

Experts by Experience

**How we should end homelessness -
by people who have experienced it.**

Housing and
support

Welfare
and justice
services

Health
and social
services

Education

Stigma and
changing
attitudes

About Cymorth Cymru

Cymorth Cymru is the representative body for providers of homelessness, housing and support services in Wales. We act as the voice of the sector, influencing the development and implementation of policy, legislation and practice on behalf of our members and the people they support.

We are committed to working with people who use services, our members and partners to effect change. We believe that together, we can have a greater impact on people's lives. We want to be part of a social movement that ends homelessness and creates a Wales where everyone can live safely and independently in their own homes and thrive in their communities.



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Introduction

In June 2019 the Minister for Housing and Local Government established the Homelessness Action Group. The group's remit is to provide policy recommendations to the Welsh Government on the actions and solutions required to end homelessness in Wales.

In October the group published its first report about how to end rough sleeping, which resulted in co-ordinated action by the Welsh Government, local authorities and other organisations to reduce its prevalence during the winter of 2019/20.

The second report will be much broader, outlining the group's views on the policies, approaches and plans needed to end homelessness in Wales. It will reinforce the need for this to be a cross-government priority, rather than just a housing issue, requiring action from a range of public services and policy areas.

During the autumn of 2019 the Homelessness Action Group surveyed people with experience of homelessness and asked for their views on the solutions. This gave the group a clear framework to start developing its report and a series of recommendations. However, the group was keen to ensure that people with lived experience had another opportunity to shape the final draft and recommendations.

At Cymorth we place a huge value on listening to, and acting on, the views of people with experience of homelessness. As a member of the Homelessness Action Group we offered to organise engagement events in February 2020 for people to discuss their experiences and share their views on how we can end homelessness in Wales. We held two events in Colwyn Bay and Cardiff, which were attended by nearly 80 people. They brought a huge amount of expertise to these discussions, based on their own experiences and a determination to effect change.

This document is structured around the discussion topics from these events, with the key points summarised alongside direct quotes from the people who attended. It has been considered by the Homelessness Action Group, resulting in amendments and additions to their report and recommendations to the Minister. This document has also been sent to the Minister so that she can read people's views herself.

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who came along to the events and contributed their thoughts and experiences to these discussions. You have my promise that we will disseminate this document and share your views with decision makers across the length and breadth of Wales.

Katie Dalton

Director, Cymorth Cymru



Housing and support

Participants were asked about their experiences of housing and support, as well as their views about what should be done to prevent and end homelessness in future. The key messages are summarised below, with a selection of direct quotes from participants on the page opposite.

Key messages

- ▶ **Increase access to affordable housing:** Lots of people talked about the need to increase the supply of affordable housing, with some talking about building more housing and others talking about utilising existing housing stock more effectively. Numerous people mentioned social housing in particular, recognising difficulties with affordability in the private rented sector, and several people wanted to see an increase in the provision of supported accommodation. The need for more single-bedroom properties was also mentioned by a large number of people.
- ▶ **Improve access to the Private Rented Sector (PRS):** Affordability was the main issue, with many people identifying Local Housing Allowance and the shared accommodation rate for young people as being key factors. People also called for private landlords to let their properties to more young people, people in receipt of social security and people with pets. They also asked for help with the costs of moving into a property, including bonds and costs of setting up a property. They also called for more security of tenure and for incentives to encourage landlords to let their properties to people with experience of homelessness who need more support.
- ▶ **Reduce barriers for young people:** Lots of young people attended both events and referenced the specific difficulties they face in accessing accommodation. Affordability was a key issue, particularly in the private rented sector, where their social security entitlement severely limited their options. They also talked about the challenges of providing references and having a guarantor when they were estranged from their families. Young people also highlighted the importance of support, particularly in relation to life skills such as cooking and budgeting.
- ▶ **Housing First and supported accommodation:** There were several calls to increase the supply and/or reduce waiting times for supported accommodation. However, people also called for more single unit supported accommodation rather than shared supported housing. Others wanted to be able to stay in supported accommodation longer than two years. There were also calls for Housing First to be rolled out across Wales. One issue raised by numerous people was the difficulty of working while in supported accommodation, as the impact on their social security entitlement makes it difficult for people to see the benefit of getting employment.
- ▶ **Provide person-centred support:** Lots of people talked about the importance of person-centred support. Several people called for more support workers, more outreach support and for more support with transition from supported housing. A few people mentioned the need for health professionals, including GPs to be part of outreach teams. Numerous people also talked about the benefits of peer support, calling it relatable and empowering, asking for more to be available.
- ▶ **Give people choice:** People talked about wanting to have a choice about where they live, with some referencing the need to stay away from people or influences that have previously had a negative effect on them. Others wanted to be able to live close to their family and support networks.
- ▶ **Putting empty properties back into use:** Several people referenced the number of empty or derelict buildings in Wales, and urged the authorities to do more to put them back into use, particularly to house people experiencing homelessness.

