

HOMELESSNESS






THEMED PROGRAMME



AIM

No-one chooses to be homeless, but sadly thousands of people across the UK face the difficulty of not having a place to call home. Explore this in more detail and look at ways we can all support those in need.

ACTIVITIES

-  **The Different Faces of Homelessness**
-  **Difficult Choices**
-  **Homeless at 14: Daniel's Story**
-  **Homelessness Snakes & Ladders**
-  **The Least of These**

HOMELESSNESS

» INTRODUCTION

Being homeless simply means not having a home. This however impacts far more people than just those living on the streets. Homeless people are also those who are sofa surfing, staying in a hostel, squatting, refugees and so on.

Homelessness can be caused by a wide range of factors including, family breakdown, poverty, unemployment, mental health issues, becoming a refugee, lack of qualifications and more.


? DID YOU KNOW?

- 122,000 16-24 year olds are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the UK.
- In 2021, 1,200 people died in the UK whilst experiencing homelessness.
- The average age of death for people experiencing homelessness is 46 for men and 42 for women.
- Homeless people are over nine times more likely to take their own life than the general population.



GET LEARNING: ME & MY WORLD THE DIFFERENT FACES OF HOMELESSNESS


Challenge the stereotypes around homelessness and open the groups' eyes to the wide variety of people and situations that homelessness impacts.

- 1  Download a copy of the Different Faces of Homelessness sheet. This features 12 images of different people. This could be printed out for young people or displayed using a projector / large TV.
- 2 Ask the group to look through the 12 images. Working as one large group or in smaller groups/pairs, they should try to identify which of the images feature homeless people.
- 3 After a while, ask the groups to share their answers and thinking behind their decisions.
- 4 Finally talk the group through the answers and what each image 'represents'.
 - 1) A family who have lost their house and are having to sleep in their car.
 - 2) A lawyer whose mortgage has defaulted and is living with a friend temporarily.
 - 3) A nurse who has recently moved to the area and is living in a cheap B&B.
 - 4) A rough sleeper.
 - 5) Jesus – who lived most of his life 'homeless'.
 - 6) Daniel Craig, who was once homeless before he made it in acting.
 - 7) Lady on the street, evicted because she couldn't keep up with her rent.
 - 8) Refugee children forced to flee their home due to conflict.
 - 9) A woman who is living in a shelter after escaping sex trafficking.
 - 10) A man who sofa surfs, sleeps in shelter and spends some nights on the street.
 - 11) An accountant who has recently split up with his girlfriend and was kicked out.
 - 12) An army veteran who has left the army but has nowhere to go.
- 5 All these images represent homeless people. Homelessness can impact a wide range of people, from different backgrounds, lifestyles and more. For some it is a short-term situation and for others it is a much deeper and harder thing to escape.
- 6 If you had asked the group to describe a homeless person, most of them would have described an almost identical character (similar to image 4), however how many of them would have described any of the other images before this activity? Homelessness affects far more people than we might imagine.



GET ACTIVE: PLAYING GAMES DIFFICULT CHOICES

Explore some light hearted 'difficult choices' that are guaranteed to start a debate, before considering some real life difficult choices that people facing homelessness sadly have to confront.

- 1  Access the Difficult Choices question sheet.
- 2 Explain to the group that you are going to pose some 'difficult choices' to them. These are 'would you rather' questions, where they must decide between two options.

Example: Be able to shrink down to the size of an ant or grow to the size of a skyscraper?
- 3 Everyone must make a decision by standing at one end of the room or the other.
- 4 Once everyone has decided, ask a few people to share why they have made that decision. Let young people discuss openly and debate with each other.
- 5 After doing a few of the light-hearted questions, move on to the final three questions. These explore more difficult real life 'decisions' that people have to face surrounding homelessness.
- 6 After each question and discussion, share some of the information below each question to help young people consider more about that difficult choice.
- 7 Finally explain that for most people facing homelessness, they actually face very few 'decisions'. For them, their homeless situation may have been forced on them or be out of their control.
- 8 How did they feel having to make those tough decisions at the end? What do they think it would be like to have to face those 'decisions' for real?



