

Before You Leave: Six Recommendations to Improve Policy and Practice

By **Various Contributors**

These recommendations were developed collectively during a workshop at the FEANTSA Forum 2026. Several contributors to this magazine (Magdalena, Gill, Adèle, Floriana, Arnaud) came together to reflect on practical and achievable ways to improve how homelessness services, public authorities and communities respond to the deaths of people experiencing homelessness.

1. Ensure that all deaths of people experiencing homelessness are recorded and monitored

All deaths of people experiencing homelessness should be systematically recorded through a clear local or national mechanism led by public authorities or designated agencies. NGOs and frontline services should be encouraged to notify relevant authorities when a death occurs, particularly where no formal process exists. Recording deaths should not only serve statistical purposes but also ensure that no one dies anonymously or without acknowledgement.

2. Investigate homeless deaths to understand systemic failures and prevent future deaths

Public authorities should investigate deaths of people experiencing homelessness – particularly premature deaths, deaths in public spaces, violent deaths, and drug-related deaths – not primarily as criminal cases, but as opportunities to understand what led to these situations and which support systems or safety nets failed. Such investigations can help identify systemic gaps, improve prevention policies, and ensure that every person's life and death are recognised and understood.

3. Strengthen coordination and awareness across relevant public services

Local governments should strengthen coordination between homelessness services, healthcare providers, hospitals, police, coroners, ministries, and other relevant actors to ensure more dignified and effective responses when deaths occur. Awareness and understanding of homelessness should be improved across these sectors so that responsibilities are clearer, communication is better, and people experiencing homelessness are treated with dignity throughout all public systems.

4. Integrate mortality prevention, end-of-life care, and dignity into homelessness strategies

Preventing homelessness remains one of the most effective ways to prevent avoidable deaths. Still, the prevention of deaths among people experiencing homelessness should also be explicitly integrated into local and national homelessness strategies. This should include access to healthcare, harm

reduction, mental health support, protection from violence, overdose prevention, and appropriate palliative and end-of-life care, while ensuring dignity and accompaniment when death cannot be prevented.

5. Create spaces for remembrance and tribute

Cities and homelessness organisations should create collective spaces to honour and remember people who died while experiencing homelessness, including regular memorial events organised in partnership with NGOs, local authorities, peers, and communities. These collective moments of remembrance can also complement smaller tributes or commemorative practices organised by services and communities each time a person dies, ensuring that every individual is acknowledged with dignity and humanity.

6. Prepare clear protocols and support mechanisms following a death

Homelessness services should prepare clear protocols and support mechanisms to guide staff and service users when a death occurs, rather than responding on an ad hoc basis during moments of crisis. Services should recognise the emotional impact, grief, frustration, and trauma that these events can create for frontline workers, peers, and communities, and provide appropriate spaces for reflection, emotional support, and collective processing.