

# ***HOME – LESS – NESS***

Presentation for Gerry Skelton, MBE Event at the  
Social Care Council, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec, 2019

***‘Living without a home’.***

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# Thanks to **Gorgeous Gerry**

Mary O'Brien

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- 10 years of the homeless awareness panels.
- His vision – Embracing “Home-less-ness” as a compelling concern in Social Work Education, Training and Practice.
- Persistently and consistently pushing to make his vision a reality.
- Real and honest engagement with those for whom homelessness is a reality.
- Making this issue real for all his SW students – visits to hostels, key speakers in class sessions etc.
- Contributions to the DoH Social Work and Homelessness Reflections document.
- Encouraging, empowering, challenging me to have the confidence to start my journey in SW and then supporting me throughout my career.



## MY experience in this area of work

- Worked for the Simon Community for 2 years prior to joining Belfast Trust. I managed a homeless hostel for one year during this time.
- Original and formulating member of the Multidisciplinary Homeless Support Team in Extern (still going today).
- Sat on the NIHE consortium board for Multidisciplinary Support Team for 5 years.
- Extensive experience of developing supported living continuum of care services in Belfast Trust Mental Health Services.
- Lead manager for NIHE interface with Mental Health Services in Belfast.
- Supporter of Gerry Skelton's tireless work in campaigning to have Homelessness included in SW education, training and, of course, SW practice.



## What does your home mean to you?

- “**Home** is a safe haven and a comfort zone. A place to live with our families and pets and enjoy with friends. A place to build memories as well as a way to build future wealth. A place where we can truly just be ourselves” (Habitat for Humanity).
- “Home is a shelter from storms-all sorts of storms” William J. Bennett)
- “Home is where one starts from” (T.S. Elliot).
- And for **ME** ...HOME is a place to call mine, to feel safe in, provides shelter from the pressures of life, and a place of laughter, family, friends. It's a foundation on which to build from the moment existence was sparked. It is my anchor.



## Some NI Stats.

- As of September 30 last year, the NIHE said 19,378 households were on the waiting list and are classified as statutorily homeless.
- Single people were the largest affected group, with 8,534 waiting for accommodation.
- Other groups were: 2,724 elderly, 334 large adult (three or more adults), 1,511 large family, 777 small adult (two adults), and 5,489 small family.
- In the past six months, for those requiring emergency accommodation, there were 516 placements in a hotel or B&B.
- 13,505 children were living in households accepted as homeless.



## Social Work's Responsibility within the area of Homelessness.

- Holistic Assessment – What has brought this person to this place at this time in their life?
- Understanding the complex nature of the impact of homelessness in all its forms.
- Campaigning to stop homelessness.
- Securing permanent accommodation – a home not just accommodation.
- Instilling Hope, enabling control and creating opportunity on the recovery journey from homelessness to home.
- Core component of SW training and practice...from cradle to grave!

## Conclusion

- Well done to the **Social Care Council** for inviting Gerry to do this and providing such an important platform here;
- Thank you **Gerry** for inviting me as one of your principal speakers and for all you do;
- Thank you **ALL** for listening

