

The Social Bite Village

The Experience so far

Data results from 01/08/2018 – 31/01/2021



SOCIAL
BITE

The Status Quo in Temporary Homelessness Accommodation

In major UK cities, there are traditionally two primary forms of temporary homelessness accommodation, Homeless Hostels and Homeless Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs).

- » The Hostels typically accommodate a large number of people affected by homelessness within a single building in a congregate environment. The facilities and level of support vary significantly with many facilities offering no support at all.
- » Homelessness B&Bs are private sector single bed accommodation units that are provided to local authorities as a temporary form of homelessness accommodation. This form of accommodation typically offers no support to residents and is often criticised for substandard facilities.

Criticism from people who have stayed in these either of these forms of accommodation often include a lack of autonomy in relation to curfews and time restrictions for when you have to be in or out of the accommodation, a lack of facilities for cooking and cleaning, a negative experience of the social environment which can compound mental health and addiction challenges and of a lack of support. A 2018 report on people's experiences of unsuitable temporary accommodation in Scotland by Crisis¹ found of 108 people surveyed:

- » **60%** of respondents were **subject to a curfew**
- » **81%** of respondents who had restrictions on visitors found their **relationships had worsened**
- » **45%** of respondents said they had no access to a kitchen with over half of this number saying this meant they **regularly skip a meal**
- » **84%** of respondents stated that their living situation meant they sometimes or often **felt isolated**
- » **Over half** reported **feeling unsafe**
- » **88%** of respondents reported experiencing depression

¹ Sanders, B. and Reid, B. (2018) 'I won't last long in here': experiences of unsuitable temporary accommodation in Scotland. London: Crisis.

The Social Bite Village Concept



Founded by Josh Littlejohn MBE and Alice Thompson, Social Bite started life as a café in Edinburgh in 2012 that began offering employment and free food to homeless people.

To expand the charity's work into housing provision, Social Bite were able to secure vacant, derelict land in Edinburgh to be brought back into use on a "meanwhile use" basis for the Social Bite Village project. Social Bite constructed 11 innovative pre-fabricated wooden houses called '**nest houses**' which would accommodate up to two residents in each home (known as Community Members). Community Members would live at the Social Bite Village for an average of a 12-18 month period until they secured a permanent tenancy or suitable move-on accommodation.

Social Bite partnered with local charity Cyrenians to create an innovative, highly supported community for up to 20 people affected by homelessness, at any one time. The goal of The Village is to provide a different blueprint for how we respond to homelessness and temporary accommodation - one which puts support and the individual at the centre of the approach.

Since August 2018 The Social Bite Village has given accommodation and support to **37 residents**. The nest houses provide a quality living space for two people with cooking & bathroom facilities. The Village has a large community hub where the residents can cook, eat and socialise together. The hub is also the base for training and support. Social Bite commissioned Cyrenians to provide 24/7 onsite support as well as outward partnerships in the community with the local college and employers so residents can get academic qualifications and into the workplace.

Data from The Social Bite Village

In October 2020 Social Bite conducted a survey among the current residents of the Social Bite Village in Edinburgh. Below is a summary of the findings.

A Summary of the statistics:

- » **39 residents have now been given accommodation** and support within the Social Bite Village since launch in August 2018.
 - » 9 out of the 14 (64%) residents surveyed had previously slept rough
 - » 13 out of the 14 (93%) residents surveyed had previously stayed in traditional homeless B&Bs or Hostels
- » **100%** of the residents in a recent survey **preferred living at the Social Bite Village** over Hostels or B&Bs.
- » The surveyed residents when asked to rate their experience of feeling happy, secure and support out of 10 (10 being the highest) rated:
 - » **The Village - 8/10**
 - » **Hostels - 4/10**
 - » **B&Bs - 3/10**
- » **86%** of the Village residents surveyed said their time at the Village has helped them **build new relationships and friendships**.
- » On average the residents surveyed rated **the support they received** at the Village **8 out 10**, 10 being the most satisfied.
- » On average the residents surveyed rated the **accommodation** (the nest houses and community hub) at the Village **8 out 10**, 10 being the most satisfied.
- » **79%** of the Village residents surveyed said their time at the village has helped them **improve their sense of wellbeing**.
- » **81%** of people who have lived at the Village are either **happily still housed there or have moved onto a positive destination**.
- » **36%** of the Village residents surveyed said their time at the village has helped them feel **better able to secure / sustain employment**.
- » **67%** of the Village residents surveyed said their time at the village has helped them feel **better able to sustain a future tenancy**.
- » **64%** of the Village residents surveyed said during their time at the Village they have **learned new skills**.



