

Homelessness Task and Finish Group – Responses

Date Received	From	Comments
12 October 2022	Kate Hannan	<p>Dear Cllr Mitchell</p> <p>I'm contacting you as Chair of the scrutiny committee looking at homelessness in the city.</p> <p>Inclusive Exeter runs a Drop-In Support Service for people from ethnic minorities who do not have English as a first language. Many of the people who come to us have housing issues and a couple of families have been faced with homelessness and/or have been homeless and given temporary accommodation by the Council.</p> <p>I wanted to draw your attention to the extra barriers faced by people from ethnic minorities when it comes to homelessness (and indeed other issues) – language, culture and a lack of knowledge, understanding or familiarity with 'how things work'.</p> <p>Of course, not everyone from an ethnic minority has these barriers but there are some who do, and they can reach the point of being homeless because they have not known who to turn to for help or their circumstances have changed so quickly that even if they did know it can be too late for them to find appropriate accommodation, eg during the pandemic a restaurant worker whose accommodation was tied to his job was told he had to leave when the restaurant closed, putting his family at risk of homelessness (it's a bit more complicated than that but you get my drift).</p> <p>I also want to let you know that there is a huge amount of hidden homelessness among BAME communities in Exeter, especially amongst asylum seekers who arrived in Exeter from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and some African countries back in 1999-2000. They had to stay in this country 20 years before they were able to get British Citizenship. Most of these people were young men, now married with children, the majority of them still living in restaurant accommodation as they have been working in this sector for decades. This accommodation is not suitable for women and children. Because these groups of people had no access to public funds during the asylum process, they never had the opportunity to obtain any social housing in the way new refugees have. There is, of course, a huge difference</p>

		<p>between refugees and asylum seekers; however, these communities are no longer asylum seekers but are still living in awful conditions, some of them living in shared accommodation with their young children.</p> <p>I think it will be important for the Council to reach out to ethnic minorities to help prevent homelessness in the first place. And by reaching out, I don't necessarily mean to the self-proclaimed community leaders who can be something of a gatekeeper. I mean to the people who work in the kitchens, the taxi drivers, the delivery drivers and so forth.</p> <p>I would be happy to talk further with you about this and/or come to one of your scrutiny meetings. My mobile number is 07767 407072.</p> <p>I have copied in Cllr Trish Oliver, who kindly and rightly, prodded me to contact you.</p> <p>With best wishes</p> <p>Kate</p>