



## Transcript

### Introduction video 1 | Introduction to framing - and why we frame.

#### Slide 1

Welcome to the first video of our introduction to framing homelessness. We're going to explore a few things today. What framing is, what problems it can solve - and why we need to frame homelessness.

And we'll start... with an experiment. I'm going to show you a short video. Only five seconds long. Then I'll ask about what you saw, and for you to press pause to think about your answer. Ready?

#### Slide 2

What did you just see? Don't worry, it's not a trick question. Pause this video and write it down. There's space in your workbook. Have you paused yet?

Welcome back. I'm guessing you've written the obvious. You saw some fish. Perhaps one in the lead, and the rest following. Or chasing. Maybe something about the colours. Red silver, gold.

Well, we've just repeated an experiment known as the Michigan Fish Test. This video was shown to two different groups - one in America, one in Japan. They were both asked the same question - what did you just see? Now, the Americans answered in much the same way I think you just did. They talked about the fish. In Japan, the people focused on the pond. The rock and the coral. They focused first on the environment and only then narrowed down to the individual fish.

And this speaks to a wider point. That our culture shapes what we perceive. How we respond to information. And in more individualistic cultures - like America, and our own here in the UK, we pay more attention to those single actors. Our default is often the individual. And not their circumstance. Which means that when we're campaigning for big changes in society - changes to policies, changes to systems, it's harder for us to show the need for that change.

#### Slide 3

Because it's harder for us to see, and show context. The circumstances that surround us and shape us. And framing can help us with this.

As campaigners and communicators we can use framing to drive people's attention to the things we might not ordinarily notice. Because our culture makes them less obvious and interesting to us. If - before we'd watched the fish video - I'd said 'pay attention to the pond' you would likely have given a very different answer. And that's what framing is all about.

#### Slide 4

Framing is making choices. About what we say, and how we say it. What we emphasise, how we explain an issue, and what we leave unsaid. And this can lead to radical changes in how people think, feel and act.

### **Slide 5**

I'll show you what I mean here with some more footage; this time from qualitative research on the framing of two different issues: addiction over in the States, and childhood adversity here in the UK. Your challenge is to spot the difference in the before and after clips. Ready?

#### **Video transcript (each line a new speaker)**

'Somebody who's addicted to cigarettes chose to have those first through drags and rip the s\*\*t out of their throat and become addicted to cigarettes and alcohol. They chose to have enough alcohol to end up addicted to it... as I said initially, leading to addiction is the susceptibility to addiction and if you aren't exposed to it and especially at sensitive times or at critical times then you might not end up addicted'

'So what do you think about stress?'

'It's a normal part of development in my opinion'

'What's the effect or the role of stress, again thinking about young kids?'

'That causes, in my opinion, long term damage to a child. A lot of the emotional developments and the learnings that are meant to take place wouldn't happen in that situation.'

### **Slide 5**

Did you spot anything? Take some time to pause if you need to. What changes did you see? The first man goes from individual choice choice to susceptibility and biology. The woman goes from stress is normal, to stress damages development. These are both big shifts in understanding. One that mirrors the stories told by campaigners and experts on these issues.

And there's one more thing that you may have noticed in these clips. One that's perhaps even more important. In his second response, the man begins with 'as I said initially.' For both responses, the woman says, 'in my opinion.' He didn't say that initially. But that was her opinion - both times.

Psychological anthropologists call this the variability of salience structures. What this means in practice is that humans are inconsistent. We are complex. And we are able to think very differently - and much more accurately - about an issue if we are given the tools to do so. And the tool here was a frame. Between takes these people were read a short, well-tested way of framing addiction and childhood adversity.

And this means that what we say matters. How we frame matters. Especially when we want to change how people think about systems and context - rather than narrowing down to the individual and the individual behaviours of others. And all of the framing research we're sharing in this series is designed to drive people's attention to that bigger picture. And to build public appetite for the systems change we need to prevent and truly end homelessness.

### **Slide 6**

So let's start by setting a baseline. How do we - throughout the UK - think about homelessness? What are the mental shortcuts we draw on to make sense of this issue? Which ones are helpful to us - and which ones cause harm? Because in order to make choices about what we say and how we say it, we need to know what's out there. We need to know what to avoid - and what can help people better understand the lived reality of homelessness.

### **Slide 7**

The video we're about to see is a compilation of interviews from across the UK. It illustrates the default patterns of thinking - shared across our culture - that we draw on when making sense of homelessness.

