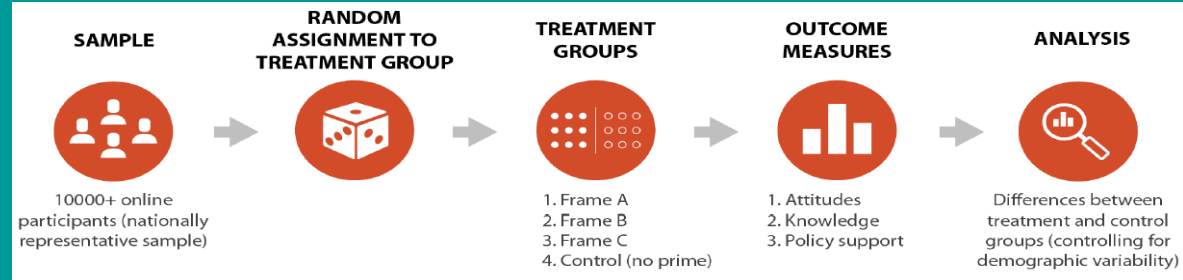
**What to leave unsaid**

...In order to equip people to think differently

Wider experience + context

Avoid 'othering'

# Framing with values



## Moral human rights

In our society, we believe in treating everybody with dignity and humanity and upholding everyone's basic human rights.

All of us, as human beings, have a moral right to decent housing, yet right now, many people in our country are homeless – no-one should be forced to live like this.

Treating all people with dignity and humanity means making sure everyone can afford a safe and stable home.

Watch out:

- not a 'legal right'
- avoid 'deserves'

## Interdependence

In our society, what affects one of us affects all of us.

When some people are struggling, it hurts everyone.

Right now, many people in our country are homeless, and this affects us all.

Making sure everybody has safe, stable housing benefits us all by creating a stronger society.

# Interdependence framing

Homelessness hurts us all

If we work together, we can...

Making sure everyone has safe and stable home benefits us all

In society, our lives are connected, we all depend on others for help and support

Homelessness takes a heavy toll on our communities

We can decide as a society to...

This is our collective responsibility

Our society is stronger when everyone has a place within it

Our support systems should work for and include everyone in our society

We've failed as a society when some of us are struggling

We all depend on public services for support

We/ us/ our/ everyone/ all

# Using interdependence

# Moral Human Rights framing

Everyone has the right to a safe and stable home

We should treat people like human beings

No-one should be forced to live like this

As human beings, we all need a home to build a life and thrive

Everybody has a right to be treated with dignity

Denying people access to housing is simply inhumane

No-one should be forced to...

It's not right that

This is inhumane and wrong

We can do better than this

We can all see the human cost of homelessness

Decent housing is a basic human need

# Using the moral human rights

‘Behind these statistics are human beings, who like all of us, had talents and ambitions’

**NEWS** 01/10/2019 11:32 BST | Updated 01/10/2019 11:44 BST

## Drugs To Blame For Biggest Rise In Homeless Deaths Since Records Began

“Behind these statistics are human beings, who like all of us, had talents and ambitions,” Crisis chief says.



By Sara C Nelson

A huge increase in drug fatalities has contributed to the biggest rise in deaths of [homeless](#) people in England and Wales since records began.

Deaths of homeless people increased by 22% to 726 in 2018 – the largest rise since 2013, according to Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures.

Two in five of the deaths were related to drug poisoning – an increase of 55% on 2017 and compared to just 16% for the population as a whole.



## Example: framing poverty.



It's not right that in a classroom of thirty, on average **nine children would now be living in poverty.**

# Framing with metaphor.

Metaphor interrupt default thinking. They:

- ▶ Provide a strong **mental image**.
- ▶ Make abstract, complex concepts **simple and concrete**.
- ▶ Explain **why** something happens (rather than positioning it as normal or natural).

# Constant pressure metaphor

Poverty puts constant pressure on people.

If the pressure builds up, people can be pushed into homelessness.

This pressure comes from high housing costs, low wages and inadequate government support, which can build up to a breaking point.

A sudden increase in pressure from a life event – like losing a job, a relationship breakdown or a health crisis – can quickly become unbearable and force people into homelessness.



### **Before**

Homelessness is caused by the combination of high rents and low wages.

### **After**

Homelessness happens when the constant pressure of high rents and low wages pushes people to the brink.



