

**I was homeless,
I was you.**

Campaign Toolkit



Introduction

We are looking for your help to promote a new campaign which encourages people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to take the first step towards turning their lives around.

Three people who have experienced homelessness are sharing their stories in a bid to get those who are currently rough sleeping or facing homelessness to seek help and engage with the support available.

In line with the challenge nationally, Bristol has seen an increase of people sleeping rough over the past five years.

Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping is a key priority for the city as a whole, not just the council. Finding lasting and effective solutions to these challenges requires a holistic and joined-up approach from organisations and citizens across Bristol.

This toolkit will provide you with a range of materials to help promote the campaign and direct people to the support available.

How can you help

We would be grateful if you can help us share this campaign through your networks.

One of the key messages of the campaign is how important it is to get help early.

It is vital to seek advice as soon as possible. It is much easier to get the help you need before you find yourself homeless.

Visit www.bristol.gov.uk/homeless for more information.

We have provided some sample text and materials below for your use.

Many thanks for any help you can give.

Posters and postcards

It's quick and easy to put up a poster in your workplace, public areas or other venues. Use the download button below to access pdfs that you can print yourselves.

Posters

**Hi,
I was homeless, I was you.**

I know you hate living in a hostel but can see no way out.

Not everyone grows up in a loving and happy family. I was really lonely – nobody was on my side and nobody wanted me. I tried to take my own life a couple of times as I couldn't see a way out. I came home one day and all of my things had been packed into bin bags. One day I had a home and the next day everything was gone. I was homeless and moved into a hostel where I met a much older man who started abusing and controlling me. I eventually reached out for help. I'm in a much better place now and even have hopes and dreams for the future. **I could have given up a number of times, but I'm still here, and I'm still fighting.**

Help is out there.

Danni aged 24, Bedminster

To read my full story go to:
www.bristol.gov.uk/I-was-homeless
If you are worried about your housing situation go to the Citizen Service Point at 100 Temple Street, BS1 6AG or visit:
bristol.gov.uk/homeless

**Hi,
I was homeless, I was you.**

I never thought it would happen to me.

I had an operation so I couldn't work and at the same time my landlord said he was evicting me and my children because he needed to do repairs. I couldn't find anywhere I could afford to rent and no one wanted to take people on housing benefit. I had no idea where we were going to end up and that was terrifying. The worst bit was the guilt. I felt like a failure as a mum because I couldn't look after my family. I went to the council and told them we were about to become homeless and we were given temporary accommodation. A few weeks ago, me and my daughters moved into a council house. Now we can finally put down roots. I feel like I have my life back. **I know things might be difficult and you might be scared, but there is help out there.**

Get help early.

Lisa aged 40, Barton Hill

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**Hi,
I was homeless, I was you.**

I know what it's like to wake up on the streets.

I grew up in south Bristol and we didn't have a lot. I left school at 13 and got in with a bad crowd. It started with cannabis, but soon moved on to crack and heroin. At 17, I started sleeping rough and was addicted to drugs. There were a lot of unhappy times. I used to look at people on their way to work and wonder 'why can't that be me?' There were a lot of services trying to help me, but I wasn't ready. Thankfully, they didn't give up. After 13 years on the streets I tackled my addiction and got into supported housing. **I am living proof that there is a different life for you. You just need to be ready to reach out and take it.**

You can turn your life around.

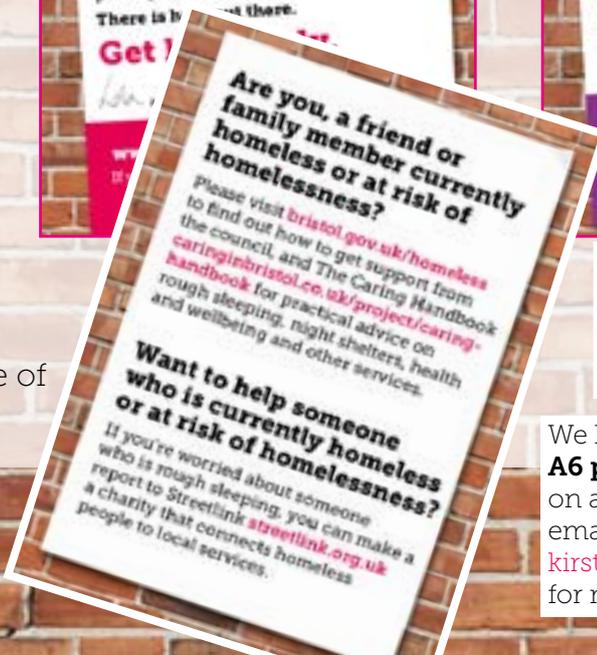
John aged 47, Bedminster

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Postcards



Reverse side of Postcards



Download a copy here

We have a limited number of printed **A6 postcards** which are available on a first come, first served basis by emailing us at kirsty.stilwell@bristol.gov.uk for more information.

Please mention the campaign in your e-bulletin, e-newsletter or on your websites

Here is some copy which you can use to promote the campaign.

Full press release

The full press release gives more background to the approaches being put forward. You may want to use some of this detail.

[View the full press release here](#)

Copy for newsletters/websites

Letters from Lola, Danni and John have started to appear around the city.

