

“Voting isn't going to get me a house, it's going to get me nowhere. It's basically just giving someone a job. Why would I vote for a system that's against me”

### Harry, 33 Hidden homeless

Harry has been homeless for most of his adult life.

Living in the large city where he had grown up, Harry flits from friends' spare rooms or sofas to shelters. He had experienced two instances of rough sleeping but vowed never to do it again as he was worried for his safety. There is also an element of pride, he tries to distinguish himself from those who sleep on the streets, though he does offer them advice on where to stay. He has a large number of friends who he can stay with, though many are struggling with little resources themselves, or have trouble with drugs. Though friendly and charismatic, Harry has a tendency not to trust people (even his friends) assuming they would try and steal from him.

Harry spends most of his time looking for property. He spends time in day centres where he enjoys a cheap hot meal, or goes to the shops at the end of the day to get discounted fresh food. Harry is currently on Universal Credit, which he mostly uses for food and tobacco, though he likes to look for good deals for clothes in charity shops. He feels like he can't have too many belongings or even do a big food shop, as he doesn't have a place to store them.

Harry has presented himself as homeless to a number of organisations but says they don't believe him as he 'doesn't look homeless,' making him question what homelessness is.

#### Key themes with Homeless

- **Often very difficult backstory** Sexual exploitation, suicide, substance misuse, domestic violence
- **Can feel 'outside' mainstream society.** Might not want to be part of mainstream, might not want to be found



“What is it I’m saving for? Because who knows what’s going to happen in this country... or you have a bunch of friends who’ll rob you.”

### Voter registration

Harry feels disempowered and has little motivation or desire to vote, though feels like this could change for the right candidate. He doesn’t feel that voting will help in anyway, and is essentially a mechanism to ‘get someone a job’. He has never been registered to vote, and feels like he hasn’t been anywhere long enough to do so. A canvasser had once spoke to him, but Harry was not convinced and felt they were trying to push a political view on him.

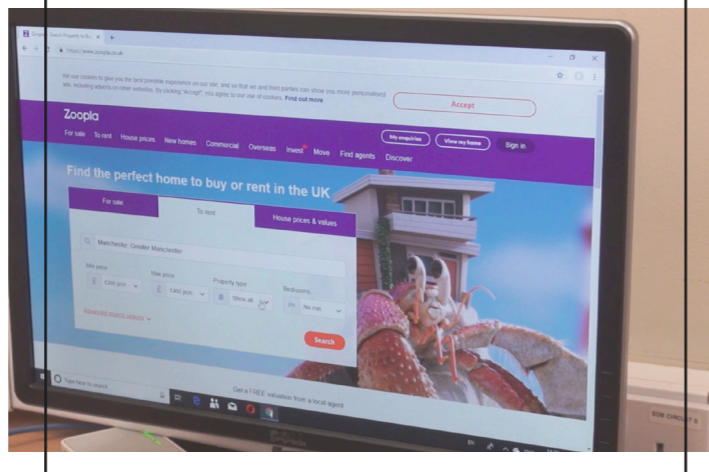
Harry is aware that being on the electoral roll has an effect on your credit score. He is very proud of his good score but believes that you are blocked from certain services (like getting an overdraft) if you are not on the electoral roll. Because of this, he is mildly inclined to register.

### Support networks

Harry grew up with his mother and siblings, after his father left them when he was a child due to alcohol abuse. He had a turbulent relationship with his brothers and sisters and has currently very little contact with them. He credits his mother for ‘keeping him good’ and often calls her on Skype but hasn’t physically seen her for two years

### Technology

Harry spends a lot of his time on websites such as Zoopla or Gumtree to look for properties. He does this on his smartphone, or on shared desktop computers at day centres, libraries or internet cafes.



### Services, interactions and outreach

For Harry, his local day centre is a trusted place to send his post. He has to show his ID to retrieve them, an aspect he likes as he has had trouble in the past with letters being stolen.

The day centre also offers classes, donated clothing and hot meals, which helps Harry not resort to stealing. Being in a large city has meant Harry sometimes has to travel long distances, which he does via bus.

Harry feels like he needs help and is asking for help, but is often ignored.

“I’m screaming out for help, but help’s nowhere to be found. I’m dying for a good life.”



### The future

Harry’s short term goal is to find a place to live, and then to ‘sort his life out.’ However, he often gets pessimistic, and worries about whether he can maintain such stability. He flips from feeling that there is no point trying as something will always go wrong, to passionately trying to make lasting changes to his life. Harry is tired of living so sporadically and ‘just wants a life like everybody else.’

### Questions to consider

What might Harry not know about electoral registration?

What would be the best medium of communication with him?

What are the barriers to Harry registering to vote, and how could you tackle these?

Who does Harry interact with and who does she trust?

What are Harry’s feelings and motivations?



“My ex found me through a website that showed my address when I voted. I think it was through the open register....now I'm worried every time I vote, he can find me.”

