Agenda

- Introduction about me and MUST hostel

  - Reality of homelessness

- Social Work's Role in Homelessness

  - Call to Action

About me:

Passion from Experience:
Years in social care revealed limitations in recognition and growth despite expertise.

Key Realisation:
Formalising my expertise through social work to deepen impact and gain recognition.

•**Current Path:**
•Studying Social Work (RGR Route) starting September 2024.
Practical experience in homelessness and social issues now enriched by education.

•**Long-Term Vision**:
Leveraging knowledge and experience to transform lives through permanent housing and stability.

Overview of MUST

Mission Statement:
"To provide safe, supportive housing and comprehensive services that help individuals transition from homelessness to permanent housing and long-term stability."

Services Offered:
- 24/7 On-Site Staff: Professional support ensuring safety and immediate assistance.
- Individualised Support Plans: Tailored to each resident's unique needs.

Population Served:
Men and women with complex needs, including:
- Substance abuse challenges.
- Mental health issues.
- Criminal justice involvement.
- Chronic homelessness.

Support offered:

❑ **Core Services Offered:**

➢ **24/7 On-Site Staff:** Trained professionals ensuring safety and immediate support.

➢ **Individualised Support Plans:** Tailored to each resident's unique needs.

➢ **Housing Advice & Support:** Assistance with permanent housing applications and tenancy rights.

➢ **Life Skills Training:** Skills for independence, including budgeting, cooking, and job searching.

➢ **Mental Health & Addiction Support:** In-house counselling and referrals to external specialists.

➢ **Job Search Assistance:** Coaching and resources for employment and vocational training.

➢ **Engagement Activities that are service-user led:**

➢ **Mindfulness Gardening:** Garden project promoting relaxation and teamwork.

➢ **Social Events:** Movie nights, quiz nights, and local walks fostering community and well-being.

➢ **Skill Development:** Tailored workshops to promote confidence, independence, and resilience.
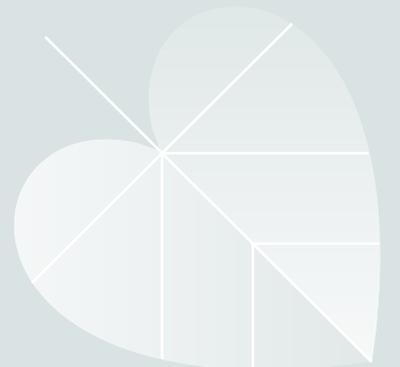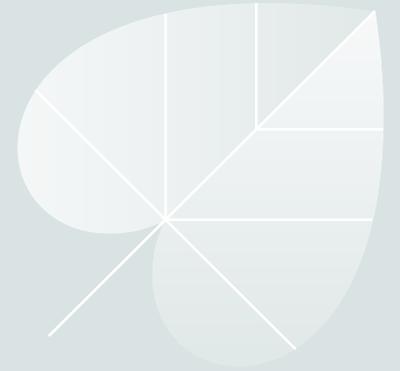
The Reality of Homelessness

Challenges Faced by Residents:

• **Financial Difficulties:** Lack of income or access to affordable housing.

• **Mental Health Issues:** High rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD.

• **Substance Abuse:** Addiction as both cause and consequence of homelessness.

• **Lack of Social Support:** Isolation from family, friends, and community networks.

• **Criminal Justice Involvement:** Those with offending backgrounds face barriers to housing and employment.

• **Access to Services:** Issues such as lack of ID and the need for staff accompaniment.

Social Work is at the heart of everything we do:
From the moment we receive a referral to the successful move-on of a resident, social work principles guide every step of our approach.

Key Theories We Apply:
- **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:** Ensuring basic needs (food, shelter, safety) are met before addressing higher-level goals like independence and employment.
- **Crisis Theory:** Immediate stabilisation is crucial for residents in crisis before engaging in long-term interventions.
- **Systems Theory:** Understanding the complex interaction of mental health, substance abuse, and social support.
- **Strengths-Based Approach:** Empowering residents by focusing on their strengths and resilience.

Key Social Work Areas in Homelessness Support:

- **Advocacy and Housing Rights:** Social workers can help secure permanent accommodation by advocating for housing rights and connecting individuals to the right housing services.
- **Case Management:** Ensuring continuity of care, from initial referral to successful transition into permanent housing.
- **Emotional Support and Stabilisation:** Providing mental health support, life skills, and substance abuse management to prepare individuals for long-term success.
- **Collaborative Approach:** Social workers could act as a bridge between housing authorities, healthcare providers, addiction services, and community groups to provide wraparound support.
- **Empowerment and Trust:** Social workers empower residents by fostering trust and promoting autonomy in the housing process, helping them take control of their future.

