



ASK US
Advice toolkit

CASE STUDY: TAMAI

This resource is part of the Ask Us Advice Toolkit. For more information or queries on any of the topics covered in this toolkit, or to find out about training and consultancy the Ask Us partners can offer please contact enquiries@1625ip.co.uk



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CASE STUDY: TAMAI

Advice category for Ask Us

Housing, legal, mental health

Presenting the Issues

Tamai* was a young professional in her early twenties, living in social housing following a previous history of homelessness.

Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, Tamai had been working full-time. She struggled to make friends, had very little contact and a strained relationship with her family. Tamai had experienced threatening abuse in supported housing and had suffered with poor mental health, even whilst working.

Almost six months before referral to Ask Us, the isolation of the lockdown contributed to Tamai being signed off from work by her doctor with depression and anxiety. This affected her motivation and her ability to process thoughts and carry out tasks. While her benefits were being processed, she had no money to cover rent and accrued rent arrears. It was then that she received an eviction notice.

When Tamai questioned her housing provider about the eviction, she was told that there had been other factors alongside the rent arrears which had contributed to them asking her to leave. She told Ask Us that she was not aware of the other issue and felt that her poor mental health and circumstances beyond her control were not being taken into account. The threat of eviction adversely affected her mental health. She asked for it to be reconsidered and attended a zoom appeal meeting with her housing provider, without any legal representation or an advocate there to support her. She reported to us that she was not able to concentrate during the meeting and didn't remember details of what went on. She was prompted to seek help from 1625 Independent People, as they had originally supported her when she was first homeless.

Barriers

Tamai's barriers were to accessing advice because she was experiencing a mental health crisis. This was exacerbated by the overwhelming and confusing language of housing law and also by her past experience of trauma relating to their previous homelessness.

She was also very fearful about being judged by services and potentially not being helped. Her mental health issues and previous experience made it difficult for Tamia to trust and engage with services.



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Making phone calls was too overwhelming for her. She was unable to engage with home visits and to look for key information and paperwork relating to her eviction was too much for her. A solicitor referral was made but Tamai was unable to fill in the legal aid paperwork

Ask Us contribution

After the referral from 1625 Independent People, Ask Us consistently encouraged Tamai to contact the council to make a homelessness assessment.

Ask Us helped Tamia to understand complicated legal language around housing including making notes about key issues relating to her case. With this information we were able to refer her to a local housing advice agency with a clear outline of her case.

Ask Us made a referral to a specialist support service for young people with insecure housing and experiencing homelessness. A dedicated support worker was able to meet Tamai to go on walks and talk about her situation.

With someone that was able to provide this regular support and offer a listening ear, Tamai was able fill out the paperwork needed to get legal advice and the support worker was able to accompany her during the initial meetings with the solicitor.

Tamai was also able to reflect on other aspects of her life and she realized that applying for a less pressured job so that she could return to work was the right decision for her. She began to engage in healthier coping mechanisms and reduce her self neglect and self-harm.

Outcomes

Tamai's housing case was ongoing when Ask Us ended our casework with her. She is represented by Bristol Law Centre and they are ready to face court together when the time comes.

Tamai has a new job that she is starting soon.

Tamai told us:

"If I didn't have the experience of Ask Us's support to get this help in place and get all the evidence needed for referrals, then I think that I would have been desperate and on the street. I see people struggling on the street all the time and I was scared that that was going to be me. This experience has helped to believe there is more options for me out there in all areas of my life. Everyone starts somewhere, and I feel like I'm on the beginning of a positive journey."



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Tamai also gave feedback to Ask Us that she wants all young people with mental health issues to get a dedicated support worker who can help them engage in an action plan to engage with legislative processes. She also told us that she wants advisers and professionals to know that it's so important to regularly update young people and be clear on who they are and what role they are able to have in her case when providing a phone service. This feedback is reflected in the Ask Us toolkit.