

## General points raised

There was positive news from one area, where people with lived experience have been involved in gathering evidence for a report to be considered when making strategic decisions around ending homelessness.

*“We found out there was a problem, and they listened!” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

Some work by drug treatment services continues to benefit from people being housed, which allows the journey of recovery to begin.

*“Get them off the streets and give them a roof does give you a headstart.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

There were also positive examples of people moving into accommodation after extended periods.

*“People have been moving into places they haven’t been able to for a long time.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

There have also been some concerns. Some move’s to interim accommodation are being conducted at pace without effective communication to relevant service providers, in some instances putting at risk people’s recovery.

*“Our hotel is closing. We’ve had no follow up from the staff as to where are clients are going. They gave us 2 hours notice to find them a chemist to script them (moved from Croydon to Barking) I think more of this moving them out as far as can. It’s a major worry.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

Referrals into accommodation is increasingly difficult, and there is concern that expectations of the private rented sector being able to meet demand are unrealistic.

*“Move on’s is private rented. There’s a lack of provision in [CITY] in regards to choice ad options, so they’re using a hotel and a hostel.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

There are also worries that people who have No Recourse to Public Funds but have an amnesty, are not seeing that amnesty applied to getting support with supported accommodation (although can get shared accommodation). One area cited positive success with their local authority in regards to EEA migrants, due to the Governments suspension of an EU regulation relating to emergency accommodation.

Some of the high density accommodation options are not working, in particular a large hotel located outside of the City Centre, which is being used as temporary accommodation. Not only is this offer unsuitable for many, because people are being given no choice but to access it, they are being deemed as not being in need of support.

*“No surprise, there is some concerning allegations in terms of some of the offending. A lot of service users are refusing to go there. It’s not safe. You couldn’t pay me to go.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*“This individual did not want to go to the hotel, said he’d go to [a different option]. They said no, even though there was places.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*“There’s one offer, and they (staff) think that you’re obviously not that desperate, as you’ve refused the offer.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

There are also some longstanding issues relating to local authorities verifying whether people are homeless. This process is not transparent, installs distrust, and puts undue pressure on family and friends of individuals where it may not be suitable for them to accommodate.

*“I have a frustration around verification. I don’t like the local authorities having to get phone numbers. The Government needs to look at it. It’s quite intimidating. They ring [family/friends] up, and they’ll [family/friends] say you can stay, but do you **know they can?**” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*“Councils often tell family members that if they don’t let the person stay with them they’ll be left on the streets, even when the council have a blatant duty to house them.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

## **Next Steps Accommodation Programme**

The National Advisory Panel welcome the commitment within the Next Steps Accommodation Programme for service users to be part of local authority’s co-production process.

We believe this will not only help innovation and effective use of resources, but will provide therapeutic benefits for individuals involved and also help to challenge the stigma that is experienced by people from disadvantaged groups. We offer our congratulations to all those who made it this important work happen!

*“Services need to change. We are not offering treatment. We are offering a one way street. We aren’t fluid. We have a single lane.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

It is welcome that we have already seen some indication of local authorities seeking the views of ‘service users.’

*“Within a week will be doing a survey, which is a step towards it.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*“[BOROUGH] are trying to apply for it. They already have a good co-produced system.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

There is concern that some areas will only involve ‘service users’ in a limited way, or not at all. In one area in particular, the local authorities Housing department has been historically ineffective at working with ‘service users.’

*“It frustrates me if involvement is a 2 page survey. You can get from a survey what you want.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*“It was mentioned at the Strategic Board. Nobody has contacted us [Lived Experience Team] yet.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*“Housing [normally] come with paperwork and tell you what you think. No, we need to be there from the start. There was money with drug related deaths, and we’re involved straight away.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*“Housing are the worse for it. There’s hotels that can’t open because of damage [which could have been avoided with better decision making]. Public health are brilliant with coming to us [Lived Experience Team] first, but Housing are still ‘we know best’ sort of thing.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

*“Housing is always the main barrier when you’re working with other services. Everyone else says need lived experience there. Everyone sees the value. Housing see the value, but as far as sitting down writing the strategy, they don’t do it.” **Member of National Advisory Panel***

There is also some communication/educational work needed for some local authorities. For example, one area argued that service-users did not have to be involved in co-production, though this position was retracted when relevant paragraphs were shown.

## **Recommendations**

Expert Link, like the MHCLG, are keen for service users to be meaningfully involved in co-producing a local authorities bid.

To ensure that this happens for this and future funding rounds, we recommend:

- **Share information with local authorities on how to involve ‘service users’ in their bids. To support this, Expert Link has developed a [free webinar](#) specifically for local authorities, which we have promoted through our channels. We would welcome support from various teams, including Rough Sleeping Advisors, to ensure relevant local authorities are aware of the offer.**
- **Sharing positive case studies of those areas that do involve service users, highlighting the benefits it has brought to their bids.**
- **Monitoring which local authorities involve service users in their bids, and provide targeted training to those who don’t in anticipation of future funding rounds.**

## **About Expert Link**

Expert Link is a peer led organisation championing the voice of people with lived experience of multiple disadvantages, including homelessness, mental health issues, substance misuse, offending and domestic violence and abuse. We advocate for a world where people with lived experience of multiple disadvantages are treated as equal partners in decisions made about their lives.