Governance and Practice:

- **Social Work Education and Training:** Emphasising the role of social workers in supporting residents through all stages of homelessness—from crisis to permanent housing.
- **Policy and Governance:** The role of social work in shaping policies that focus on long-term housing solutions and support for people who are homeless.

Benefits of Increased Social Work Involvement in Homelessness Support

Holistic Approach:
- Social workers provide a comprehensive understanding of residents' needs physical, emotional, and social.
- **Theory Application:** The **Ecological Systems Theory** underscores the importance of viewing individuals within the context of their environment (family, community, work, etc.) providing more effective and targeted support.

Improved Outcomes:
- **Permanent Housing:** Social workers could help residents access long-term housing solutions, leading to more successful transitions to permanent accommodation.
- **Reduced Recidivism:** Social work involvement reduces the chances of residents returning to homelessness, particularly through **relapse prevention plans** for individuals with addiction issues.
- **Improved Quality of Life:** Increased social work support improves overall well-being—enhancing mental health, financial stability, and personal growth.

Efficient Resource Utilisation:
- Social workers coordinate multiple services, ensuring that resources are used effectively and residents receive timely, appropriate interventions without duplication of services.

Success Stories: The Impact of our Support and the Potential of Social Work Involvement

Life Story 1:
- **Resident Background:** A 56-year-old male with substance abuse issues and a criminal background.
- **Intervention:** Provided housing advice, connected to a low-threshold harm-reduction team, and worked with a mental health counsellor.
- **Outcome:** After 13 months, the resident successfully transitioned to permanent housing.

Life Story 2:
- **Resident Background:** An 18-year-old female escaping domestic violence, struggling with mental health issues, and polysubstance use.
- **Intervention:** Case management included connecting with legal services, addiction services, and managing physical health.
- **Outcome:** Successfully placed in stable housing after tailored support.

Imagine the Potential with Social Work Involvement:
- **With social work support:** A more comprehensive, coordinated approach could address deeper-rooted issues, improve engagement, and facilitate even smoother transitions into permanent housing.

Testimony

"I came to the MUST Hostel 10 months ago, throughout my stay staff were very supportive of my needs. They assisted me with banking, dentists, doctors, housing and planning my bus trips to my appointments.

I found the staff brilliant as there were always there to talk to and it was a very friendly and welcoming environment.

As it is coming now to the end of my stay as I have secured a Housing Executive home, I feel saddened leaving MUST Hostel. I have never felt as happy as I have staying here in the past 10 years. I really enjoyed my stay.

Thanks MUST Hostel"
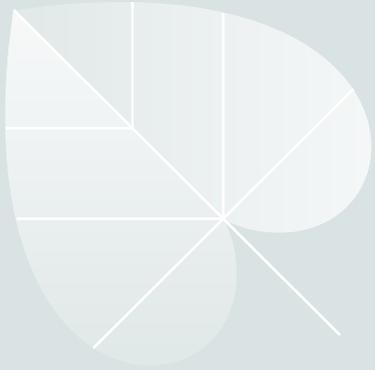
Reflections and Conclusions: Strengthening My Understanding and Commitment

Key Points:

- **Consolidated Understanding:**

- Learning about **Homelessness Awareness Panel** (HAP) and **Gerry Skelton's work** has deepened my knowledge of the complexities of homelessness.

    - It has reinforced the importance of **holistic, person-centred approaches** in homelessness services.

- **Key Themes:**

•**Person-Centred Practice:** Supporting individuals in ways that reflect their unique circumstances and aspirations.

•**Systemic Collaboration:** Highlighting the importance of **multi-agency approaches** to tackling homelessness effectively.

•**Anti-Oppressive Practice:** Challenging stigma and advocating for dignity and respect in every intervention.

•**Conclusion and Commitment:**

•This has reinforced my passion for integrating **social work values** into homelessness services.

•I am committed to advancing **collaborative efforts** that move individuals from temporary to permanent housing with dignity.

•**Personal Commitment:**

    - These lessons have strengthened my passion for social work and my belief in the power of **integrated, compassionate support**.

    - I am committed to applying these insights in my future practice and advocating for **social work-driven solutions** to homelessness.

Call to Action: Bridging the Gap with Social Work

Need for More Social Workers:

•Advocate for the integration of social workers into homelessness services to facilitate transitions from temporary to permanent accommodation.

•Social workers are essential for addressing complex needs, ensuring that residents receive the support necessary for lasting stability.

Collaborative Efforts:

•Foster partnerships between social workers, temporary accommodation, and community organisations.

•Create stronger support networks by coordinating social work expertise, housing services, and mental health and addiction resources to ensure comprehensive care.

Thank you

Megan McLaughlin