## Framing and coronavirus: constant pressure

**Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive of Crisis, said** “As it currently stands, the future for renters in this country is **incredibly precarious** – with **mounting financial pressure and job insecurity** caused by the pandemic leaving many struggling to pay rent.

“The temporary ban on evictions has made a big difference in protecting tenants, but as this is currently set to lift at the end of August many people could still be **forced into homelessness** during this ongoing public health emergency.”

And in personal stories...

weighed down

It felt like the walls  
were closing in

I needed help to ease  
the pressure

Couldn't take the strain  
anymore

...lifted a weight from my  
shoulders

## **Avoiding passive entry into homelessness or bad choices**

Avoid:

**Ended up/ found themselves homeless**

**Lost everything**

**Lost their home**

**Decided to/ chose to..**

Embrace:

**Forced into/ pushed into homelessness**

**Forced to leave their job**

**Couldn't afford rent, and had to leave**

**Had not option but to...**

# A wider experience + context



# What did you see?

The wider experience of homelessness – hostels, sofa surfing

Leaving the care system

Someone in stable work, but...

Affordable housing and waiting lists for social housing

The difference between and 'roof' and a home

Home as a foundation to build a life

# Avoid othering and stigma



Them / the homeless / rough sleepers

Troubled / vulnerable people

Addiction / addicts



People who are / people facing / people experiencing

Exposed to / higher risk of

Drug dependency / problems with drugs

# Avoid myth-busting



**MYTH** "The flu isn't a serious disease."

**FACTS** Influenza (flu) is a serious disease of the nose, throat, and lungs, and it can lead to pneumonia. Each year about 200,000 people in the U.S. are hospitalized and about 36,000 people die because of the flu. Most who die are 65 years and older. But small children less than 2 years old are as likely as those over 65 to have to go to the hospital because of the flu.

**MYTH** "The flu shot can cause the flu."

**FACTS** The flu shot cannot cause the flu. Some people get a little soreness or redness where they get the shot. It goes away in a day or two. Serious problems from the flu shot are very rare.

**MYTH** "The flu shot does not work."

**FACTS** Most of the time the flu shot will prevent the flu. In scientific studies, the effectiveness of the flu shot has ranged from 70% to 90% when there is a good match between circulating viruses and those in the vaccine. **Getting the vaccine is your best protection against this disease.**

**MYTH** "The side effects are worse than the flu."

**FACTS** The worst side effect you're likely to get from a shot is a sore arm. The nasal mist flu vaccine might cause nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat and cough. The risk of a severe allergic reaction is less than 1 in 4 million.

**MYTH** "Only older people need a flu vaccine."

**FACTS** Adults and children with conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease **need to get a flu shot**. Doctors also recommend children 6 months and older get a flu shot every year until their 5th birthday.

**MYTH** "You must get the flu vaccine before December."

**FACTS** Flu vaccine can be given before or during the flu season. The best time to get vaccinated is October or November. **But you can get vaccinated in December or later.**

**MYTH** "The flu shot can cause the flu."

**FACTS** The flu shot cannot cause the flu. Some people get a little soreness or redness where they get the shot. It goes away in a day or two. Serious problems from the flu shot are very rare.

## Study of myth-fact structure found

- ▶ People misremembered the myths as true
- ▶ Got worse over time
- ▶ Attributed false information to the CDC

**Bringing today's themes together...**

# What did you see?

The wider experience of homelessness

Systems causes – leaving care, redundancy, Vagrancy Act

Pressure - rising rents

Moral human rights values to frame stats

Systems solutions + ending homelessness is possible

Interdependence values for collective action

# Framing resources available to everyone


**Crisis** ENDING HOMELESSNESS GET INVOLVED ABO

[Homepage](#) | [Ending homelessness](#) | [Homelessness knowledge hub](#) | [Services and interventions](#) | [Talking about homelessness](#)

Introduction video transcript.

## Video 1: Introduction to framing homelessness and why we frame

Explore what framing is, what problems it can solve, and why we need to frame homelessness.



Introduction to framing homelessness and why we frame video transcript.

