



'Hear My Voice': What People Experiencing Homelessness Want From Palliative Care

Healthwatch Heroes: The Moses Project

February 2026



Introduction

People experiencing homelessness often go unheard, especially when conversations turn to death, dying, and end-of-life care. Yet their experiences, fears, and hopes are crucial to designing compassionate, accessible services in the North East and North Cumbria.

As part of the regional work on palliative and end-of-life care, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees carried out a dedicated focus group with individuals supported by The Moses Project. This was not a tick-box consultation, it was a deliberate, relational piece of engagement with people who rarely get asked what matters to them.

This work was only possible because of the trust, safety, and relentless compassion provided by Brian and the team at The Moses Project. We heard repeatedly how the work of this project has saved lives.

This document shines a light on:

- The people whose voices shaped this insight
- The role The Moses Project plays as a constant presence for those with nowhere else to turn
- What the system must hear if we are serious about equitable, person-centred end-of-life care



Our Healthwatch Heroes: The Moses Project

For people living chaotic lives with trauma, addiction, homelessness, and health inequality, trust is everything. Trust is exactly what has been built, day by day, conversation by conversation, crisis by crisis.

Participants told us repeatedly:

'I wouldn't be here without them.'

'They are the only people I trust.'

'If I'm talking about death, this is the only place I'd go.'

Brian and his small team provide far more than practical support. They offer:

- Safety
- Warmth
- A non-judgemental ear
- A place where people feel seen and human again

One story captures the essence of the impact of The Moses Project.



'If I'm talking about death, this is the only place I'd go.'

A Life Saved – Quietly, Without Ceremony

One participant told us he had tried to take his own life by jumping from a third-storey window. He survived, spent a long time in hospital and had major surgery, when he was discharged late at night, he had nowhere safe or warm to go.

He said he ended up sleeping in a doorway with CCTV. It wasn't because it felt safe, it was because it was the only protection he could find. He told us he stayed there so that if he died, someone would find him, and if anyone attacked him, it would be caught on camera.

For him, that doorway wasn't a place to sleep. It was the only place where he felt he had even a small chance of being seen and staying alive.

Another time, when he was in a very dark place again, Brian, founder of The Moses Project, immediately recognised the signs and tried to get him urgent help, but he wasn't able to be admitted anywhere. So Brian stayed with him, took him for a hot drink, and sat with him through the night until he felt safe.

This is what care looks like when the system cannot step in.

This is why the people we spoke to trust only him and his team.

We want to celebrate publicly our Healthwatch Heroes, offering a place of compassion, care, and humanity that genuinely saves lives.



What We Heard – End-of-Life Views from People Experiencing Homelessness

1. Talking About Death

- Participants were not afraid to talk about death, but they were careful who they talked to.
- Family often felt uncomfortable
- Medical professionals were not trusted

Only The Moses Project was seen as a safe place for these conversations.

2. What Matters Most at End of Life

Across the group, three priorities came out powerfully:



Safety

'A warm place. Somewhere safe.'



People who genuinely care

Being surrounded by family would be ideal, but relationships are often strained.



Hospice or care home would be acceptable if staff were kind.



Being listened to

'I don't want decisions made about me without me.'

People felt judged because of addiction, and treated differently by hospital staff.

What We Heard – End-of-Life Views from People Experiencing Homelessness

3. Spirituality and Belief

Some participants described strong Christian belief or a sense of being 'guided by God,' but had no specific rituals they felt must be followed.

4. Planning for the End of Life

No one had written plans. As one person put it:

'When you're homeless, writing things down isn't a priority.'

They had talked about their wishes only with:

- The Moses Project staff
- Partners
- Occasionally family (but only when it didn't cause distress)

The biggest barrier to planning ahead was:

- Not wanting to make others uncomfortable
- Mistrust of professionals
- Lives that feel unpredictable, unstable, and unprotected



**'When you're homeless,
writing things down
isn't a priority.'**

What We Heard – End-of-Life Views from People Experiencing Homelessness

5. What Would Help

Participants said the most helpful things would be:

- Someone to listen with empathy
- A chance to tell their story and help others
- Information delivered face-to-face by someone they trust

No one trusted medical professionals. All trusted The Moses Project.

6. Planning for the End of Life

People tried not to think about death, but some lived with it daily, particularly those with serious health conditions or past near-death experiences.

They asked for only three things at the end of life:

- Warmth
- Safety
- To be cared for

One participant said his biggest fear was being discharged from hospital 'to nowhere safe.'

This had already happened to him.



Why This Work Matters

This engagement highlights something vital for the Integrated Care Board:

- You cannot reach people experiencing homelessness through a standard survey.
- Engagement must be relational, trauma-aware, and led by someone they trust.
- The Moses Project delivers care and compassion long before services do.

Because of that trust, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees was able to gather insights rarely heard, insights that must shape end-of-life care across North East and North Cumbria.

A Huge Thank You

To everyone who took part in this work, to the people who shared their stories with honesty, courage, and vulnerability, and to the people who stood beside them.

6 Thank you 9





healthwatch
Stockton-on-Tees

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees
6 - 8 Yarm Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 3NA



t: 0300 180 0660

e: info@healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk

[healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk](https://www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk)