



MEET A TENANT

> *Izzy Kingie is aged 26, and has been living in social housing in Auckland for around three years. She tells HousingWORKS about moving from a state of fear to safety.*

Izzy Kingie is a 26 year-old transgender woman. Born and raised in Auckland, it's a place she happily calls home.

In recent years, though, things have been tough for Izzy and her family. Home wasn't necessarily a happy place to be. As someone who prefers a quiet, understated life, an act of kindness on Izzy's behalf became a terrifying experience that turned the family's collective world on its head.

"That was a big mistake that I now regret," she explains to *HousingWORKS*. "I was trying to do something out of the kindness of my heart, because I'm not a heartless person. I took this guy in, who was the same age as I am, give or take a few months."

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"My mum, my brother and I learned about human nature the hard way. He was claiming to have nowhere to go, so I gave him my terms and conditions [on living with us] and he said that it was alright, but then he started inviting a lot of people over and, basically, he didn't respect any of my rules. He turned around and s--t on me."

As Izzy further explains, "A lot of wannabe gangsters and hoodrats that were his friends found out where he was living and they started mistreating my property. I had a good handful of these hoodrats all wanting to sleep over just because I had this one particular person in my home, so I tried to kick them out. Too many of them were saying they had nowhere to go, when they did – they had their parents to go home to, their guardians. They weren't being respectful to my mum when she was trying to sleep for work."

"I became intimidated because it was hard to get rid of the lot of them," confesses Izzy. "They wouldn't go away, even when I threatened the police onto them, they still wouldn't stay away. It's like they never took me seriously at all, like I was a laughingstock to them."

The final straw for Izzy and her family was a robbery that occurred around the same time they gave their houseguest his marching orders.

"Me and my family went out one night," she recalls. "We locked our house up, came back and found that someone had been in our house and taken some things. They stole my brother's bike that was locked up in the shed by booting the shed door open."

"None of the neighbours heard or saw anything," she admits. "They weren't able to call the police on the intruder – or the intruders – while me and my mum and my brother were gone. That's the part that scares me, that the neighbours were trying to claim that they heard nothing, and they didn't even see anything."

"These people just basically mistreated my house and s--t on

me. I felt betrayed by this particular person, and now I'm too scared to help anyone again in that way."

Months later, after having found a new place to live through Housing New Zealand, life is certainly different for Izzy – and, thankfully, for the better – but the experience at her previous home has left some deeply etched scars.

"I feel that I can't trust anyone, even if they try to say the right things," she laments. "I just don't feel like I can trust them. So now, even though I am determined to remain a kind-hearted person, I just don't want to take that risk of taking someone in that I don't know that well. I don't want to feel unsafe in my new address."

Not surprisingly, the quality of security features remains an important issue for Izzy in her housing. She makes a plea to those working in the social housing industry to keep an eye on the wellbeing of their tenants, and ensure all their homes are safe and secure. Keeping intruders out so the actual tenants feel comfortable in their own home is something Izzy feels needs to be put high on the priority list.

As a result of her experiences, Izzy is keen to ensure the location of her new home remains secret.

"Nobody knows where I stay, that's the best part about it [she smiles]. People have tried to ask me where I've moved to and I just say, 'Oh, I stay around.' I don't tell them where I live. I don't feel like it's anybody business where I stay unless I feel it's their business to know. That's my way of trying to not only protect myself but also to try and protect my home."

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The move to a new home has turned Izzy's life around. A sense of comfort and security has replaced the previous persistent emotions of dread and anxiety.

"I'm happy, I feel safe, unlike my old address," she says. "I used to feel like a prisoner, because I was scared to open a window. I refused to open up my curtains because I was scared that someone might peer in or peer through or whatever – look into my house, you know scoping it out. But now in my new address, I can open up my curtains, I can open up my windows. I say hello to my neighbours. I greet them in the morning, afternoon, evening, by saying hello when I get the opportunity to, or I wave out to them to say hi."

Izzy's relationship with her mum remains close. She alternates visits with her brother, so her mother has company across the weekend. Her intention is to ensure her Mum never feels alone and vulnerable.

"I'm trying to think of the protection of my mum and also myself, and also this house, because it's a new build. I don't want anyone over here that's going to mistreat the house and cause some kind of damage to it."

"I just want to feel safe. I want my mum to come over here on her Friday night stayovers, and I want her to be able to feel safe as well."