

Reading Time: 8 minutes

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Anyone who bothers to check this blog on a semi-regular basis would have noticed that I've not really posted in a month. Anyone who's been listening to Breaking Down, Breaking Down will know that there's not been any new episodes in a couple of months, and anyone who is here because they saw my news piece about the state of Black Country Healthcare on BBC News / BBC West Midlands will be wondering who the hell I am!

I'm going to address the following in the next couple of blog posts, starting with number 1.

1. What's been going on in my life.
2. [What's happening to Breaking Down, Breaking Down.](#)
3. [What's the story about the news story.](#)
4. Support Groups and Networks.
5. My future plans for 2025 and beyond.

In short, it's been a tough couple of months for me. The eventual date to move out of my old house came and went, and along with a mental health crisis, things were massively up in the air for me. Oh, I'm also now legally divorced, which is somewhat positive. Let me explain.

Back in November, once I knew that the house was sold STC, I approached Dudley Council, and applied via their homeless team that I would be homeless by late February. I was assigned a homeless case officer, and a support worker of sorts. Now I've been homeless before, so that wasn't the most daunting bit, it was about what would happen to me, my stuff, and at one point my cats. Throughout November, December, and January, the only thing that was offered as support was a Rent Deposit Guarantee, and my so called support worker would email me every 2 weeks with properties that I had already looked at online and applied for, and then a number of properties that would be way out of my price range. It was like they were trying to set me up to fail, with a pathetic carrot and stick approach.

See, even though their handbook states that you can't be denied private rental housing due to being on benefits, the challenging housing market (More people than properties), combined with the fact that estate agents use affordability pre-screening to weed out so called DSS candidates. If you do make it to viewing, it's correct that you can't be seen to be treated unfairly, but when there's 20 people looking at a property and you're a landlord,

which one would you take: The person on benefits (Which I'm on because of being on long term sick from my job as a university lecturer at Birmingham City University), or someone who has a stable income and a sexy credit score. Even some of those who were at the bottom of the class when I was studying the odd Real Estate Module could give you the correct answer here.

I had tried to applied for housing association housing, however only one provider would let you sign up, unless you are on Dudley's housing list, which is different to the homeless list. Despite it being two groups of people after the same thing (Albeit with one being more urgent than the other), you can't be on the two lists at once. One at a time. This would mean rescinding any homeless support, and moving to the longer queue. It's a situation about as screwed up as border control at a Vietnamese Airport. I should know, I've been to Vietnam twice, and both times it was chaos.

I went to about 15 viewings, and got nothing back. One estate agent, G&T properties tried signing me up for things which I was in no way interested in, specifically HMOs. With HMOs being one of my specialist research areas, both for students and general society, I know the pros and cons. I've also lived in one once in London. With my specific mental health needs, this would also be an issue for me, as I have massive anxiety issues being around people whom I don't know, as well as personal safety, security and safe space needs which a HMO simply cannot provide. I was offered an interview at some supported accommodation (Which I have been banging on about for 18 months), but with my deteriorating mental state, I tried to go there one day early, ended up missing my actual appointment due to sleeping through alarms, and I couldn't contact them as there wasn't really a contact number. Trying to explain this to Dudley Council was like talking to one of the metal statues in Dudley Town Centre. Pillar to post, with no outcome. Shameful, and they were completely unapologetic to me.

Alongside this, I also had a house to pack up. Some of this was easy, some a lot more complex. See, As well as my mental health issues, my physical health has declined recently as well with my diabetic neuropathy, meaning that it's a lot more difficult to do lifting, moving of things etc, especially if heavy. I was able to do all my clothes, books, and office crap over the course of a couple of weeks, but the larger stuff was almost impossible. My friend was able to help out where he could, but he also had his own stuff going on, so I couldn't rely completely on him. My ex-wife, she was able to help deconstruct a few things to sell, as well as prepare things for storage. She wanted to leave the kitchen until last, as it

would have the most of 'who gets this' stuff attached to it, which is fair.

With all of this going on things started to get really dark for me. I already knew that I would have to vacate the property two days before completion to allow the ex-wife to do a deep clean, and with everything going on, I ended up in a mental health crisis with no one to really turn to. As I'll explain in another post, I have absolutely no faith in Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and I felt completely alone. I wasn't drinking alcohol to blackout / suicide as in the past, just to calm me down a bit, and I was nowhere near where I'd been in the past. This however decided to become an argument, and not wanting to have a massive blowout argument where I would do / say something stupid, I decided to just walk out of the house, never to return. I left my keys, and just walked away, determined to end my life.