The Experience of the Social Bite Village Residents

A recent survey of Village residents found:

» **100%** of respondents **preferred living at the Village** than their previous accommodation of either hostels or B&Bs.

When comparing their experiences of living at the Village to previous temporary accommodation, some residents commented:

"My previous accommodation had no cooking facilities, a curfew and the shared flats tended to be full of drug/alcohol addicts. Where as the village is a very nice, peaceful, mellow place to live."

"The village is better for ma mental health and I have never found a place to call home till I moved to the village"

"More freedom than traditional B&Bs, no night time curfew and not having to beg to stay out"

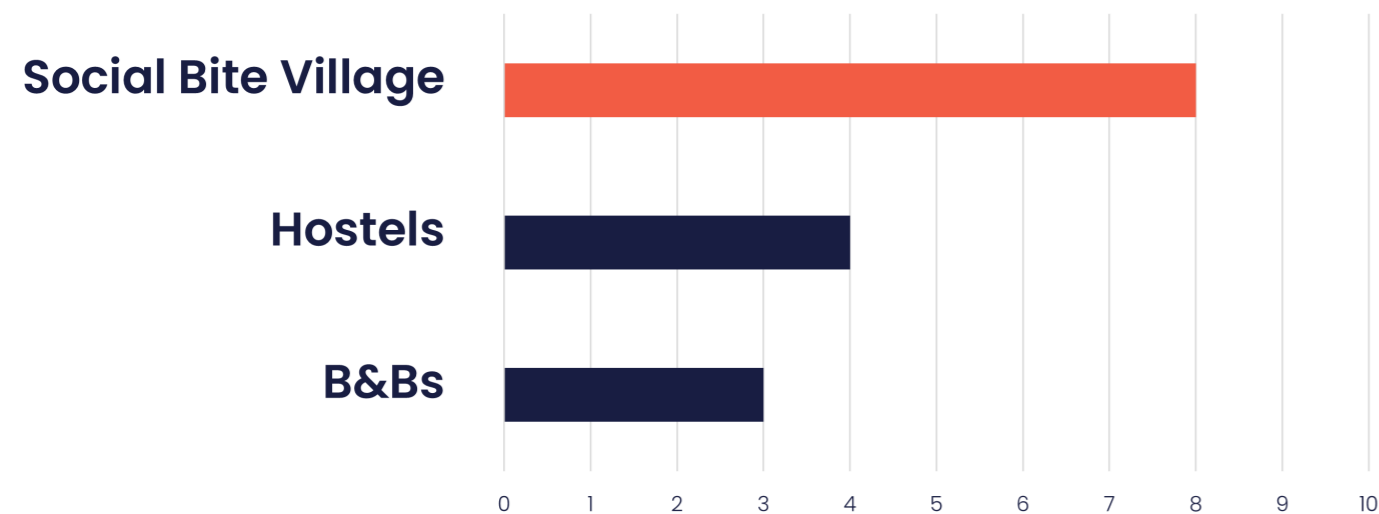
"Living in the village is a beautiful experience, we have what is necessary and more. Having a house, food and feeling safe is priceless when you don't have anything of your own. Emotional support, I cant find words to thank you for being here. Thanks also to the volunteers and workers who gave me so much support where we need it."

"No strain on my personal relationships"

Experience in Social Bite Village Compared to Hostels and B&Bs

The residents who were surveyed were asked to rate their experience of feeling happy, secure and supported in Hostels, B&Bs and The Social Bite village:

Chart 1: Average Rating out of 10 (10 being the highest)



As you can see in Chart 1, the respondents of the survey rated their experience of feeling happy, secure and supported in the Social Bite Village double compared to their experience in hostels and the worst performing was their experience of B&Bs.

Of their experience of feeling happy, secure and supported in the **B&Bs** which was **rated on average 3/10**, some residents commented:

"Living in B&Bs was like living with parents again, having to be in for 10.30pm-11pm wasn't good"

"Generally, no cooking facilities and curfews"

"Open prisons are probably better"

"You feel in danger all the time, exposure to drugs"

"Wasn't allowed to talk to other residents"

Of their experience of feeling happy, secure and supported in the **Hostels** which was **rated on average 4/10**, some residents commented:

"Small rooms that felt like prison cells. Staff were great and they do feel like friends"

"It's just bad, like really really bad, they put you in a cell, people screaming through the walls"

"The common spaces must be subject to a schedule. Nowhere to cook, wash etc"

Of their experience of feeling happy, secure and supported in the **Social Bite Village** which was **rated on average 8/10**, some residents commented:

"The Village is great, there's always something happening and there's plenty of support if needed"

"The concept is amazing"

"I have made good friendships. I feel I can talk to my keyworker and manager"

"I love the staff. The activities they get you involved in. It's good for the mind and soul you don't need to change yourself. They like you for who you are even if you're struggling"

"It is a good experience for me to live here. It has taught me how to live with what is necessary and with the most important things"



Positive Outcomes

Creating Community

86%



86% of the Village residents surveyed said their time at the Village has helped them build **new relationships and friendships**.