Private rent too high for people on benefits.

More self-contained affordable accommodation for under 25s.

More homeless shelters / emergency accommodation that is suitable.

More one bed properties.

Housing First roll out across Wales.

Empty property should be used for homeless people.

Private landlords to accept people on benefits.

Young people unable to get references or guarantor for move on accommodation.

More should be done to stop rogue landlords and eviction laws.

Give people a choice of where they want to live.

Having to repeat info ALL the time to different people and forms.

Incentives for private landlords to let to homeless people who need additional support.

Maintenance, painting and decorating, to fill up empty properties.

More outreach tenancy support available.

Not enough homeless accommodation, too long waiting list for too few places.

Transition from supported housing too tough.

Help before becoming homeless, i.e., mental health, debt, support to prevent homeless.

More help in setting up a new home.

More affordable housing for people on a low income / working class people.

Personalised support following move on from hostels.

Consistent support worker – trust building, not giving up on someone.

Increase funding for support workers cause they deserve more than what they get.

Smaller residences, so: Less drama / conflict, More home-like, Easier to make friends, Calmer, Private space.

Caring support workers knowing that they actually want to help you and be there.

Welfare / social security

Participants were asked about their experiences of the welfare system and what should be done to prevent and end homelessness in future. The key messages are summarised below, with direct quotes from participants on the page opposite.

Key messages

- ▶ **Reform or abolish Universal Credit:** Unsurprisingly, a large proportion of the comments were related to Universal Credit. Some people called for it to be abolished, others for it to be changed. Lots of people called for UC, or housing benefit, to be increased to reflect local rents. They said that they struggled to afford rent with their current allocation, with some specifically mentioning Local Housing Allowance rates. People criticised the sanctions regime and others called for the bedroom tax to be abolished. Some people called for the housing element of UC to be paid directly to landlords in order to prevent homelessness, and others called for the frequency of UC payments to be increased to fortnightly or weekly. There was a lot of criticism for the 5-week wait for people's first UC payment, saying that this causes anxiety and increases debt, with long term implications for people. Others suggested people shouldn't have to pay back the advances.
- ▶ **Improve information, awareness and support:** Lots of people talked about the challenges of applying for social security, saying that it was daunting, and they didn't know where to start. They called for more awareness of people's entitlements, more accessible written information and support with navigating the process. They asked for better access to the internet, support for people with health issues to attend assessments, and help to pay for identification and paperwork. They wanted it to be easier for people living on the streets to access their welfare entitlements and for more information on emergency funding. Several people also suggested that specialist housing advice should be available in job centres.
- ▶ **Improve welfare for young people:** Lots of young people highlighted the inequality faced by young people, commenting that their social security entitlements are lower than older people, yet their costs are the same. They highlighted the impact of this on being able to afford rent in the private rented sector, with the shared accommodation rate severely limiting the properties available to them.
- ▶ **Reduce barriers to education or work:** People talked about wanting to enter education or work but this being extremely difficult due to the impact on their social security allocation. For people in supported accommodation, this was a particular issue, as the high rents meant there was 'no incentive to work'. People wanted to see a smaller gap between their social security and their rent, to enable them to enter work while in the safety and security of supported accommodation. Some people also said that entering education over the age of 21 was extremely difficult as they lost their entitlement to some elements of social security.
- ▶ **More compassion and understanding from DWP staff:** A number of people suggested further training for DWP staff, including those answering the telephones and conducting assessments. In particular, people asked for more compassion and empathy, suggesting training in adverse childhood experiences and becoming more trauma informed or psychologically informed. People talked about the importance of this in relation to decisions about sanctions or the removal of benefits, which can lead to homelessness.
- ▶ **Grants for specific issues:** Some people called for specific benefits to pay for clothing and travel when people are in receipt of social security and are struggling with their finances. People also commented on the expense of utilities, suggesting that people in receipt of Universal Credit should be able to get water for free, highlighting the not-for-profit status of Welsh Water.