The image shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top, there's a red 'Crisis' logo and navigation links: 'ENDING HOMELESSNESS', 'GET INVOLVED', and 'ABO'. Below these are more links: 'Homepage', 'Ending homelessness', 'Homelessness knowledge hub', 'Services and interventions', and 'Talking about homelessness'. The main heading is 'Video 1: Introduction to framing homelessness and why we frame', followed by a subtext 'Explore what framing is, what problems it can solve, and why we need to frame homelessness.' The video player itself shows a woman with brown hair tied back, wearing a grey hoodie over a striped shirt, standing on a city street. A play button is overlaid on the video. Below the video, there's a red caption: 'Introduction to framing homelessness and why we frame video transcript.'



## Intensive online workshops

16/ 17 November 2020

January 2021

Free to join

**Book your place today!**



# Exercises to try out

#1 Underline all of the framing you can see in this piece:

## Crisis responds to deaths of people who are homeless in England and Wales in 2018

Responding to the figures, **Jon Sparkes, Crisis Chief Executive** said: 'It's heart-breaking that hundreds of people were forced to spend the last days of their lives without the dignity of a secure home. This is now the second year running where we have known the true scale of the human cost of homelessness, yet still the lessons from these tragic deaths go unlearnt.

'Behind these statistics are human beings, who like all of us had talents and ambitions. They shouldn't be dying unnoticed and unaccounted for. It's crucial that the Government urgently expands the safe-guarding system used to investigate the deaths of vulnerable adults to include everyone who has died while experiencing street homelessness, so we can prevent more people from dying needlessly. Because in this day and age, there is no excuse for anyone dying without a safe place to call home.'



# Crisis responds to homelessness deaths of people who are homeless in England and Wales in 2018

Responding to the figures, **Jon Sparkes, Crisis Chief Executive** said: 'It's heart-breaking that hundreds of people were forced (pressure) to spend the last days of their lives without the dignity (moral human value) of a secure home (home as solution). This is now the second year running where we have known the true scale of the human cost (moral human value) of homelessness, yet still the lessons from these tragic deaths go unlearnt.

'Behind these statistics are human beings, who like all of us had talents and ambitions (moral human). They shouldn't (moral human) be dying unnoticed and unaccounted for. It's crucial that the Government urgently expands the safe-guarding system (solution) used to investigate the deaths of adults to include everyone (moral human/ interdependence) who has died while experiencing street homelessness, so we can prevent (prevention is possible) more people from dying needlessly. Because in this day and age, there is no excuse for anyone (moral human) dying without a safe place to call home.' (home as solution)

## #2 Try framing this stat:

170,000 families and individuals are homeless in Britain today

Moral human rights

Our interdependence in society

Constant pressure

# Try framing this stat – a reminder

170,000 families and individuals are homeless in Britain today

**Moral human rights** – all of us, as human beings, have a right to safe, stable housing we can afford

**Our interdependence in society** - homelessness hurts us all, our society is stronger when everyone has a place to call home