"I get on really well with my flat mate, plus I have quite a good relationship with the volunteers"

"I have some brilliant friendships that I would like to keep"

"[fellow resident] is ma boy. We're all family here"

"I have made friends here"

"Met guy here, we consider ourselves brothers, friend for life"

"I make friends with different people of different ages, who have lived in different situations"

"Sound, I'm good with everyone but I make friends in years and a lot of trust earned"

Receiving High Quality Support

8/10



On average the residents surveyed rated the **support they received at the Village 8 out of 10**, 10 being the most satisfied.

"I've always got help"

"[My keyworker] is brilliant"

"I have not a single problem with my keyworker she's lovely and listens to you"

"The support always with a smile and time to listen and help me. I will always be grateful to many of them"

"Support for getting work and with debt relief"





High Quality Accommodation with Dignity

8/10



On average the residents surveyed rated the **accommodation** (the nest houses and community hub) at the Village **8 out of 10**, 10 being the most satisfied.

"It's home"

"I have everything"

"I have everything I need in the house and help in the hub"



Improved Wellbeing

79%



79% of the Village residents surveyed said their time at the village has helped them **improve their sense of wellbeing**.

"I eat more now than before I moved in the village"

"The fresh air, proximity to the beach and there's always someone to talk to if you need it"

"I still have moments in where my mental health is bad and I have good days"

"The location has been good and staff were kind"

"Came out of Jail, I know I needed to deal with my past & current issue"

"I am quieter and better mood"

"With the organisations I've been working with outside the village my sense of wellbeing has improved"

"Anxiety ain't as bad but missus to be thanked for this"



Housing Outcomes

81%



81% of people who have lived at the Village are either **happily still housed there or have moved onto a positive destination**.

"I was sitting begging for money around the corner from the Rose St café when a woman approached me and told me about how to access free food at Social Bite. This led to my stay at the Village, where I was given the skills to manage my own tenancy. My time living there was essential, because the move has been less daunting. Now I am managing my own place. I'm happy to work full time now that I am settled. It's early days but I have everything I need for my home. I have friendships at the Village, some like me have moved on to their own social housing. I am now also going to come back to volunteer at Social Bite, now I am settled and have spare time."

Areas for Improvement

Helping Residents get into the workplace

36%



36% of the Village residents surveyed said their time at the village has helped them feel **better able to secure / sustain employment.**

"Still Unemployed"

"I have a health condition which restricts my ability to work"

"The village and nature in the area calms ma mind"

"I know I can get work if I want but I need to fix me before I think about that"

"Having a house where to go after work give tranquillity because you know where to go"

"Has helped me to work at Social Bite academy"

"Still some financial problem"

Helping Residents get sustain future tenancies

67%



67% of the Village residents surveyed said their time at the village has helped them feel **better able to sustain a future tenancy.**

"Yeah, its getting me back used to cooking, cleaning being respectful of neighbours again"

"No house parties. No Drink (I'm getting help)"

"Living in the village helps me save for future rent"

Helping Residents learn new skills

64%



64% of the Village residents surveyed said during their time at the Village they have **learned new skills.**

"How to stand up for myself"

"Made tortellini from Scratch"

"I cooked some meals"

"Discovered that I can be a good source of empathy for other residents. A lot talk to me about issues they cant tell staff"

"Cooking"

"I have been able to learn photography, some painting and developing my music skills"

"How to make juggling balls and to juggle"



Best things about the Village

When Village residents were surveyed and asked what the best things about the village were, comments included:

"It's better than a B&B"

"The hub and sense of community"

"It's usually quiet. It's not a B&B"

"My friends, cooking with volunteers"

"The Community and its location"

"The hub area"

"If you need help with anything you know there is someone to help you"

"Let me find out who I am"

"Support"

"That we are able to learn new things"

"No curfew, nights out aren't an issue, location is great for walks"

"Shelter"

"It's safe and secure and the staff are amazing"

"Not having a curfew"