If this is your first time watching - and I recommend doing it a few times - I want you to think about the patterns here. And if this is your second time, I want you to think a little bit deeper. What are the consequences of each pattern. Which might be helpful, and which can cause harm. There's space in your workbook to note these down.

**Video transcript (each line a new speaker)**

'What comes to mind when you think of home?'

'Warmth'

'Warm, cosy'

'Warm and comfortable'

'Nice warm surroundings and family'

'With people that you care about'

'Family'

'A home is a happy family and a nice bond'

'Family'

'Family, people more than a building'

'The house I live in with my family'

'You can live in any house but your home is where your family are'

'So what about the word homelessness? What does that make you think of?'

'Living on the streets'

'Living on the streets'

'Sleeping on the streets, could be living on the streets'

'People on the streets'

'Out in all weathers'

'Cold'

'Cold, freezing cold, dark nights'

'Why does homelessness happen?'

'Drug addiction'

'Addiction issues'

'Drug and alcohol addiction'

'Psychological issues'

'I'm sure a large percentage of people who are homeless and on the streets have got mental health issues'

'Mental health'

'Mental health issues'

'Could be broken homes'

'It could be family issues'

'Breakdown of family'

'People whose marriages have broken up and they've nowhere else to go'

'Family might have kicked them out'

'Kicked out of their homes'

'Some people it was due to their way of life'

'They couldn't pay rent, they didn't know how to look after their money'

'And also there's people that choose to live on the streets'

'Certainly some people are as homeless that is their choice'

'People who are down on their luck'

'Some have absolutely, you know, just a bad deal'

'Circumstances that... just life issues'

'It's not their own fault. It's just society has changed so much, jobs are hard to come by'  
'There's massive, massive social issues that impact on people's lives'  
'The jobs aren't there, people get chucked out their house'  
'Suffer so much social abuses'  
'End up in a downward spiral'  
'And you become less enchanted with society'  
'It's a kind of circle'  
'And who's responsible for homelessness happening?'  
'Obviously the Government'  
'Probably a Government responsibility'  
'The Government has to take some form of responsibility for how things are done'  
'Government has to pay attention to it a little bit more'  
'10% of the population own 90% of the wealth'  
'And so it's just frustrating how people can claim that, you know, there's no money for these things when there is so much money'  
'They take chances away from people and of course they make it sound good as they're doing it'  
'People can't work and they're denigrated for not working 'cause there is no work'  
'So what do you think should be done to address homelessness?'  
'Erm'  
'Erm'  
'More money into mental health facilities'  
'Good addiction support for people who fall by the wayside'  
'I guess more money put in the social state, into hostels and things'  
'I think it will always happen, regardless'  
'I suppose it's all kind of chicken and egg'  
'You will always find them you will always see it. People will always run into difficulties and problems'  
'Some of the people you see around here are tragically almost beyond help.'

### **Slide 7**

Welcome back. What did you see?

### **Slide 8**

Here's a map that we prepared earlier. Pause this video - and see if there's anything you missed. And how much this differs from the sector story in our foundation video. Have you paused?

Welcome back. We're not going to go through every mental shortcut here, but I'll take us through some of the more important ones. And we'll revisit these later on in the series.

### **Slide 9**

Some of these shortcuts are harmful. When they're activated by something someone's heard or read it's harder for that person to think differently. To reason differently. Let's go through a few of them.

First - homelessness happens when individuals make bad choices. The idea of self-makingness; that we succeed or fail depending on how hard we work. This individualism leaves systems - leaves context - in the background. We'll go into this one in a bit more detail in a later video. But it's worth noting that when we in the sector do talk about systems, it tends to be the support systems that come in to play after a crisis event - and not the systemic and social issues that push individuals into homelessness to begin with.

Second - homelessness is rough sleeping. That narrowing down of homelessness to only its most visible representations. Middle-aged men with an addiction, young people, and abused women sleeping on the streets. And when we're narrowing down the scope of the problem, we're also narrowing down potential solutions.

It's also incredibly othering; ensuring people are defined first and foremost by their lack of a home. Something compounded when people experiencing homelessness are called 'the homeless' 'them' 'rough-sleepers' or 'troubled.'

And third: the system is rigged - it's just how things are. This is an incredibly fatalistic way of thinking. The idea that homelessness is inevitable and actively maintained by the system. This shortcut is one of the most damaging for us, because if homelessness will always be with us, why try to end it?