End the 5 week wait for Universal Credit.

Empathy training for council and job centre support staff.

Make it easier to get support when on the streets.

Increase housing benefit for people under 35 so people don't have to pay a top up.

More available staff to get hold of as it's hard to get hold of them.

Support and training for assessors completing ESA & PIP assessments to stop unwarranted sanctions and removal of benefits

- Clothing grants
- Travel warrants
- A bus pass

More thorough explanation of UC to vulnerable people.

UC gets you into debt before you get any benefit. 5-week wait = a debt. Being in debt increases anxiety.

Make renewals simpler for DLA / PIP claimants.

There have been multiple times when I've needed emergency funding but haven't known where to get it.

Rent to be paid directly to landlord to prevent eviction.

Increase the housing benefit for vulnerable and young people.

People on benefits should get free water - not for profit!

Shouldn't have to pay back your advance on Universal Credit.

If on UC, court fines can be deducted at 40% and the rest is impossible to live on.

Non user friendly correspondence from DWP / HMRC etc.

The younger age group receive less at present - how are they supposed to support themselves?

Want to work but Universal Credit makes too difficult.

Benefits not just paid monthly. Option to pay weekly, fortnightly.

Housing benefit needs to reflect rent levels in local area.

Applying for benefits is so daunting. Without support people don't know where to start.

Looking for work while in supported accommodation is not worth it as rent is too high.

Specialist housing advice in job centres.

Health services

Participants were asked about their experiences of health services and what should be done to prevent and end homelessness in future. The key messages are summarised below, with direct quotes from participants on the page opposite.

Key messages

- ▶ **Mental health:** The largest proportion of comments were related to mental health, with a particular focus on access to services. People commented on the need to reduce waiting times for appointments and referrals to services, as well as calling for more mental health support groups in the community. People also called for more mental health support to be provided in supported accommodation schemes. Some people suggested that the threshold for accessing services should be lowered, to enable more people to access services without seeing their mental health deteriorate further. Others called for more sympathy within mental health services, while recognising that they were understaffed and needed more resources.
- ▶ **Substance use issues:** A number of people called for more training for GPs and other health professionals about alcohol, drugs and mental health. A particular point was made about understanding the use of substances as a coping mechanism and ensuring that this wasn't used to prevent access to mental health services. People advocated for quicker access to treatment and for a greater focus on preventing substance use problems. Several people called for more funding and support for harm reduction approaches such as needle exchanges and safe injecting spaces, as well as calling for more training for professionals to administer naloxone.
- ▶ **Access to health services:** People called for GP registration to be made easier, citing the need for ID, photos and a fixed address as barriers they had faced. Some people talked about how the physical environment in health settings can cause anxiety for people, suggesting that more thought could be put into making this experience less stressful for people. They also called for more flexibility and understanding of their circumstances, saying that doctors and dentists shouldn't write people off if they miss appointments. Some people highlighted positive examples of doctors and dentists working with supported accommodation providers to ensure access to health services. Others said that people experiencing homelessness should be regarded as a priority for healthcare. People also talked about the importance of support services in helping them to engage with health services.
- ▶ **Compassion, consistency and listening to people:** People called for GPs to be active listeners, pointing out that people don't want to attend appointments if they don't feel listened to - and that some people worry about not being heard if they are not a good communicator. People wanted to be treated with respect and as 'equals', and to see the stigma of 'them and us' reduced. They didn't want to concentrate on negative experiences and issues, and valued having the consistency of the same GP so they didn't have to repeat their history and past traumas to lots of different people.
- ▶ **Working in partnership:** Several people talked about the importance of health, social services and housing working together effectively. They said that release from hospital into homelessness should not be permitted, regardless of whether people were in hospital for physical or mental health issues. Communication and information sharing between and within organisations was also raised by a number of people. They called for health services to communicate more effectively with housing and support providers and commented on the need for housing to be treated as 'equal partners' by health. People also called for more doctors and substance misuse services to pro-actively refer to housing services, highlighting the impact of homelessness on people's mental and physical health.

