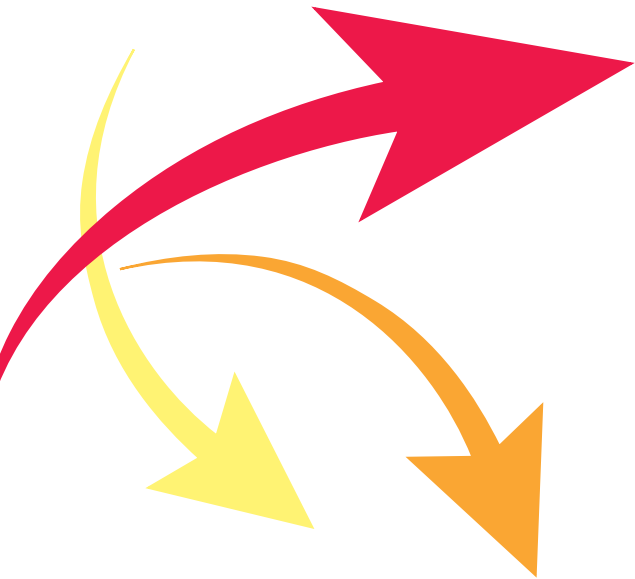


“first tenancy, which way should i go?”

Smart+Living
falkirk



LINKLIVING



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WELCOME

“Giving the facts and dispelling the myths,
WE KEEP it REAL and TELL it LIKE it REALLY is.”

INTRODUCTION

This is a book of the real life stories of six people, including me. Some good, some bad and some funny experiences of having a tenancy.

All of us have been homeless at one point in our lives and one person is still homeless. We are currently volunteering for LinkLiving's SmartLiving as Peer Educators. We go into schools and other youth groups to raise awareness of housing and homelessness. Giving the facts and dispelling the myths, we keep it real and tell it like it really is.

The group has been working with Falkirk Council's Adult Literacy Team who have been helping us work on our communication skills. We decided to write a short book about our experiences as a project, to give us practice with our writing skills but also so we could spread the word to other young people about what it is like to be young and living on your own. A big thank you to the Literacy Team for taking the time to help us.

The group would like to share their stories so people don't get into the same situations as we did. We hope you enjoy reading this as much as we enjoyed writing it.

Caroline

introduction

CAROLINE

CAROLINE

I remember when I first got my keys to my house - the first thing I did was phoned all my friends and got them all down for parties. Within six months, three of my neighbours had moved out, with one of them selling her flat next door. Don't get me wrong, I feel bad about it now but I didn't at the time.

Within two years I got put on an ASBA (Anti-Social Behaviour Agreement). That's what they give you before they put you on an ASBO (Anti-Social Behaviour Order). Part of my agreement was that I wasn't allowed to stand on my veranda, as I was giving abuse to people walking past. You do silly things when you're younger. I didn't realise at the time that all of it would follow me around for the rest of my life. But I am older and wiser now and I'm not a silly little girl like I was then. I've got my two kids now and when you've got kids you have to grow up a bit.

There was a time when I had no one, all my friends stopped coming because I stopped having parties and I lost my family through drink and drugs. So there I was on my own with no one to talk to. I ended up becoming depressed because it all made me feel that my so-called friends used me for somewhere to sleep when drunk and just to party. I became suicidal, taking overdoses and self-harming. I also started to take panic attacks when I was leaving the house so I stopped going out for a while. My support worker was great - she got me the help I needed and got me out of the house eventually (with a lot of persuading).

But that was three or four years ago and I'm all better now. Don't get me wrong - I still get down now and again but who doesn't? And I now have my family back in my life...



You do silly things when you're younger. I didn't realise at the time that all of it would follow me around for the rest of my life.

JENNIFER

JENNIFER

Hostel life

I became homeless because I wasn't getting on with my family very well and found it hard. I ended up in a hostel in Grangemouth.

I was scared in the hostel – didn't know anyone, didn't know what to expect. The staff seemed really friendly though. I ended up with a drinking problem at the time – I got in with the wrong crowd and there was nothing else to do.

After about eight months of being there I got moved on to a halfway house. It was a great wee furnished flat, it was much better than the hostel.