### **Mariam, 23** **Vulnerable mother in a women's refuge**

Mariam was married when she was 19, and started experiencing verbal and physical abuse from her husband when she became pregnant. With the abusing continuing when her son was born, she decided to call the police and escape to her family home. The police then warned her that she should move away her and her son's safety. Mariam called the National Domestic Line, which recommended calling different women's refuges across the country. When a space opened up, Mariam had to pack their things quickly as they had to get there within 24-hours to secure the room. Unfortunately, her ex-husband found them after only a few months, prompting them to move to another refuge. She has been at this refuge for three years.

She shares her residence with several other vulnerable mothers and their children, and is classed as 'insecurely housed.' She and her son sleep in one room, and share communal spaces. Whilst her son goes to nursery, Mariam works a few hours a week and spends the rest of the time cleaning, shopping, seeing friends, going to support classes.

Despite the long distance, Mariam and her immediate family are close and they try to have as much contact as possible. Coming from a religious background, her faith is very important to her. Mariam wants to pass on these cultures and rules to her son, but finds this hard to do in her current circumstances. She wants to rebuild her life but also lives in fear of her ex-husband and not having enough money to rent privately.

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### Voter registration

Mariam was registered to vote when she first entered her previous refuge and had gone out to vote. Because she was placed on the open register, her husband had found her address online. She is now off the open register and is reregistered anonymously at her current residence but has become wary of voting.

Support workers at the refuges had helped her on both occasions to register as part of their initial process. She is not sure how she would do so by herself, though she would probably check online or make a phone call. Mariam also feels quite cut off so is often not aware if there is an election happening.

Despite all this, Mariam believes it is important to vote.

**“I feel stuck, I’ve got nowhere else to go. They won’t help me unless I present myself homeless... I can’t do that to my son”**

### Systems, process and technology

Mariam has a phone which she regularly uses to contact her family and some friends, as well as her support workers. She does not go on social media, and prefers face to face interactions or talking on the phone.

Mariam feels like she is always ‘running around’ to places, leaving her little time to relax. She does not have much private space or her computer. Though she was initially anxious about the area, she now likes to get out, walking to most of her activities.

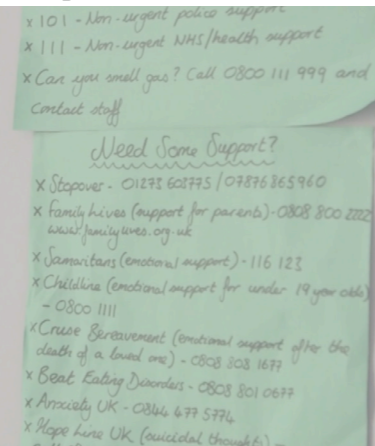


### Services, interactions and outreach

Mariam has a number of different support workers from refuges and social services who help her with both practical aspects of her life, such as working with a solicitor or support on applying for benefits, and her emotional wellbeing. Beyond this, she regularly goes to a women’s support group at a local church and attends the neighbourhood mosque where she does charity work.

Mariam wants to move on from her current programme and find housing through the council. However the contract between her programme and the council that streamlined this process has expired, leaving her feeling stuck. She has been advised to declare herself homeless in order to be eligible for temporary accommodation but she is worried about how this may affect her son, particularly his place at primary school and safety.

**“I’m cautious of who I mix with and I try not draw attention to myself.”**



### The future

Mariam plans on finding a full time job when her son goes to school. She aspires to have her own home where she could set things the way she wanted, which she cannot do in her current shared house. She feels that she needs more specific counselling for domestic abuse, but feels like she just needs to carry on and be optimistic.

### Questions to consider

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*What would be the best medium of communication with her?*

*What are the barriers to Mariam registering to vote, and how could you tackle these?*

*Who does Mariam interact with and who does she trust?*

*What are Mariam’s feelings and motivations?*

“Voting? I may heard about it in school in a class or a lesson...? No one has ever talked to me about joining the electoral register...”

### Tom, 28 Rough sleeper

Tom is a young man cycling in and out of rough sleeping in a small city.

Tom had a turbulent upbringing, experiencing both physical and sexual abuse from his early teens. He became a father when he was 17, and was also helping raise his partner's daughter. His relationship with his partner became abusive and Tom was arrested for domestic violence. Shortly after, he came out as gay. From that period onwards he had spent a lot of time around the gay area of town, cruising and taking drug, eventually becoming a sex worker.

Recently, Tom had found out that he was HIV positive, which severely impacted his mental health. He set fire to himself twice, forcing him to give up his tenancy and leading to time in prison and then homelessness. After being kicked out of a number of hotels in his home city, he moved to a smaller, neighbouring city, which he finds unfamiliar and horrible. He currently is staying at a hotel as temporary accommodation but had spent six months on and off sleeping in a multi-storey carpark.

The city council initially refused his application for accommodation as a homeless individual, forcing him to sleep on the streets before getting on their books. He has since been in five hotels or temporary accommodations.

He has no contact with his father nor siblings but is still close to his mother, who he sees from time to time. Now that he is HIV positive and people are aware of it he can't earn his money through sex work anymore. He has to make any prospective client aware of his situation and the stigma attached to the disease, particularly in his current city, prevent him from living the lifestyle he previously was used to.

