



The Voice of Lived Experience

HOMELESSNESS-OUR TRUTH
INDEPENDENT FUTURES



As a group of Lived Experience individuals some of us have been homeless ourselves and have friends or family that have been homeless. This is the story of an ex-member who agreed to share her story.

- INDEPENDENT FUTURES

Lillian has been street homeless more than once and now works for a charity as a drug an alcohol worker. She was asked to record her experiences of homelessness- what she found supportive and what she struggled with.

- INDEPENDENT FUTURES



Lillian's Story

I have been homeless twice

. “I’ve been homeless twice in my life. Once for a few months back in 1994 and again for almost two years with my partner in 2006. The experiences were totally different but I remember my biggest shock and disappointment was that when I needed help the second time round the ‘hub’ had gone..”

- LILLIAN





I can't remember its official name but everyone always called it the hub.





Lillian's Story

I have been homeless twice









Fast forward to 2021 and we have been in secure accommodation for 12 years and off the streets for 14. I still have regular contact with homelessness services but this time as a drug and alcohol worker.





. “Today, there are more food banks and soup kitchens but day centers are long gone and the quality of food provided has dropped. Sofa surfers have almost next to no chance of getting housed and night shelters and hostels seem more frightening than the streets. I believe it’s the loss of places like the ‘hub’- the one stop, disorganized, paper filled office, that had allocated and contactable workers - where services users had a name- that has changed the feel and effectiveness of homelessness services in a terrible and faceless way”.

- LILLIAN





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We asked our members with lived experience to share some of their experiences of homelessness and homelessness services with us for this event today. Particularly what helped them get housed and what barriers they faced.

We also asked our friends and wider network.

This is what they told us.



-CHANGE IS GONNA COME

Sam Cooke

“I was so happy when I got my flat. Getting out of the hostel and having my own space.

9 months later I have never been so lonely. I haven’t even laid the carpet I bought when I first moved in. I was homeless for 11 years but I feel that I had more support then than I do now. I don’t speak with anyone but my drug worker.

I am on the waiting list for trauma therapy.”

-PHIL

“I feel bad saying this but covid has helped me so much. I was told I was not a priority for housing when I came out of prison. I was sleeping at different people’s places and going to my mum’s for food. Then lockdown happened and I got the call to say I had a room in a hotel. It was okay there and the staff were really friendly. As the hotels started to get shut down I got help to find somewhere to go. I now have a room in a shared house and spent last summer on a youth programme - doing some great activities like horse riding. I am hoping to stay involved with this and become a support worker. ”

-SAMMI

. “The night shelter was not an option for me and my partner. We had to queue for hours and I just didn’t know who else would be there so we stayed in a communal bin room. I believe I found accessing services harder than my partner as I am black. I often felt stereotyped. I know my community finds it harder to take up help from the system. As an IF member I want to carry a message that tells both diverse communities and services that we need to find better ways to support each other.”

-JASON

. “I found the ARA drop in really great. Nadia was lovely. She explained everything really well and spent well over an hour helping me and my girlfriend fill out this massive form. No way I could have done that on my own. We had to wait a bit for a room and were put in separate houses but that's okay. They kept in touch while we were waiting, that really helped us both know that it was going to happen so we didn't totally give up”.

-IMAR and SARAH

"I used a housing cooperative that offered a service to house you. I registered and used to pop in every now and then to see if there was any progress. After awhile I could see no change and I aired this. This did not go down well. From that time I felt alienated and the staff had no time for me which caused me to leave and in the end did not go back. My culture had a lot to do with this and the lack of understanding."

-JOHN

. “On the other hand what happened forced me to look for other alternatives and I found the hub. They helped me on the waiting list and after awhile I was given an offer on a flat not with the council but with a housing association. I was given a clean tidy small one bedroom flat. I later exchanged this flat for a council two bedroom house which I shared with my then partner. ”

-JOHN

. “Homelessness comes from dysfunction and can hit anyone from any walk of life. For me it was due to addiction. I left prison and ended up on the street. No one was there to help me. I needed someone to step in at that point.

Now looking at it from the other side...recovery and involvement in IF, I see we need more Lived Experience in services. We can all learn from each other if we remain teachable. Problem –Solution Action!

Services need more submissions and commissions.”

-ANTHONY

. “I’m in a friends shed right now. Outreach offered me a hostel but I won’t go there. I had so many problems last time and was attacked. They said all I can do now is do is keep bidding on homechoice. I can’t do this myself but my sister has been doing this for me. She says I am coming up first and second on the list for some flats but I haven’t been offered anything yet or heard anything at all. I feel angry and can’t understand.”

-KEVIN



KEY POINTS

Hard to Access Services

Telephone –no credit, waiting in a queue.

Transport-lack of transport and money for buses.

Technical Difficulties –access and ability to be online. Issues with reading and writing.

EDI Barriers-feeling judged, unconscious bias, stereotypes, ‘too loud’ and lack of trust in the system

Fear –of violence, of the unknown and of failing or being let down

Stigma –drug and alcohol and mental health.



KEY POINTS

Supportive Services

Easy to access –drop ins and appointments, local and part of local communities.

Good Communication –feeling heard, being kept in the loop, personal not generic. Services talking to each other –drug and alcohol and mental health.

Lowering the power differential between service providers and service users – friendly, open and honest. Using the correct language for each individual.

Service doing what they say they will in a timely way.

Clear expectations

Understand cultural and other diverse needs may differ.

Lived Experience and Peer involvement.