Better mental health support.

More training for NHS staff re: drugs, alcohol, mental health.

Transition from child to adult is still a huge problem. Everything stops.

Priority services for homeless persons.

Quicker access into treatment: methadone, subutex.

Needle exchange / safe injecting spaces. Safer for everyone.

Young people need more help with their mental health.

Dentist writing people off if they miss 1 / 2 appointments.

Better planning for mental health discharges, people being discharged with nowhere to go.

Reduce waiting times for mental health support. 6-10 weeks waiting for support - a joke.

Reduce stigma of "them and us".

Units provided for homeless showering / washing and drying / hygiene.

Better communication with all health and social services.

Can't get an appointment to get a referral to CMHT.

Needing to travel 30 mins or more to CMHT appointment.

No ID or photo to register for GP.

Access to services. £58 a week to live on. How can you pay for transport?

Could health and social services work better together?

More funding for clean needles, naloxone and the training that is needed for charities.

People feel that if they aren't good communicators they won't be listened to.

More NHS to help combat homeless health problems.

Unless people have support they may not engage in health services.

More groups / organisations for mental health and addictions.

Seeing the same GP (knowledge, history, confidentiality). GP being conscious of listening actively.

Social services

Participants were asked about their experiences of social services and what should be done in this area to prevent and end homelessness in future. The key messages are summarised below, with direct quotes from participants on the page opposite.

Key messages

- ▶ **Better, more consistent access:** A number of people wanted to see better access to social services and social workers, particularly for people who are homeless and rough sleeping. People called for social services to intervene earlier when people are struggling in order to prevent things from getting worse and resulting in homelessness. People also wanted shorter waiting times and to be able to spend more time with their social worker. They said that social workers have high caseloads and consequently do not have enough time to deliver good quality support, calling for more social workers to be recruited. People also voiced frustrations at frequent changes in social workers and the need to constantly repeat their experiences to a new person each time.
- ▶ **More compassion and less judgement:** Several people talked about feeling judged by social services. In particular there were concerns that young people were not listened to or taken seriously, sometimes resulting in no action being taken. People called for services to be more approachable, show less judgement and suggested that further training, particularly from a 'service user perspective' would be helpful in order to achieve this.
- ▶ **Support during transitions:** Lots of people talked about the challenges of transitioning from childhood to adulthood, referencing the decrease in support after age 18 or 21. They called for services to prepare young people for adulthood at a much younger age and to better communicate the options available to them. Some talked about the experience of moving from a children's home to an independent tenancy as 'very scary' and 'unknown', calling for more support to alleviate their fears and support them through this move. Other people talked about transitions from supported housing and prison, highlighting the need for more support during this time.
- ▶ **Support for parents and families:** A number of people called for better support for parents and families, including more mother and baby units, more accommodation schemes for single parents and pregnant women, and more support for single fathers. Some people said that there should be more support for young people to become successful parents and keep custody of their children, particularly when they are experiencing mental health problems. Others highlighted the need to provide suitable homelessness accommodation and support that helps to keep families together. Some people also called for more accessible and flexible childcare so that they could access work outside of traditional 9-5 hours, thus being able to afford and maintain their tenancy.
- ▶ **Cross-sector approaches and partnerships:** People were keen to see professionals and organisations working together, calling for better information sharing and more communication between social workers and social services departments. They also called for social services to discuss housing options with young people and for more social services support for people in supported accommodation. Other people suggested that there should be more social workers with specialisms in homelessness, mental health and substance use issues.