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### Voter registration

Tom has never voted no registered to vote. He has never thought about it and is unsure whether he can or not, due to the lack of a permanent address and his previous prison sentence. Tom doesn't think anyone has talked to him about electoral registration since he had been in secondary school.

Tom isn't politically engaged and has little knowledge of what is happening politically. Growing up, he doesn't remember his family ever talking about voting.

He personally thinks that the system is not working and there is a lot of stuff to sort out. However, he does feel that it is important to vote and children, especially his children, should be encouraged to do so. It is their future.

**“In these hotels, there are families trying to get off the streets, but others who are blatantly taking the piss...I do get into fights often..”**

### Systems, process and technology

When he was involved in sex work, Tom had used social media to advertise his services. This was mostly through his smart phone.

Tom's only forms of ID is his bank card, a DWP letter and a photo ID of his disability bus pass. The charity Men's Room helped him apply for the pass and Tom uses their premises as his care of address for the pass as well as for his benefits. He is not allowed to drive and so does not have a license, and had set fire to his childhood passport.

Tom is on a number of different medications and takes up to twelve different pills per day. These are for both his HIV and for his mental health conditions.



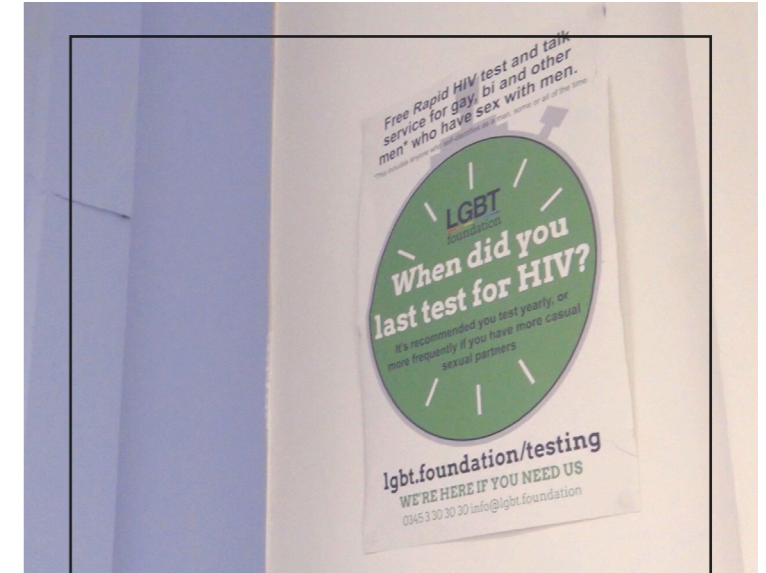
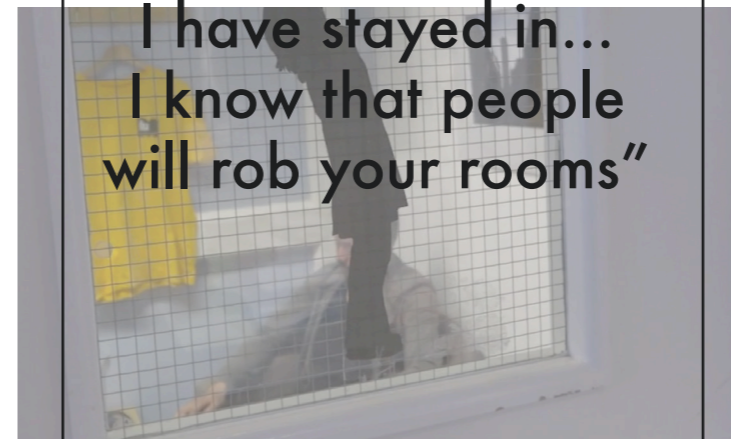
### Services, interactions and outreach

Having moved away from his hometown has meant Tom feels cut off from services he knows about and can trust. Support from his previous mental health team had stopped since he had been to prison, and despite safeguarding conditions, it had taken two months to get a new mental health team in place for him.

Tom gets Employment Support Allowance but no longer receives Personal Independence Payments as he had missed a number of appointments. He feels this was because he was moving frequently. He has gone from £1200 a month to £150 every two weeks.

Tom has visited two different homeless charities. He had heard from a homeless friend that they provided hot meals and showers, and after going, he was given a support worker. Tom finds it difficult to go to group sessions but the effort they put in to keep in touch means a lot to him.

**“Sometimes, I haven't received letters in places that I have stayed in... I know that people will rob your rooms”**



### The future

**“I'm right at the bottom but just above being on spice. I hope I can get to the top, to the light.”**

Tom is unsure where his future lies. He feels that he could equally go one of two ways: up out of homelessness or descend further into instability. He often feels that he's given up and that he cannot see anything changing.

**“As long as my mum and children are happy then I can die in peace.”**

### Questions to consider

*What might Tom not know about electoral registration?*

*What would be the best medium of communication with Tom?*

*What are the barriers to Tom registering to vote, and how could you tackle these?*

*Who does Tom interact with and who does she trust?*

*What are Tom's feelings and motivations?*