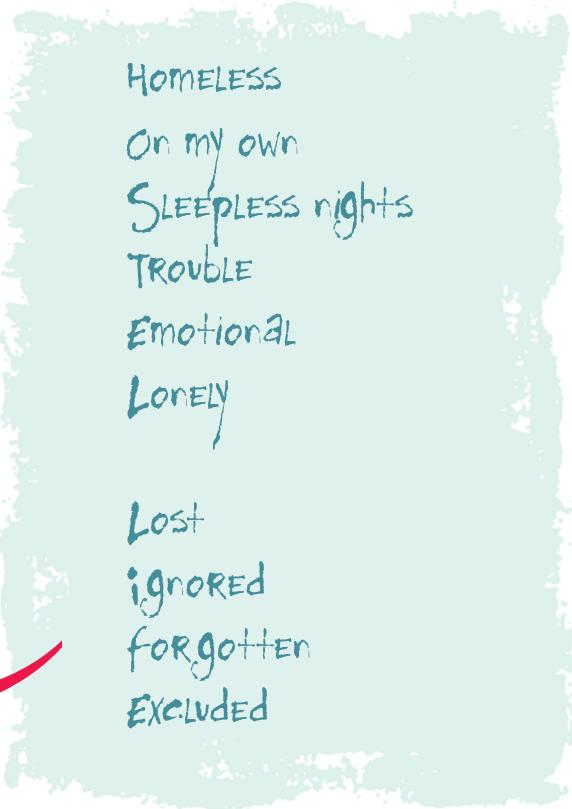
Unfortunately I didn't last long there as I ended up letting three other people stay because I felt sorry for them as they were also homeless. This was a bad idea as my house ended up in a bad state. I was always drinking as they drank every day.

One evening somebody came to my door causing hassle, then the people I had staying with me went out with knives causing more trouble.

i didn't think i WAS EVER going to get my own place.

I had a meeting with the staff of the halfway house on my birthday about me staying there. I had to leave there and then or they were going to phone the police. I was gutted, I couldn't stop crying. They told me I had a bed at the hostel but I didn't want to go. I got an hour to pack my things and leave and the staff packed the rest of my things.

I then ended up back in the hostel. I was back at square one, I felt I was going nowhere. I didn't think I was ever going to get my own place.





KAREN

My story

One minute I was staying at home then a huge row erupted and I was out on my ear but to be honest it never bothered me until much later.

I wouldn't have said I was stupid, just naïve. At school I thought money grew on trees – you don't think about bills or the consequences to having a house, it's not a thing you think about when you're at school.

I remember my first night in my own home, I was only 17 and with every little noise I heard my head was straight up from that pillow wondering what it was. I never slept a wink all night! I absolutely hate being at home on my own and it especially bothers me at night, I find it SCARY even after doing it for years.

i wouldn't have said i was stupid, just naïve.



KATIE

PART 1

Scared and nowhere to go!

I am 21 years old and recently I have been through a really rough time - over the past year and a half I have been homeless. My daughter was only three months old when I became homeless. With no sense of where to go I felt scared and alone.

My mum and dad helped me out until the Accommodation Resource Centre gave me temporary accommodation. I could have been placed anywhere in the central belt. Luckily enough I was placed in Tamfourhill which isn't that far away from my family.

I was in there for just over a month when they placed me in a flat in Falkirk, four storeys up. The place was not up to standard. We spent two days cleaning it from top to bottom.

It was tough because I was placed with another family and I was allocated one room for me and my daughter while they had the other two rooms. We had to share kitchen, bathroom and living area. I was placed there for three weeks when I couldn't take anymore sharing with anyone so I moved back with my mum and dad



until I was given my own accommodation, which was five months down the line.

I was allocated my own flat which my support worker came and looked at with me. It is a two-bedroom maisonette – upstairs downstairs. So once I collected my keys and signed the missives and good behaviour agreement, the flat was my own.

PART 2 **Getting my keys – PARTY ON** **DOWN!**

The day I got my keys and signed the missives I thought to myself, "Yes - party on!"

I had nothing for my house except for a carpet that my mum and dad gave me. I had organised for my friends to come to my new flat to see it and they brought a carry out. I thought nothing more than wanting to party so I went over to my mum's to get the carpet. She wasn't for letting me take it because she wanted me to stay with her till I got more things. But being 16 I wanted to party ... as you do. So I dragged the carpet all the way from my mum's to mine.

I can remember stopping at the traffic lights, pressing the button to cross the road and everyone sitting watching me thinking, "What is this young lass doing?" The carpet was really heavy and I was glad to get home to have a drink, so when I eventually got there – drinks all round!

Eventually I laid the carpet and when I eventually fell down drunk I slept there.

PART 3

Free party for all

Music blaring and there's me sparked out on the floor, two bottles of Buckfast and half a bottle of vodka, no awareness of what was going on around me.

Hadn't a clue who was in my flat or what they were up to. When I eventually woke up there was writing all over the walls and the carpet was soaked. Oh well, I suppose not wanting to be a party pooper I poured another drink down my throat. No idea of the consequences surrounding my neighbours.