Social workers have too large case loads.

Working together is the key!!!

People say "what's the point" when they get yet another social worker and now have to repeat themselves

Easier access to a social worker especially for rough sleepers.

More support after the age of 18.

More accessible and affordable childcare for parents and it needs to be flexible so people can work outside of traditional 9-5.

Earlier intervention for people who are struggling.

Social workers have too high case loads and don't give the best support due to this. They have no time.

More consistent foster placements instead of passed about because they are naughty or troubled.

Follow on support when coming out of care / prison.

Having to repeat info ALL the time to different people and forms.

Social services giving young people chances to become better parents.

Start preparing you from a younger age and give you options on the next step.

More cross communication between social services departments.

Specialities such as: social workers specialising in homelessness, drug abuse, mental health.

When children report domestic abuse, abuse or neglect. Listen!

Understanding the impact of going from a children's home to independent tenancy very scary, unknown.

Special units set up to help one parent / pregnancy families with issues.

More mother and baby units less judgement more openness to people's situations.

Discuss housing options and keep young people in the loop to reduce anxiety.

More approachable. Less fear surrounding services.

Support for single fathers.

Young people being discriminated, not taken seriously, action not being taken.

Not enough social workers.

Education and skills

Participants were asked about their experiences of education and what should be done in this area to prevent and end homelessness in future. The key messages are summarised below, with direct quotes from participants on the page opposite.

Key messages

- ▶ **Support to develop life skills:** The largest proportion of comments during this discussion related to the need for young people to be taught 'life skills' in school and college. People specifically referenced being taught how to manage their finances/budgeting, cooking skills, managing a tenancy and social inclusion. They also thought it would be valuable to have a better understanding of the realities of the cost and availability of housing as well as information about advocacy agencies, charities and support services in their local area. This is something that has frequently been raised during 'Experts by Experience' engagement events in previous years, particularly from young people who have experienced homelessness.
- ▶ **Financial support:** People talked about the importance of the Education Maintenance Allowance, free school meals and free transport, as this would otherwise contribute to additional financial pressure on their household. However, some people also called for changes to the social security system to enable older people to be able to access education without losing their benefits entitlement.
- ▶ **Vocational and practical skills:** A number of people talked about the importance of providing opportunities to participate in apprenticeships or other vocational training routes. They called for the promotion of alternative educational routes, rather than simply focusing on academic qualifications. They were keen to see more practical subjects and trades taught to young people, including construction skills. They recognised that qualifications and work could prevent homelessness, but wanted more opportunities for people who were less academically inclined. People also talked about the need to provide support and learning opportunities in basic skills and digital inclusion for adults who wanted to develop their knowledge in these areas.
- ▶ **Educating parents and teachers:** Several people highlighted the need to ensure that teachers and other educational staff understood issues relating to homelessness and could appropriately support young people who were experiencing or at risk of it. People wanted to know that they would be listened to and supported through any difficulties so that they could reach their potential at school and college. Other people talked about the need to educate parents, particularly about child health, mental health, and LGBTQ+ issues to promote understanding and prevent family breakdown and youth homelessness.
- ▶ **Learning from lived experience:** A number of people highlighted the benefits of involving people with lived experience in the education of young people about homelessness, mental health and substance use issues. One person called for schools to have people who have been homeless on their staff, and others called for more youth peer mentors in schools for care leavers.

- *EMA*
- *Free meals*
- *Free transport.*

Include a % of people who've experienced homelessness in services as staff.

