

There's been one facet of recovering from my homelessness experience that's been overlooked by most government funding, and that's been funding towards post-homelessness mental health support. Access to it, and the cost of adequate mental health support has been extremely prohibitive in my recovery and is still a major hurdle.

What's often been overlooked in regard to funding is the trail of destruction homelessness leaves, in areas such as self-esteem, self-image, everyday experiences, the struggle of survival, lack of security, and violence. What's often missed is addressing the trauma of what lead us to homelessness, the trauma of what we experienced while homeless, and the trauma of trying to piece our lives together afterwards.

It's taken me more than 20 years after my homelessness experience to get to a point where I could address these issues while attempting to be a fully functioning member of society and the economy. There was 20 years of struggle that could've been avoided if appropriate funding toward homelessness mental health recovery were in place. My homelessness period ended in 1999, and it wasn't until 2017 that I became comfortable even talking about my experiences in a general sense.

In 2018 I was diagnosed with PTSD and in 2021 this diagnosis was upgraded to Complex PTSD. This diagnosis was primarily related to the violence I faced while sleeping rough. Additionally in 2021 I was diagnosed with Binge Eating Disorder due to not having reliable access to food or money while I was sleeping rough. This taught me to hate and fear hunger and is something I still struggle with.

I struggled with undiagnosed complex mental health issues every day. Without the tailored mental health support I needed, I attempted to take my own life. On top of that, I struggled with and continue to struggle with relationships, friendships, employment. I learned to expect violence, and being in crowded environments is still incredibly overwhelming as I'm forced to assess everyone as a threat. I can't accept compliments, concern or affection.

I felt completely incompatible with society as it felt like I had no place in society and society had no place for me.

I wanted to find my place in wider society and the economy so badly that it drove me to attempt suicide. There was no tailored support for helping my complex mental health needs that resulted from homelessness. This is in dire need of funding.

The focus of housing funding is great, but it will be in vain without mental health support to help us recover from the trauma of homelessness.

Thank you.