See, the problem was at 16 I hadn't a care in the world. This area was a Neighbourhood Watch area filled with old people. There I was – first tenancy and ready to party.

'ASBO' was the letter heading. What's an ASBO? With no clue, well you can guess the letter went to the back of the drawer.

Partying on I finally realised what I had got myself into when I got an eviction notice through the door.

Two weeks to leave or be put out. Where would I go...?

Friends

Many friends come and go
But when you find that someone special
They will let you know

They will dry your tears
And be a listening ear
When you come across things in life
that you fear

But true friends will never leave your side
Someone to listen, someone to guide

Unwanted guests

Being on the bottom floor flat,
unwanted or unexpected visitors have easy
access to letting you know that they are
looking for you.

Firstly it's a chap at the door ... no
answer?? Next it's your bedroom window.
If still no joy then they try every other
window in the house.

Usually visitors at 2–3am are drunk and
looking to either party or for somewhere
to crash 'cause they canny be bothered
going home.

But reality kicks in – this is my flat, I may not
have much left but what I have got, no-one
respects it.

So NO, I am not answering the door!

Next thing you know SMASH! A brick
through the window.

Why is that, just because I don't wanna
party anymore?

Family

I wouldn't be who I am today
If it weren't for my family
They have been there through
thick and thin
And helped me when things were
looking grim.

They gave me a lot of furniture
they had spare
I needed all I could get – I didn't care,
You are grateful for all the littlest things
When you have nothing, when you spread
your wings.

Going it alone

Freedom at last
With no one telling me what to do
I had my first tenancy
But I didn't have a clue

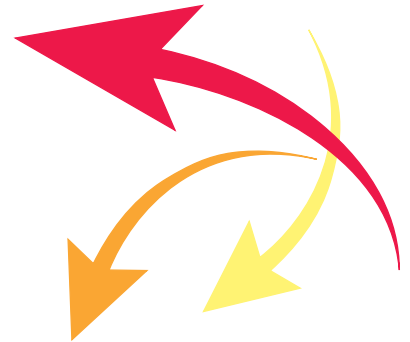
I signed my papers
I got my keys
Partying for hours
Till I drop to my knees

The police came round
To keep the noise down
I was annoying my neighbours
But I didn't frown

My friends didn't care
It wasn't their house
They just wrecked what I had
I was really sad

I ended up with an ASBO
I had to follow the rules
But my visitors didn't care
They were just fools

It's my home ...

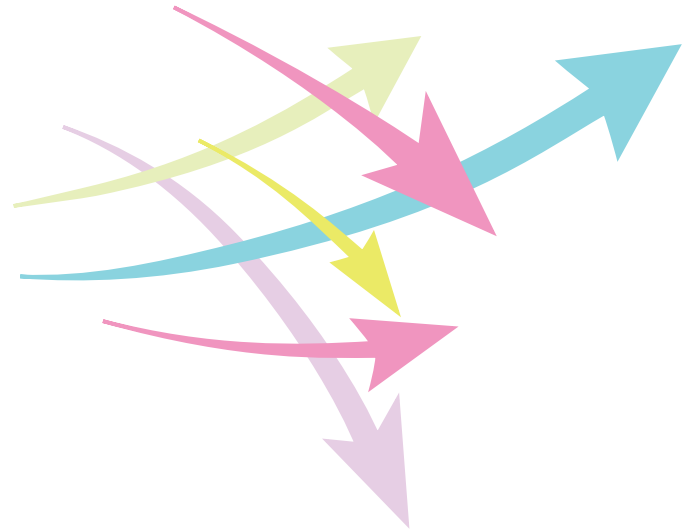


Parties

When you're having parties,
Everyone wants to be your friend,
They don't care about your property,
They just party till the end,

They trample beer on your carpet,
And there are fag burns on your couch,
It's not them that has to pay for it,
My pockets are now empty ... OUCH!!

BUT TRUE FRIENDS WILL NEVER LEAVE
YOUR SIDE. SOMEONE TO LISTEN,
SOMEONE TO GUIDE.



KIRSTY

Gardens - who needs them?!!!

Once you have your own tenancy, you are responsible for your garden and it can be really hard, especially if you share a garden with other residents who don't take their turn.

If none of the residents do the garden, the council will send people out to cut it and will bill all the residents for it. This can be really expensive.

I have a small front garden and a shared back garden. I always stay on top of my front garden, as my child uses it. We keep his toys there as it is ours!

The back garden, however, is a different story. There are four of us in the block with two washing lines that we're meant to share (which sometimes causes arguments) and none of us take responsibility for the garden. You would think with us all being adults we would take turns.