I ended up via a myriad of busses and trains at University Station in Birmingham. I knew the canal ran alongside the line between there, Selly Oak and Bournville, and my plan was simply to jump into the canal and disappear. The security guard who works at University station clearly saw that I was in a bad place, and told me to call 999, and get away from the canal, which I did. I ended up being picked up by ambulance, and ended up at the QE Hospital. You don't get a bed if you are in the QE as a mental health patient, just a recliner, unless you are a danger to others, or a significant risk of danger to yourself. I was seen, told that home treatment would look after me for a week (I had to book a hotel anyway, so they advised me to get one nearby, which I did), and take it from there.

My hotel stay wasn't great. They never are. You have 4 walls, a toilet, nothing to easily eat without going to the supermarket / take out place, and no one to really talk to. I slowly gave up eating, stopped looking after myself, and my crisis was getting worse and worse. On the day I checked out, I was determined that this was it. I wasn't in the physical mindset to be on the streets again, and it was only by sheer luck that home treatment called me, listened to me, and essentially told me that if I wasn't back in A&E at the QE within a few hours, a search party would be sent out via police.

I spent the next 6 days in a mixture of A&E and The Oleaster, which is the National Mental Health NHS Trust. I must say that I met some incredibly strong people whilst in both places. One or two I hope I'll be friends with for a very long time to come. They say it only takes 2 people to have an AA / NA meeting. It also only takes two people in a mental health crisis to talk to each other to realise that they are not the only person on this blue and green earth that is having these feelings and emotions, and is struggling to cope. And it's not just a

specific age group either. I met people 10 years younger than me, and 30 years older than me. Mental Health affects anyone, at any time, and I am so grateful to the staff first and foremost at the QE for making me feel safe, welcome, and not just a burden on the NHS that I've felt in other places in the past.

My time at the Oleaster was in what is known as a Psychiatric Decision Unit. Again, no beds, just recliners, but this was supposed to be a short term stay. It ended up being days for me, because of some of my complex needs. I was given an ultimatum by Dudley Council that I could either get a hotel with my own money and wait for another appointment at this supported accommodation, or be put into an HMO, and be done with. Not both. They claimed I had missed two appointments (I missed one that I was aware of, and again, it's impossible to contact this place to reschedule), and not engaged with the homeless team (Which is utter bullshit, and I have proof if they are libellous enough to try and challenge me). The funnies thing is that the hotel which I stayed in; a Travelodge, is actually used by Dudley Council as emergency accommodation for people. So they were forcing me to pay for something which they were giving away to others, under the simple fact that I have a penis, and didn't want to take the easy way out, and was prepared to fight my case.

I had booked a hotel for a week. Before I was discharged, I received a call in terms of another interview for this supported accommodation, for two days later. Even better, I had a phone number I could contact if I had any issues. I made sure I got the first bus I could get with my concessionary bus pass to Stourbridge, to then get the first bus to where I needed to be. I turned up 20 minutes early, but it's better to be early than late. Right? My interview was scheduled for 11AM. By 12:30PM, I'd been offered a flat, and told in no uncertain terms that I presented myself in a completely different way from the referral made by Dudley Council. Without them spelling it out, they were trying to set me up to fail, but my honesty and transparency won the day.

This isn't permanent, but it's about getting me back on my feet, which is the key thing, and identifying proper support for me in the future, something which I constantly have to battle with Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust about. I have an outpatient appointment with them next week, and I'm wondering if I'm a *Persona non grata* yet. That though is another post.

I do owe a massive thank you to the staff at the QE Hospital in Birmingham, The Oleaster in Birmingham, and the people I met who helped me through and on my way whilst in hospital. I owe a massive debt of gratitude to the housing manager where I am now living,

and Dudley Council? They need to hire some staff who have a degree of compassion and understand what a mental health crisis is.

I do owe an apology to my ex wife. I could argue that the state of my belongings in storage deserves an apology too, but I don't like playing to semantics. Shit happened, and I could have, and should have handled it better. It's just so fucking hard to explain just how you feel sometimes to people who either don't get it, or are too quick to attribute situations to other situations. I wish that there's an easier way; perhaps evolution will allow us to show how we feel through a change in ear colour, or by a flashing dot on our head. Or maybe we just need to be safe enough in ourselves to talk, even if we won't be listened to. That's my reflection for later. Also, the cats are safe. Please don't worry!

One post down, a boatload to come. Thanks for reading.

Peace, Rage And Love xx