

Gerry Skelton (MBE👁️)'s 2019 Homeless
Awareness Event
@ The Social Care Council
December 2nd

Grace Price's
Presentation

QUICK TEST BEFORE WE START

People often refer to people like me as:

Oh NO



Oh YES



- HOMELESS

person;

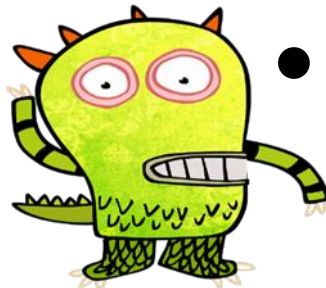
- A ***PERSON***

- Or HOMELESS

who is Homeless!

PEOPLE!

- Monster!



- PEOPLE who are homeless.

‘Joining the dots’ for me

- My Hopes from my talk today and this latest Gerry awareness event;
 - 1) All of Gerry’s events gives me and people like me a **VOICE** which isn’t always heard by others!
 - 2) Treat the person as a human being not a label, or a number, or a form to be filled in, or to be judged, etc;
 - 3) Have a better understanding of homelessness and self harm.
 - 4) Be ready and willing to help people like me!

So **WHO** am I?

SOMETHING TO THINK
ABOUT...

AM I homeless **ONLY** and
that's what you see, social
worker?

OR
she homeless **WITH**
COMPLEX NEEDS?

Do **YOU** think any of this
matters?

Would **YOU** treat me
differently?



As a adolescent who became Homelessness:

- 1) How I became **Homeless**...
- 2) ...And started **self-harming**;
- 3) My experiences of living in homelessness:
 - I. Hostels;
 - II. Night Shelter;
 - III. ...and streets!
- 4) Did Social Work help me?
 - I wonder would any social workers here have helped me?
- 5) How did medical professionals do?
- 6) How did Homelessness professionals do?

So what and who helped?:

- I have often had to help myself;
- BUT, as Gerry says, sometimes we also just get in our own way!
- Some professional helped, including...;
- Many didn't (Including no SW involvement, etc);
- Helping others in my position has helped me;
- Working with Gerry (and others he has brought into my life) has helped me;
- But mostly its Gerry, to be honest, because others make false promises and I never hear from them again! Its so ANNOYING



Becoming HOMELESS again!

- ❑ How did this happen?
- ❑ What / Who helped?
- The key DIFFERENCE this time was:
 - 1) I knew I had Gerry, Declan, Robert, etc to turn to;
 - 2) And they NEVER turned away!
 - 3) I was distressed, yes, but knew I would be supported...
 - 4) And now I'm ok again, in my wee home and cosy!



NOW...Here is a few points I like you to think about in helping you understand me and self harm.

- I'm the same as you but when you hurt you talk...when I hurt, I cut;
- Words hurt...I have the scars to prove it!;
- These scars on me help me know that I can get through this!;
- I self-harm because I am hurting inside;
- Don't misunderstand self harm as an 'attention-seeking' act; because we don't do it in public, we do it when we find ourselves alone!
- Today I'm not as alone and my VOICE has been heard by Gerry and I'm hoping ALL of you here today.
- All of this matters, and is an important part of me helping YOU to hopefully 'join the dots'...
- ...and ME remaining being HOPEFUL that what Gerry, me and the other speakers have made a difference to you!

I want to tell you a few things about Gerry.

- I met Gerry (approx. 6 years ago)...my new life begun...and got very BUSY!
 - Getting involved in his campaign about raising homelessness as a real issue;
 - He campaigns about... **EVERYTHING!**
 - And joined his other campaigns {EG Community relations, anti-bullying, self-harm, suicide prevention, mental health awareness...}
 - ...If you know Gerry you know work isn't 9-5 and everybody matters to Gerry...
 - ...he just doesn't do the talking he does the walking – what he says you can depend on, and on him!
 - And that really matters to me and others I can tell you.

More 'joining the dots'

- My public appearances addressing homelessness and various audiences as a service user have included:
 - 5 HAPs at Belfast Met (2012; 2013; 2014; 2015 & 2016);
 - 2014 HAP Event @ QUB;
 - NISCC User & Carer Participation Group;
 - Anti-bullying initiatives;
 - NVTV Interview
- ☐ And outside of Gerry, I Work with Zest in Londonderry/Derry.



Gerry CARES about me...

- Gerry invited **ME** as one of his 3 guests to the 2013 SW Awards ceremony.
- And invited me to be in one of his official pictures... **ME!**
- NOW, given Gerry's fame and now his MBE, I feel SO privileged to know him...and act as his bodyguard.



I have had to take on other bodyguard duties...such as looking after one of today's speakers - Declan's pamper day!



Grace Price



But I always look after Mr BIG!

A worried Gerry...

“I made him do it” claims
Bodyguard, Price 😊



Q: How do you
control Gerry...
A: Nick his glasses
and tell him
everything is OK 😊



So...Gerry ALWAYS challenges us to 'Join the dots'...

❑ For me, this means:

1. Homelessness needs a more joined-up approach;
2. We need to see the connections between it and other issues that I've experienced (E.G. self-harm);
3. We ALL need to treat people as people...
4. ...NOT a label that can often lead to people being treated as 'Less than' (a Gerry criticism that many of you will be familiar with!);
5. And those of us in pain need you to listen to us, to help us and give our voice a chance!

Conclusion

- Thank you for listening to my story and I hope it has helped you understand:
 - Homelessness;
 - Self-harm;
 - And how as a social worker, Bosses, Social Care Council, YOU can help me and others do better!
- A Thank you to MY FRIEND, Gorgeous Gerry for ALL his years and years of caring,
- for pushing us all to do better, to think better and CARE about others too!
- ...If we had more Gerry's in this world we would have a lot more positive change, especially in homelessness!
- Thank YOU, everybody!