More youth mentors in school for care leavers.

Financial education in schools is important. Tenancy management skills.

Help for adults with basic educational needs and things like digital inclusion / internet access.

There should be more / different educational routes for young people. Rather than focusing only on the academic.

Dyslexic children need more support.

Educating teachers in college around homelessness and support young people who are struggling.

Educate parents on children's needs, e.g. LGBT issues to prevent young people being kicked out or running away.

No funding for school counsellors.

More educational support/career options for ex-offenders and those who may not be academically motivated.

Agoreds are useful to do. Assistance to get back into education via support.

Information about advocacy agencies, charities, support services.

Provide accessible education for people who can't access college.

Life skills: finances (budget), cooking, pet care, responsibilities.

Teach how to budget, manage money, independent living.

Compulsory lessons in social housing / budgeting, etc. Life skills classes.

- *GCSE in life skills.*
- *Rent ready, social inclusion lessons in school*

Cried for help multiple times but wasn't taken seriously and didn't reach my potential.

More apprenticeships for learners.

Allow people with personal life experiences to become more involved in schools.

Inspire to work. More funding to companies like this to provide 1-2-1 education.

Parents, especially new, need mandatory education, especially in child health, mental health, discrimination, LGBTQ and more.

People wanting to get further education cannot access college as they lose their benefits.

Criminal justice

Participants were asked about their views and experiences of the criminal justice system and what should be done in this area to prevent and end homelessness in future. The key messages are summarised below, with direct quotes from participants on the page opposite.

Key messages

- ▶ **Secure housing before release:** The majority of comments during this discussion related to the provision of housing and support for people when they leave prison. Lots of people called for housing to be secured before people are released so that they don't become homeless. Others called for supported housing to be provided, or at least temporary accommodation so that people had a roof over their head. However, most people felt that secure, permanent housing was preferable to temporary or emergency accommodation. People also suggested that local authority housing officers should be based within the prison estate so that they could understand people's housing status and help to secure housing for them before release.
- ▶ **Provide support on release:** Lots of people also highlighted the importance of continuing to provide support before, during and after release from prison. People recognised the risks of people re-offending and becoming homeless if they did not have the right support in place, citing pressures to secure housing, arrange benefits, access medication and attend probation appointments. Some people also called for an increase in the amount of money people receive on release from prison, commenting that cost of living has increased but the amount has not. Other called for more funding for clothing and for employment opportunities on release in order to break the cycle of offending and homelessness.
- ▶ **Improving skills and wellbeing in prison:** Lots of people talked about the need to improve people's skills and wellbeing while they were in prison. They called for training and support about managing mental health and substance misuse problems, as well as courses to develop confidence, self-esteem and social skills. There were also calls for more peer support to be provided to people while they were in prison. Others talked about the benefits of learning how to manage their finances and become 'rent-ready' before they were released from prison in order to increase their chances of maintaining accommodation and reduce re-offending. People also talked about having the chance to access education and career support, particularly for people who are less confident academically.
- ▶ **Preventing crime:** People also considered how to prevent people from being involved in the criminal justice system, recognising that this could result in homelessness. They said that there needed to be more youth clubs in order to prevent young people from becoming involved in criminal activities and suggested that there should be more prevention work in schools. People called for more leniency from probation services when people missed appointments due to being homeless. They also said that people who are street homeless should not be criminalised, and should instead be directed to support services. People also commented on how homelessness can lead to interaction with the criminal justice system - and how having a home could prevent this.
- ▶ **Compassionate, person-centred support:** A lot of people recognised that life has been difficult for many people in the criminal justice system and called for more empathy and support for people who have become institutionalised. They called for a reduction in the discrimination faced by people leaving prison, particularly in relation to access to housing. People also suggested that professionals working in the criminal justice system should receive more education and training about mental health and how best to support people with mental health problems. They also talked about the importance of working holistically, rather than in isolation.

Too much pressure to meet appointments with probation the same day when housing and medication are our priority.

