



Your Voice Network Neurodiverse group

Thursday 3rd August 2023

Ice breaker question

Things people are looking forward to in the next year -

People said:

Losing weight, Going to a cat café, Going to see Hamilton,
Trip to Disneyland Paris, Going on holiday, Birth of nephew,
Visiting family, Being near to partner, Redecorating

Main Discussion

Housing

Feedback given by the group

- One member of the group has had notice to move out from landlord (a section 21 notice) . The language in the letter was very unclear, it seemed like they wanted her to move out temporarily. The letter caused a decline in her mental health. She found somewhere move with another autistic person but it fell through. She has been in touch with the local homelessness prevention team and a housing advisor. She is keeping up with house share Facebook groups and lots of people even those who are neurotypical are struggling to find somewhere to live. It was suggested that they look into housing associations and give evidence of their diagnoses but they don't have one. Not having a diagnosis can be a barrier to getting housing. Being sent a section 21 causes a huge amount of anxiety and there is a lack of support in managing that kind of situation.
- Some one said they had been in a similar situation however because they had a diagnosis they were able to go to the council with proof of eviction and was given gold band priority. However they were offered a place in a B&B but chose a hotel for a month.
 - Somebody had to leave her family home and was off work on universal credit. They got very lucky as a friend saw and advert on Facebook, so they pounced on it and gave the landlord a dossier of the reasons they would be a good tenant despite not being employed.
 - This person is trying to look for more permanent housing, however the letting agency told her that people had to put in applications and then a tenant would be picked. Once the capital they have is released from the house they own with their ex they will be able to access a shared ownership house. The mortgage company associated with the shared ownership association have said she won't get a mortgage, but their broker feels they have done everything possible and it may happen. She recommends that other people who are struggling to get housing could say that they are neurodiverse and say what type of help they need as she has never been asked to prove it.
 - This person also went to an estate agent and when she told them that she had autism and was on benefits he said that he had a code of practice to follow with vulnerable people and he would work differently with her. Its good to see that reasonable adjustments are made even in things like mortgage applications
- Some one said unfortunately you often have to present the absolute worst version of yourself in order to be considered eligible for support that you may be entitled to.
- Someone said they had been in hospital a number of times hospital for mental health conditions and was put on a section 117. There is a duty of care for the local authority to support someone in this situation. He had to bid for his home with the council in 2015 and was lucky to get it. He has been living there since 2017. Housing association places are not easy to find.

Feedback given by the group

- Someone who lives in their own home feels she is in a very privileged position as she lived with their family for some time and her mum helped to sort out getting her flat. However, she doesn't have a safety net as she could not move back in with family if things got too difficult financially. Feels that a universal basic income could help people. There is a pressure to work and this risks autistic burnout. Somebody else mentioned that they too were struggling with needing to work, but leaving their job would leave them with no income other than their partners, which they couldn't survive on.
- A lot of autistic people struggle with executive function and being able to keep their home to a neurotypical standard. This can translate to not being considered deserving of a home because you don't conform to conventional standards of cleanliness. Someone said that they had never wanted their own home until the land lord saw inside her flat. Someone said that they had been evicted from private renting because of not keeping to their standard. With social housing they have never had an inspection
- Someone said they currently have a great landlord and feels very lucky that they haven't put the rent up. He knows of people in the community who live in very poor conditions. Pleased to hear there are people who can help with getting autistic people mortgages. Everyone he knows in full time work is running themselves into the ground and feels it is not right for anyone to put themselves through that much stress and tension.
- It was mentioned that if you've been hospitalized, all sorts of help is available both for mental health and housing ... if you haven't then you can only access the 'top layers' of 'standard' support (or in medical terms, primary care). The gap of provision is huge and does little to prevent people eventually, painfully, ending up in hospital or just suffering a great deal. It was felt by someone else and the group agreed that you can't get help for anything until you reach crisis point either mentally, physically or financially. Surely dealing with these things before crisis is better? Even from a money driven government perspective supporting people before crisis will actually save them money in the long term.
- It was mentioned that many new build sites have social housing plots. Some are shared ownership and it maybe it's worth looking at any new housing developments and looking at the criteria for applying for social housing that way.
- Some one said the rental market is crippling financially .. whether you get the 'subsidy' (housing benefit or equivalent) or not . please that there are prospects for those of us on benefits to gain a mortgage .. it was something that I considered when my landlady changed to my landlord and they nearly offered my house up for sale

- Somebody said that Barclays are one of the very few institutions which will consider benefits only applications even better if there is SOME evidence of earned income -- that will boost your eligibility to apply for mortgage a lot.
- Someone told us that their GP told them that working is the best way to get opportunities, like she wasn't aware of that. Was also told that they might need to only work and sleep for 3 months to get their energy back. It was suggested that they looking a GP surgery associated with Mendip Vale. Some GP practices now have a mental health nurse and one person has found them really helpful. GP had referred her to a lot of inappropriate services and the MH nurse has referred them to secondary MH services who contacted her very quickly.

Recommendations

- There needs to be support for neurodiverse people to navigate the stresses of section 21 notices. A w of people being recognized as vulnerable regardless of whether they have a diagnosis or not.
- Neurodiverse people who have issues with section 21 notices need to be inked with homeless prevention workers as soon as possible.
- There could be a guide/ directory of criteria for social housing and shared ownership, or private landlords who have a experience of renting or helping neurodiverse
- More information how to ask for reasonable adjustment in mortgage brokerage or getting housing benefit or support .

Neurodiverse online Conference

- We have been given the green light to hold an co designed co produced online conference. The rough idea for the meeting is "what's it like to be Neurodiverse in the South west today?"
- I have put together an initial questionnaire to gather some early ideas if there is something that You'd like to say and haven't got space too please email me <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FY53CZK>

Next meeting

- Next meeting is Thursday 7th September
- Sammy is having an operation in August and will only have just returned to work so they have asked Andrew to be on standby to chair
- We will be talking about pain and neurodiverse suitable pain scales