And as for the bins, we all just take our own out – some neighbourly love that is ... (at least we can't get an ASBO, for not taking the bin out) ...

So like I said: gardens – who needs them?!



H is for home

H IS FOR HOME, MY SAFE HAVEN
O IS FOR ON THE STREETS, WITH
NOWHERE TO GO
M IS FOR MANAGING, JUST MANAGING
E IS FOR MY EMOTIONS
L IS FOR LONELINESS
E IS FOR EMPTINESS, I HAVE NOTHING
S IS FOR SILVER COINS, THAT'S
ALL I'VE GOT
S IS FOR SHOPPING
N IS FOR NO ONE, NO ONE AROUND
E IS FOR EVICTED
S IS FOR SUPPORT
S IS FOR THE SILENCE, THERE'S NO
ONE AROUND, NO SOUND.

Home Alone

Home alone with nowhere to go
and nothing to do
I stand alone with just my empty thoughts
I feel so alone, oh just what to do
Why can't I be elsewhere like you?

The upkeep of a tenancy that's new to me,
nobody showed me what to do
Everyone assumed I would know, but I
didn't have a clue
Where to go or what to do, what bills to pay,
what paths to choose?
What route to take, maybe moving out was
my mistake!

There's so many places who want money
and how do I pay when I don't know how?
I need help to sort out my debt, but how to
get help I don't know how. Do you?
Party all the time

Party all the time! No, that's not me – when the neighbours are partying all the time it does ma heid in! Constantly banging, shouting and playing loud music! Throwing things out of the window into my garden, it's going to end in war!

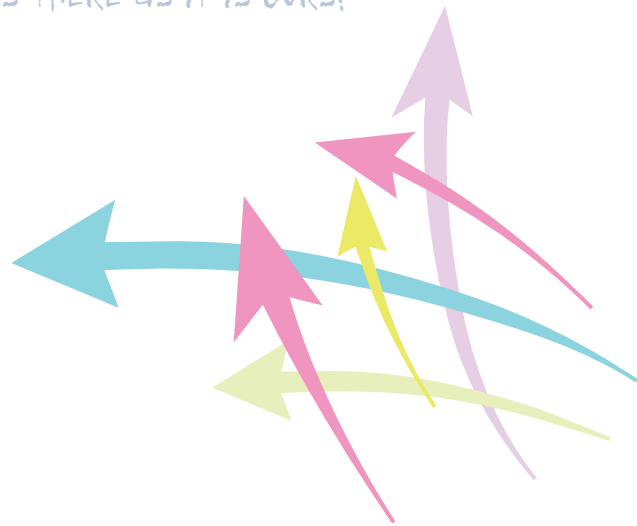
In the community

Well, what's good about your community?
Do you feel a part of your community?

Well, where to start?

There's not much to do in the community but the one good thing about my so called community is the local family centre that I managed to get my son a place in after a year on the waiting list.

i always stay on top of my front garden, as my child uses it. WE KEEP his toys there as it is OURS!



MICHAEL

MICHAEL

No place to go

This is a story about me and how I became - and how I felt being - homeless.

It started when I was not getting on with my stepdad. I came home from school one day and all my clothes were outside the door. I went to my sister's and asked if I could stay but my sister had no space. She said I could sleep on the couch so I got all my stuff and put it in her loft. I used to sleep at different friends' houses.

I left school and got a job. I went to work feeling very tired after I had nowhere to sleep but floors.

I felt rage and was very tired going round friends' houses for a place to sleep and to get washed and food.

When I was 18 I got offered my first house in Glasgow Road in Camelon but I did not take it. I stayed for a month with my sister - it was a nightmare because I would wake up with the dog sleeping on my face or my niece and nephews jumping on me.

After that I got a house in Hallglen. I got all my friends round and had a big house party where all my neighbours came up and joined in. But I soon realised I had bills to pay and I stopped the parties and paid the bills and decorated my house the way I wanted it.

My dog Rocky

My dog is seven months old and is in his teething stages. He was born on 2 October and I got him in November.

I did not know how much responsibility it was having a dog in my house and how much money it costs for food, vet bills, repairing my house and his toys.

When I got him I had to paper train him, which was hard but after a month he did it. He still does the odd toilet in the house but he usually barks to let me know he wants out.

He loves his baths and when I try to go for a bath he tries to jump in. I have to lock him out but he starts to bark and cry.

He chewed my kitchen carpet and I had to get a new carpet.

He did chew my furniture but he does not do it now or he gets skelped!

His first time in the snow he loved it! He ran up this hill and down again but there was a big hole at the end and he fell in it.



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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