Direct access to prison leavers for funds for housing on release to save hitting hostels, drugs etc.

Continued support for people once they leave prison.

Need more youth clubs to avoid youth crime.

Prisons should teach confidence, self-esteem, social skills.

A lot of people are introduced to drugs for first time when put in prison.

Training on mental health, co-occurring, substance misuse.

Too much discrimination against ex-offenders to access housing.

No help when you leave prison. You are given discharge grant and shown the gate. Often leads to re-offending.

Housing Associations only keep tenancies for 6 months. If you have a sentence for longer you become homeless.

People being punished / breaking probation when they are street homeless and missed appointment.

Not criminalise street homeless but to guide into support.

Find housing before release from prisons also set up support before.

Should be housing officers inside prisons before release.

More support when people move in from prison / treating prison leavers with more care.

Jobs available ASAP as soon as you leave jail gates.

Release to the streets "street homeless" should NOT be permitted.

Social inclusion and rent ready course available to inmates.

Special temporary accommodation set up to bridge the gap from prison release to housing.

More money from release grant - it's been £46 forever, and the cost of living has increased so much.

Not enough communication between probation officer and client.

Peer mentors in prison.

More educational support & career options for ex-offenders and those not academically motivated.

In release from jail, reinstated supported living.

Groups at particular risk of homelessness

The Homelessness Action Group has considered different types of prevention activity, including targeted prevention, and has identified a number of groups at particular risk of homelessness. Participants at the engagement events were asked to consider how we could prevent homelessness for these groups.

Young people

- ★ More mental health support
- ★ Affordable housing options
- ★ Family mediation services
- ★ Tenancy support and supported accommodation
- ★ Teach life skills, budget management, stress management
- ★ Make it easier to work when in supported accommodation
- ★ More money, housing benefit and training opportunities
- ★ Apprenticeships that pay the living wage

An app for younger generation to help them with homelessness.

Life skills and stress management in school.

LGBTQ+ people

- ★ Better access to mental health services
- ★ Reduce discrimination
- ★ Web chat groups, support groups
- ★ Educate teachers and provide support in schools
- ★ Support for LGBTQ+ people experiencing domestic abuse
- ★ Educate parents about LGBTQ+ issues and provide support to families

Educate parents. Teach them to respect their LGBT children.

Places for families to go for education and support.

Care experienced young people

- ★ Enable people to stay in care longer
- ★ Plan well in advance of people leaving care
- ★ Maintain support once people have moved on
- ★ More counselling and social support
- ★ Teach young people practical life skills and how to keep safe

Maintaining support once people have moved out.

More future planning and move on properties with support.

People leaving prison

- ★ Secure housing, support and employment for people before they leave
- ★ Avoid Friday releases and give people more money on release
- ★ Maintain housing during short sentences
- ★ Ensure access to scripts on release
- ★ Have housing officers in prisons and make prison leavers priority need
- ★ Provide support during sentence to develop life skills

Housing and support should be sorted before leaving prison.

People leaving the armed forces

- ★ Provide support with integration and resettlement
- ★ Provide follow-up care when people return home
- ★ Retain priority need status
- ★ Provide support and healthcare services

Follow up care for veterans coming home.

Refugees and asylum seekers

- ★ Consider language and cultural differences / barriers
- ★ Provide interpreters
- ★ Let asylum seekers work and earn money
- ★ Educate more professionals about the barriers facing refugees and asylum seekers

Educate more professionals about refugees and asylum seekers.

People experiencing violence or abuse

- ★ Provide specialist supported accommodation
- ★ Provide counselling for survivors
- ★ Support survivors to relocate
- ★ More support for male victims
- ★ More powers to stop cuckooing
- ★ More local services so people can stay in the local area
- ★ Increase awareness of support so people know how to get help
- ★ Ensure survivors can stay in their home and the abuser has to move out
- ★ Deliver healthy relationship courses and tackle causes of perpetrator behaviour

Not being intentionally homeless if they flee their home.

