

# IT STARTS WITH HELLO - BUT IT CAN'T END THERE

By Neil Starkie

This week is Homelessness Week 2025, and the national theme, 'Homelessness Action Now', is a powerful call to arms. It challenges us to move beyond awareness into meaningful, practical response. At The Spiers Centre, we've long believed that homelessness doesn't just happen overnight, it builds, quietly and invisibly, in the lives of people around us. It starts with missed payments. It starts with skipped meals. It starts with silence.

That's why we launched the It Starts with Hello campaign, because reaching out early, that first conversation with a service such as The Spiers Centre, can open the door to connection and support long before things spiral into crisis. It's about early intervention, yes, but more than that, it's about human connection.

Last night, I heard a phrase that struck a deep chord: "We are human beings, not human doings."

So much of our identity today is wrapped up in productivity, in what we do, how we earn, how we contribute. But at The Spiers Centre, we sit with people at some of the most vulnerable moments in their lives, and what they need most in that moment isn't judgment or a checklist. It's to be seen, to be heard, to be valued, for who they are as human beings, not for what they may have done.

Take the young mum facing rent she can't afford after her partner leaves. The older couple who've worked their whole lives but now can't afford food after paying the mortgage. The teenager sleeping in his car because home wasn't safe.

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We do this every day:

- Providing financial counselling to help people manage overwhelming debt.
- Offering emergency relief to keep the lights on or put food on the table.
- Supporting those impacted by family and domestic violence with referrals, advocacy, and compassion.
- Listening, really listening when someone says, "I don't know what to do anymore."

Homelessness is not just the person on the street. It's the family teetering on the edge. It's hidden, it's growing, and it demands action now.

But action starts with awareness, awareness starts with connection and connection can start with something as simple as a hello.

So this Homelessness Week, we're asking you – not to do something grand, but to notice the signs, to check in, to start the conversation. Because often, what someone needs most is to feel safe enough to reach out before the crisis hits. That's the heart of the It Starts with Hello campaign – breaking down the myths that stop people from asking for help. Myths like: "I have a job, so I shouldn't need help", "Others have it worse", or, "I should be able to fix this myself."

The truth is, financial stress can affect anyone and reaching out early isn't a failure, it's a strength. The Spiers Centre is here with practical help, a listening ear, and a safe place to begin again.

Because when we recognise each other as human beings, not just human doings, we open the door to early support and maybe, just maybe, we prevent homelessness before it begins.

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