### **Slide 10**

That said, there are existing mental shortcuts that make it easier for people to understand homelessness. The idea that some groups sit at the brink of homelessness, and that our government should act to protect these vulnerable groups.

Now these two shortcuts are the only ones that directly connect secure housing to poverty and economic status. And that highlight that some groups of people are more at risk than others - and so need particular support.

What's problematic for the first one is how rarely it's reinforced in public thinking. And for the second, how narrowly the term vulnerable is defined. There's a lot we could talk about here, but for now I'll highlight how easy it is for people to make divisions between who is understood to be vulnerable - and who is dismissed as just making bad choices.

### **Slide 11**

Which leads us to our final activity. Take a look at the news stories in your workbook. We'll also have them on screen - but you'll need to pause after each one is shown.

Underline all the words and phrases that activate harmful and helpful mental shortcuts on homelessness. We'll then go through the story together.

Then, review a recent piece of communications from your own organisation. Note the words and phrases that activate our mental shortcuts. And what - if anything - you might do differently. Got that?

### **Slide 12**

First up: the Guardian. And the headline: 'Removal of homeless camps trebles as charities warn of 'out of control' crisis.' What shortcuts are being activated here? Now's your time to pause.

Welcome back. There are a few shortcuts activated here, but two are causing us the most problems. Phrases like 'out of control crisis,' 'growing problem' and 'entrenched part of life' all activate the idea that homelessness is a vicious cycle, one that cannot be stopped. Add to that criticism of the official homelessness stats by the UK statistics regulator and you activate the shortcut that the system itself is rigged and so no change is possible.

It's also worth thinking about what's missing here: there's nothing on causation - why the numbers are rising in the first place. Nothing on poverty. And nothing at all on prevention. And all of these combine to activate a powerful sense of fatalism.

### **Slide 13**

Next up: the BBC. And the headline 'The Salvation Army: Wrexham's homelessness 'one-stop shop'. What shortcuts are being activated here? Now's your time to pause.

Welcome back. Again, we have 'the system is rigged' - overtly activated with statements like modern general practice being 'not fit for purpose' a 'very punitive system' where vulnerable people 'just fall through the cracks.' But we also have self-makingness. Helen 'started taking drugs' 'discovered amphetamines' and 'shamefully gave her son up.' There's nothing here on her early circumstances- and the reader's attention is instead directed towards individual blame.

### **Slide 14**

Last up: the Times. And the headlines 'Three million homes needed to end homelessness.' What shortcuts are being activated here? Now's your time to pause.

Welcome back. Again, there are a few shortcuts activated here - but we'll focus on two. First: homelessness as rough sleeping. That narrowing down of what homelessness is to just its most visible representation. Which in turn, others and narrows public thinking about solutions. And second: all of the phrases that cue the system is rigged. That although some stats are dropping, others are rising. And that Government action is only making things worse.

### **Slide 15**

You may have noticed by now that it's the harmful shortcuts about homelessness that are repeated over and over again. That are reinforced and made stronger in the stories we hear - and often the stories we ourselves tell. So what does this mean for our campaigns and communications work?

On screen is typical example of a sector communication: "People who are homeless are often dealing with complicated situations - like problems with addiction. These issues are related to other causes of homelessness, like poverty and childhood trauma. This is why providing people with the right supports early is so important in preventing homelessness."

And when we took this message out in the UK - and asked people to respond - here is what we heard.

### **Video transcript**

'To say it's their own fault they, they put either drink drugs or that before they think of their future and before they think of anyone else. So that they themselves are making their own destiny. They're not thinking of the future and how it affects everyone else. So that's why I think they've made that decision to go that way. So you know that if you don't stay on a right path something horrible's going to happen to you... whether you intend it to happen. But that's just it. we all have a path we should go, and if you deviate from that path well, that's your choice. Whether it's right or wrong you know it's your choice.'

### **Slide 15**

Our sector message - without intentional framing - wasn't able to dislodge the existing patterns of thinking, the existing mental shortcuts, in her mind. This message was completely lost in translation. And it actually backfired. It reinforced her default understanding: that homelessness happens because of individual choice.

Now, this isn't to say that this happens every time, with every person and every message. But that when we make intentional choices about how we frame, we make it much less likely. And much more likely that we can take people with us.

And that's what this series is designed to share: the framing tools and techniques that can help your message be heard, and homelessness to be understood.

### **Slide 16**

Next up: framing with values. See you soon.

### **Slide 17**

And thank you for taking the time to work through this video.