**Client expectations and choice. How do we deliver? – practice exchange pre-read 28/10/2021**

**Current knowledge**

We often get asked by authorities how to manage potentially “unrealistic” expectations of clients within highly pressurised housing markets and the limited options available. Especially when this leads to the rejection of suitable offers of accommodation or support.

A key principle of the housing-led system we advocate for at Crisis is “individual choice and control”. People are ‘placed’, ‘sent’, ‘signposted’ and, if very lucky, ‘housed’.

Research suggests that increasing a person’s sense of choice and control improves their outcomes. But how do we do this in the context of a statutory service? How do we meet people where they are, acknowledge their preferences and reach a realistic outcome? What practices are people using that others can learn from? And how do we do this within the structural constraints we operate in?

We know that the housing first model provides choice and control but this can be limited and how can we shape the service to increase the choice and control to all customers?

The importance of strong empathetic relationships with customers to enable good quality communication to take place plays a critical role in reaching realistic outcomes for the service and the customer. Can we improve services in areas that customer’s report dissatisfaction which include:

* Bad employee attitude
* Unfriendly service
* Inefficiency
* Unhelpful tech
* Unknowledgeable employees

How can we start to make the shift towards a service where respect for the choices that a customer can make is held at the centre of the service and the provision of “honest” options, that promote an informed choice, are always available?

How might we empower front line staff to give customers choice and control and manage expectations from within our statutory services? How can techniques like motivational interviewing, trauma informed care and psychologically informed environments help us to frame discussions with customers to address these needs?

**Good practice in this area**

* Provide honest feedback to the customer from the outset
* Give staff the authority to make tailored decisions for customers
* Consider planning services using a person-centred approach
* Give space and time to listen to the customer’s story and understand their needs
* Work collaboratively with customers, giving them power within the relationship

**Something to think about before the exchange.**

* Can we share any areas of good practice?
* How much choice and control do we already offer? Which customers benefit from this this?
* Do some staff members manage this with customers in a more successful way than others?
* How honest are we currently with customers regarding timescales, likely accommodation etc?
* Are we working in true partnership with others to provide the same dialogue to customers?