ANN’S PODCAST

00:00 [MUSIC]

00:13 [MARK]

Dice, a series of six podcasts about social inclusion, housing and the experiences of older people from socially diverse backgrounds. This is part one, Ann’s story. A black woman living at a housing scheme where the other residents are all white.

00:34 [ANN]

It's a complex for over 55s, independent living. I moved here nine years ago and I was very, very happy here. I was a nurse and I worked all the hours. I enjoyed my job, learning disabilities, mental health and stroke, I worked on the stroke ward as well.

00:59 [JILL]

Hello. That’s Ann. A retired nurse in her late sixties. She's a black woman who lives at a medium-sized extra care retirement housing scheme in Wales, where the majority of other residents are white.

01:14

It's an attractive, well-built setup, with two floors of one and two bedroomed flats arranged around a communal space where residents can socialize with each other, take part in activities or just sit quietly on one of the many benches provided.

01:31

Ann’s story’s one of five insights into the lives of older people, as seen through the lens of their housing experiences. They're all available as podcasts on this website.

01:43

She and the other contributors have taken part in DICE, a University of Bristol study which stands for Diversity in Care Environments. My name's Dr Jillian Powell, the Senior Research Associate on the project, and with my colleagues, we've been looking at ways in which social inclusion and diversity in housing for older people can be improved.

02:06

Hearing what works well and what needs more attention. In Anne's case, she's always felt completely integrated in her community, whether previously in her work in the NHS or more recently at the scheme.

02:25 [ANN]

I've been around more white people than black people all my life because my mother was white. My nan was white. My kids are white. I married a white man, you know, so no I don't feel out of place. I mean, when I was working, some of the staff would come in and say do you want to hear this joke, and I said, Go on there and they say, will you get offended?

02:49

And I said it depends what it is. And I said, if it's to do with my colour then no I won't get offended. I'm black and proud of it. They say this joke and then another member of staff came in and they say this joke to the other member of staff and other members of staff that are have just come in would say, Oh, the thing is, we forget you’re black.

03:14:12

And I say, How can you forget and black, I’m right in front of you? And they say, well, no, because you remove. We don't realize, we forget and I say, but you can't forget when you're looking at me, so I don't understand that at all, but there you are.

03:35:08 [JILL]

Over the course of her life Ann says she's had to develop the capacity to stand up for herself and others.

03:46 [ANN]

Oh no, if I got something to say, I say I’ll say it and that does get me into trouble. Yeah, if it's on my mind, I will come out with it. If you want something you got to go for. You got to, you've got to fight and I stand up for other people here as well, my friends.

04:00

If I think something's not right, I'll say. I will not have anyone put anyone down or anything and I mean, you know, people with learning diffi… I got a few friends with learning disabilities and I won't have anyone putting them down.

04:17 [JILL]

It was the disrespectful treatment of some of her fellow residents by other residents that caused Ann to really think hard about her future there during the 2021 winter and spring lockdown, so much so that she was on the verge of moving out.

04:33 [ANN]

There's a few people here, that are not very nice, to be fair. If you have learning disabilities, they don't want to know. They don't want to interact with you, you know, also, if you stand up for yourself, then they talk about you behind your back.

04:56

And you know, we we we all know this is going on and we've reported it. Some of us have reported it. We've got to try, the other people have gotta forget about these few and we've gotta we live here, we've got to make our lives, here now, we've got to look after each other and that's what we do.

05:19 [JILL]

Ann says that she's encouraged by the response of management to the concerns that she and other residents raised.

05:28 [ANN]

If I've got to go to them with anything, they listen to me. They're approachable, they are approachable. Things did go downhill a bit, but things are starting to lift again now with this Covid.

05:46

It was very rare that I came out to my flat the front way. If I was going in and out, I would go the back way, so I didn't have to see anyone and now I’ve started because sometimes that was for you wasn't very good and I didn't want to be in that.

06:07

But now there's different management and things are starting to lift now and the last couple of weeks I've been coming out of my front door, people have said to me, including the management, Oh my gosh, I haven't seen you around for a while. Yeah. I said, Well, I'm starting to come out and mix more again.

06:30 [JILL]

Ann confirms the disrespectful attitudes of some fellow residents towards others had been getting her down.

06:37 [ANN]

Well, I spoke to someone in management and she said to me, she said, I have to go and get something from the main doors and I went up with my friend, my neighbour. This particular person that works here, said to me, we were, we don't see you and this was a new member of staff. She said, well, we don't see you and I told them my name and everything and introduced myself.

07:10

And she said, why? And I said, and she said don’t let them bother you and my friend said to me, well, I can't believe it because she usually speaks up for herself she won't let anyone mess with her.

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But with COVID and me not being well and being in and out of hospital, it just put me down. I just didn't want to bother with anyone and and I didn't want to put up with anyone’s nonsense.

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And I said, oh, I said, I feel like moving. What you mean you feel like moving? I said, well, I got my name down with the Council for somewhere else and she said, You know, go nowhere. She said she and my friend said no I’ll lock her in her flat.

07:57

She's not going nowhere. And so after, I had a good chat with to her, to this member of staff. She's right up in my estimation, she's brilliant. She was the one that said, come on now, you’ve got to come out and you've got to be yourself.

08:17 [JILL]

Ann is very clear that the issues she's had to address with management have nothing to do with her being in the minority, a black woman, in a majority white housing scheme.

08:29 [ANN]

No, there's nothing. If there was, I would make it known to everyone, don't worry about that. No, it's nothing like that. I haven't come across anything like that. In fact, there's only three people that I don't speak to, out of all these flats and everyone else, and my friends. So no, and the three people wouldn't dare say anything about my colour, I tell you now. It’s nothing like that.

09:00 [JILL]

In terms of our findings on the DICE research project, Ann's experiences highlight the important role staff and management have in creating housing environments where all residents feel valued and supported.

09:15

Achieving this can sometimes require a systemic response that addresses the whole community, not just individuals. Where creative solutions are sought to manage conflict when it arises within the community to develop safe, secure and inclusive housing environments for all residents.

09:42

Alongside this podcast, you can listen to the experience of four other people in the context of their housing and a sixth one about how and why we've conducted the DICE research project. Thank you for listening.

09:55 [END]

10:06 [MUSIC END]