We don't want people waiting to get help or staying in risky situations because they don't know about services

People with health problems or disabilities

- ★ Provide Housing First and supported accommodation
- ★ Better networking systems
- ★ Immediate access to GP for medication
- ★ Support to deal with rent and other living skills
- ★ Shorter waiting lists for mental health services
- ★ More support from social workers
- ★ Better access to outreach mental health services and support

Drop in, no obligation, instant help, no requirements.

Not being told too complex for hostels with multiple conditions.

People with drug or alcohol problems

- ★ Provide Housing First and supported accommodation
- ★ Provide safe injection rooms
- ★ Provide out of hours services
- ★ Increase access to counselling
- ★ Develop more specialist knowledge of dual diagnosis
- ★ More residential detox centres
- ★ Quicker access to treatment pathways

Safe injecting rooms are safer than drugs on the street.

Excluding people from services due to drugs and alcohol doesn't work.

People experiencing relationship breakdown

- ★ Provide counselling and support
- ★ Provide mediation services (where appropriate)
- ★ Provide housing solutions and advice
- ★ Make divorce cheaper
- ★ Provide support for young people in the family

Mediation, counselling, support, housing solutions.

People struggling to pay their rent

- ★ Provide emergency financial support
- ★ Enable benefits to be paid directly to the landlord
- ★ Use local authority funds to assist landlords to prevent homelessness
- ★ Provide tenancy support to help people to budget and manage their money

More support to people who are financially struggling.

People who lose their jobs

- ★ More support as early as possible for people to keep their homes
- ★ Discretionary Housing Payments
- ★ Housing solutions and additional support based in Job Centres
- ★ Reduce waiting times for Universal Credit
- ★ Support for people unfamiliar with the welfare system
- ★ Provide re-training opportunities

Understanding from DWP that people may not understand the benefits system.

Suggestions for additional groups: People who have been bereaved and older people.

Stigma and attitudes

Participants were asked to share their views on how we can tackle stigma and change attitudes about homelessness. They also told us about comments made by the public and professionals about people who are homeless...

Key messages

- ▶ **Educate the public** through public awareness and information campaigns to reduce stigma. Increase people's knowledge of where and how they can get help if they, or anyone they know, is at risk of homelessness.
- ▶ **Training for professionals** to ensure that people who are using public services and third sector support services do not experience stigma and judgement that could prevent them engaging with them in future. Involve people with lived experience in the development and delivery of training to ensure it is authentic.
- ▶ **Educate young people in schools** so they develop compassion and awareness at a young age.
- ▶ **Educate employers** and break down barriers to employment for people who have been homeless.
- ▶ **Challenge the media** to stop them from reinforcing unhelpful stereotypes and discrimination.
- ▶ **Share personal stories** in order to break down barriers and change people's attitudes.
- ▶ **Employ people with lived experience** in services in order to reduce stigma.

Don't give them a drink, they'll throw it at you.

All homeless people are on drugs.

Don't be too nice – they'll expect too much.

Lazy, uneducated, stupid.

You don't look homeless!

Professionals need to listen more to service users. Make sure professionals get the right information.

Change the attitudes of parents/carers. Educate them and learn to pass it on to their kids.

As part of inductions, staff members work with vulnerable people.

Educate employers. Research shows previous homeless people are more productive and take less time off.

More education about homelessness in schools and colleges.

Stops you doing what you need to do for fear of judgement. Knocks your confidence - might not engage in services.

More education on homelessness. Public assume that homeless means rough sleeping.

The attitudes of schools and colleges. They need to care more about their homeless students.

Awareness campaigns – someone's life from childhood to show how issues can affect people and it isn't always about fault.

Challenge stigma by sharing personal stories. PLUS services should employ people with lived experience.

Prejudice and judgements can't be changed overnight, it's people's surroundings, environment, peers, education, views, experience, media.

Combat stigma of mental health, homelessness. All walks of life experience the problem.

Thank you to
everyone who
contributed
their views and
experiences. 😊



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