All three have very different experiences of homelessness, but their message is the same, you can turn your life around.

The key is to get help as soon as possible.

Are you a friend or family member currently homeless or at risk of homelessness?

Visit our [homelessness pages](#) to find out how to get support from the council and the [Caring Handbook](#) for practical advice if you're experiencing homelessness or hardship.

Want to help someone who is currently homeless or at risk of homelessness?

If you're worried about someone who's rough sleeping, you can make a report to [Streetlink](#), a charity that connects homeless people to local services.

Donating just £17 to [Safer off the Streets](#) (#SOSBristol) will provide a bed for the night for a homeless person.

You can also donate £3 to homelessness prevention and support services via [TAP for Bristol's](#) donation points around the city.

None of Bristol's night shelters can stay open without dedicated volunteers. If you could give up a night each week or month to support a homelessness shelter, please contact these charities:

- [St Mungo's](#), email volunteerservices@mungos.org or call 020 3856 6160
- [Julian Trust](#), email volunteers@juliantrust.org.uk
- [InHope](#), call 0117 330 1230
- [Caring in Bristol](#), call 0117 9244 444

Please post messages on your social media channels

We've suggested some copy below, but feel free to write your own.

Throughout the campaign we will also be tweeting, posting, sharing and re-tweeting posts via Twitter and Facebook. We'd be really grateful if you can share some of the posts and tweets from

[facebook.com/BristolCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/BristolCouncil) and [@BristolCouncil](https://twitter.com/BristolCouncil)



Download this image for use in your posts

Twitter

Three people who have experienced homelessness are sharing their stories in a bid to encourage others to seek help & engage with support. All 3 have had different experiences, but the message is the same - you can turn your life around [#IWasHomelessIWasYou bitly.com/2MqKvAb](https://bitly.com/2MqKvAb).

Facebook

"I couldn't find anywhere I could afford to rent and no one wanted to take people on housing benefit. The worst bit was the guilt. I felt like a failure as a mum because I couldn't look after my family." Lola, aged 40, Barton Hill.

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All three have had very different experiences, but the message is the same - you can turn your life around. bitly.com/2MqLa4D

Twitter

"I couldn't find anywhere I could afford to rent and no one wanted to take people on housing benefit. The worst bit was the guilt. I felt like a failure as a mum because I couldn't look after my family." Lola, aged 40, Barton Hill. [#IWasHomelessIWasYou bitly.com/2MqLa4D](https://bitly.com/2MqLa4D)

Twitter

Think you, a friend or family member might be at risk of homelessness? It is vital to seek advice as soon as possible. It is much easier to get the help you need before you find yourself homeless. [#IWasHomelessIWasYou bitly.com/2MqKvAb](https://bitly.com/2MqKvAb)

Twitter

"Not everyone grows up in a loving & happy family. I came home one day & all of my things had been packed into bin bags. One day I had a home, the next day everything was gone." Danni, 24, Bedminster [#IWasHomelessIWasYou bitly.com/2MqLa4D](https://bitly.com/2MqLa4D)

Facebook

Homelessness is not limited to the people we see sleeping rough on the streets. There are families in temporary accommodation, individuals staying in hostels and many more people we don't know about sofa surfing or sleeping in unsafe buildings.

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#IWasHomelessIWAsYou bitly.com/2MqKvAb

Twitter

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"I know what it's like to wake up on the streets. At 17 I started sleeping rough & was addicted to drugs.

"There were lots of services trying to help me, but I wasn't ready. Thankfully they didn't give up." John, aged 47, Bedminster.

#IWasHomelessIWAsYou bitly.com/2MqKvAb

Facebook

Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol, said: "These three very different experiences help us to understand that there is no one size fits all solution. Homelessness is complex and everyone's individual circumstances are different. We are working with a wide range of partners to end homelessness in Bristol, but one of the most important messages I want people to take from this campaign is get help early.

"There is a lot of support and services available that could help keep you in your home, but the longer you leave it, the more difficult it becomes. If you are worried about your situation, or about someone close to you, please do reach out for help."

#IWasHomelessIWAsYou bitly.com/2MqKvAb

Twitter

Working with partners, the council offers a range of prevention services to support people at risk of homelessness. These interventions stopped more than 3,600 people from becoming homeless in 2018.

#IWasHomelessIWAsYou bitly.com/2MqKvAb

Facebook

Working with partners, the council offers a range of prevention services including a welfare rights and money advice service and a Youth Homelessness hub (Bristol Youth MAPS) to help young people to stay with their families where possible. These interventions stopped more than 3,600 people from becoming homeless in 2018.

In the same year organisations collectively helped more than 900 people who were homeless, via a range of support services including the successful St Anne's Winter Night Shelter.

#IWasHomelessIWAsYou bitly.com/2MqKvAb

Twitter

If you are concerned about someone who is rough sleeping ANYONE can make a street referral via Streetlink.org.uk
#IWasHomelessIWasYou bitly.com/2MqKvAb

Facebook

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Want to help someone who is currently homeless or at risk of homelessness? None of Bristol's night shelters can stay open without dedicated volunteers. Could you give up a night each week or month to support a shelter? Find out more at
bitly.com/2MqKvAb #IWasHomelessIWasYou

Twitter

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