**Constant pressure** - high rents and insecure work put people under constant pressure, pushing them into homelessness

### #3 reflect again on your own practice

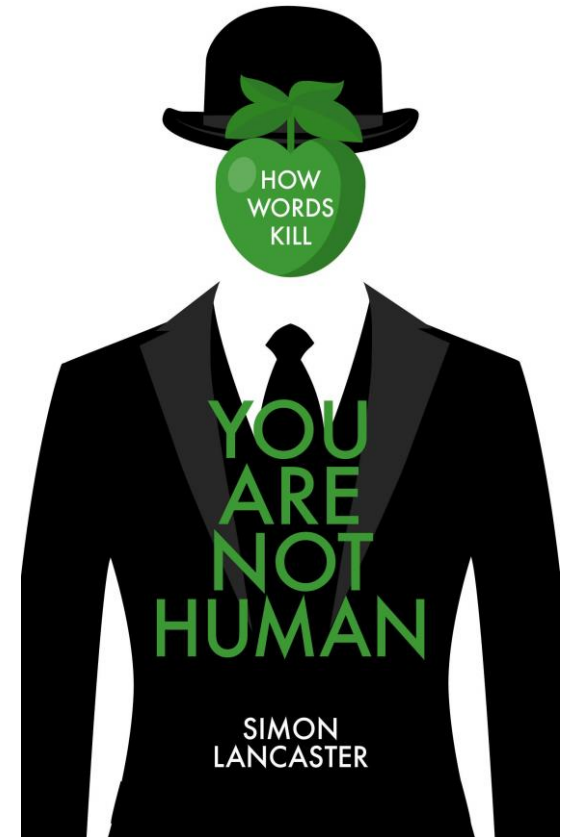
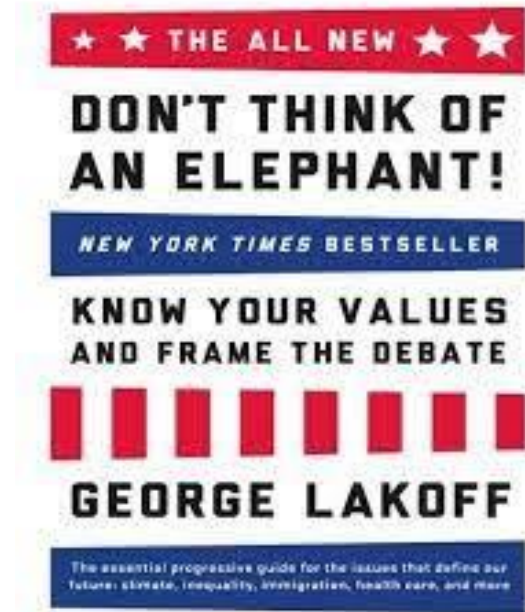
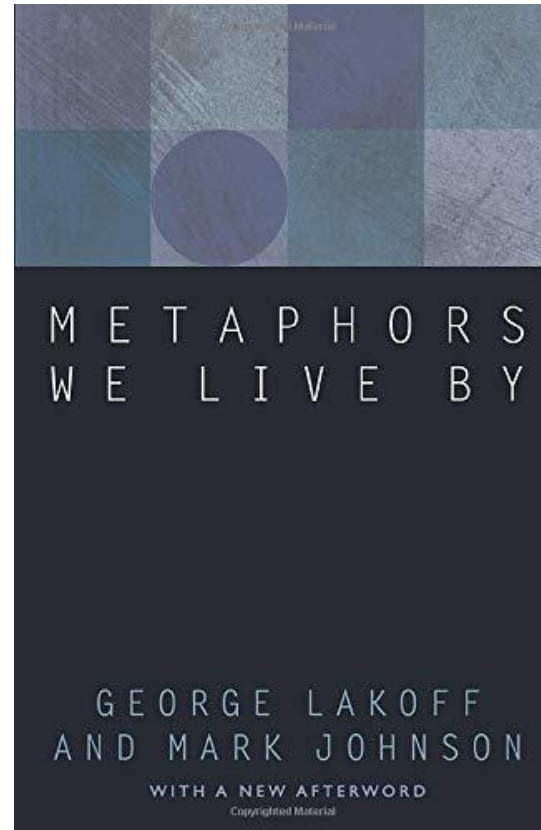
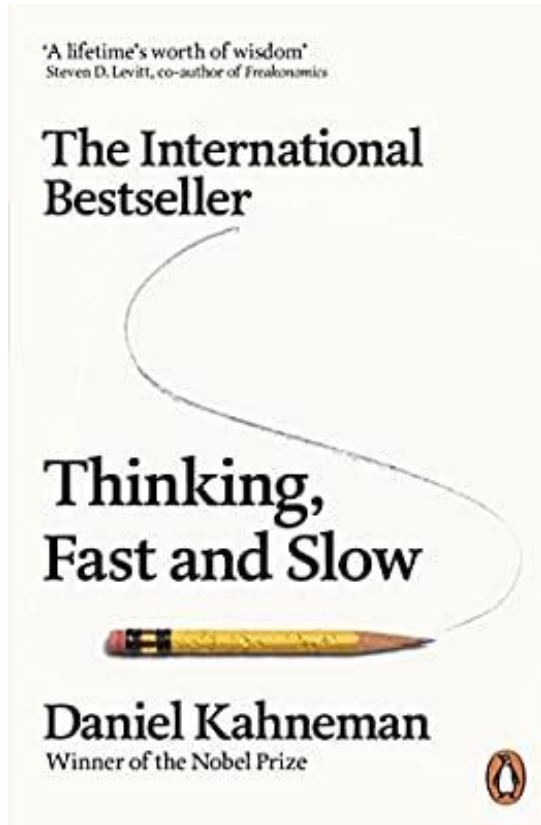
What's the one thing you want people to know about homelessness?

Do you feel heard?

What might be getting in the way of people hearing your message?

**How might you change the way you talk about homelessness?**

# Some deeper reading recommendations





# Framing Homelessness Project

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