GET LEARNING: ME & MY WORLD HOMELESS AT 14: DANIEL'S STORY

Find out about Daniel's story which found him homeless and living on the streets at the age of just 14.

- 1 Show the YouTube video '**Homeless at 14 after a Tragic Death: On the Streets of Manchester**' by BBC Three (<https://youtu.be/WNkDB6DdUVk>).
- 2 Afterwards ask the group for their initial thoughts on Daniels story. How do they think they would cope living on the streets at 14?
- 3 As a big group list all the fears you would have living on the streets at that age. Write them down on a large piece of paper. Fears may include threat of violence, how to access food, people judging you, staying healthy, how to keep warm, the impact on your mental health and so on.
- 4 After the group have explored all the fears a homeless person may face, reflect on them all and what it truly must be like living on the streets.
- 5 When we see a homeless person, what goes through our heads? Many of us may be quick to ignore them and pretend they aren't there. How often do we sympathise with a homeless person and truly consider the fears that must be going through their heads?



GET ACTIVE: PLAYING GAMES


HOMELESSNESS SNAKES & LADDERS

- 1 Start by asking the group to brainstorm all the different causes of homelessness that they can think of. We've provided you with a blank brainstorm sheet, or you could create your own.
- 2 How many causes can the group think of? We've provided a few examples on the completed mind map.
- 3 Now play Shelter Scotland's version of **Snakes & Ladders** (<https://shorturl.at/axEVW>) that explores some of these causes.
- 4 After playing the game discuss some of the following questions.
 - Did you find the game fair, or were certain situations difficult?
 - How many of the snakes/ladders were down to luck or chance, rather than things you could control?
 - How can the uncertainty of life for someone struggling to keep a roof over their head be like a game of Snakes & Ladders?



GET INTO THE BIBLE: UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN VALUES

THE LEAST OF THESE

- 1 Knowing what to do when you come across a homeless person can be difficult at times. Part of us is programmed to love people around us, whilst another part is programmed to never speak to strangers.
 - 2 As a group have a chat about the pros and cons of interacting and helping a homeless person. This might include pros such as it being the right thing to do, helping someone in need, and it making you feel good too. Cons might be that it could be dangerous, if you give money they could spend it on things that don't benefit them, and the fact you can't help everyone in need.
 - 3 Ask the group to consider what percentage of the time they help or acknowledge a homeless person, and what percentage of the time they look the other way and ignore them?
 - 4 Read the Parable of the Sheep & The Goats (**Matthew 25:31-46**). Reflect afterwards as a group on what they believe the parable is about and what are the key takeaway messages?
 - 5 This parable strongly encourages Christians to help those in need. Jesus makes it clear that in order to gain the reward of eternal life in Heaven, we must actively help those who need it the most. Jesus explains that helping a person, whoever they are, is just the same as helping Jesus himself. If we saw Jesus in need we wouldn't hesitate to help him, so why should we hesitate to help any other person, regardless of who they are?
 - 6 Earlier on the group looked at the pros and cons of helping a homeless person. Yet we have clear instructions in the Bible that inaction is not an option. Challenge the group to now think of as many ways as possible that we could help a homeless person. This will include things such as donating money or resources directly or indirectly to those in need, but it should hopefully include simple things such as not ignoring them, saying hello, having a chat or even just smiling at them as you walk by.
 - 7 None of us can physically help every homeless person we come across. But all of us can show our love with our words, our actions and our prayers. Are we currently doing enough to pass Jesus' test, or have we got quite a lot of room for improvement?
 - 8 Finish in prayer, praying for those who are experiencing homelessness and asking God for the strength to be the caring and loving Christians that we are called to be.
-  **"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40**



CAN YOU SPOT THE HOMELESS PEOPLE IN THESE PHOTOS?

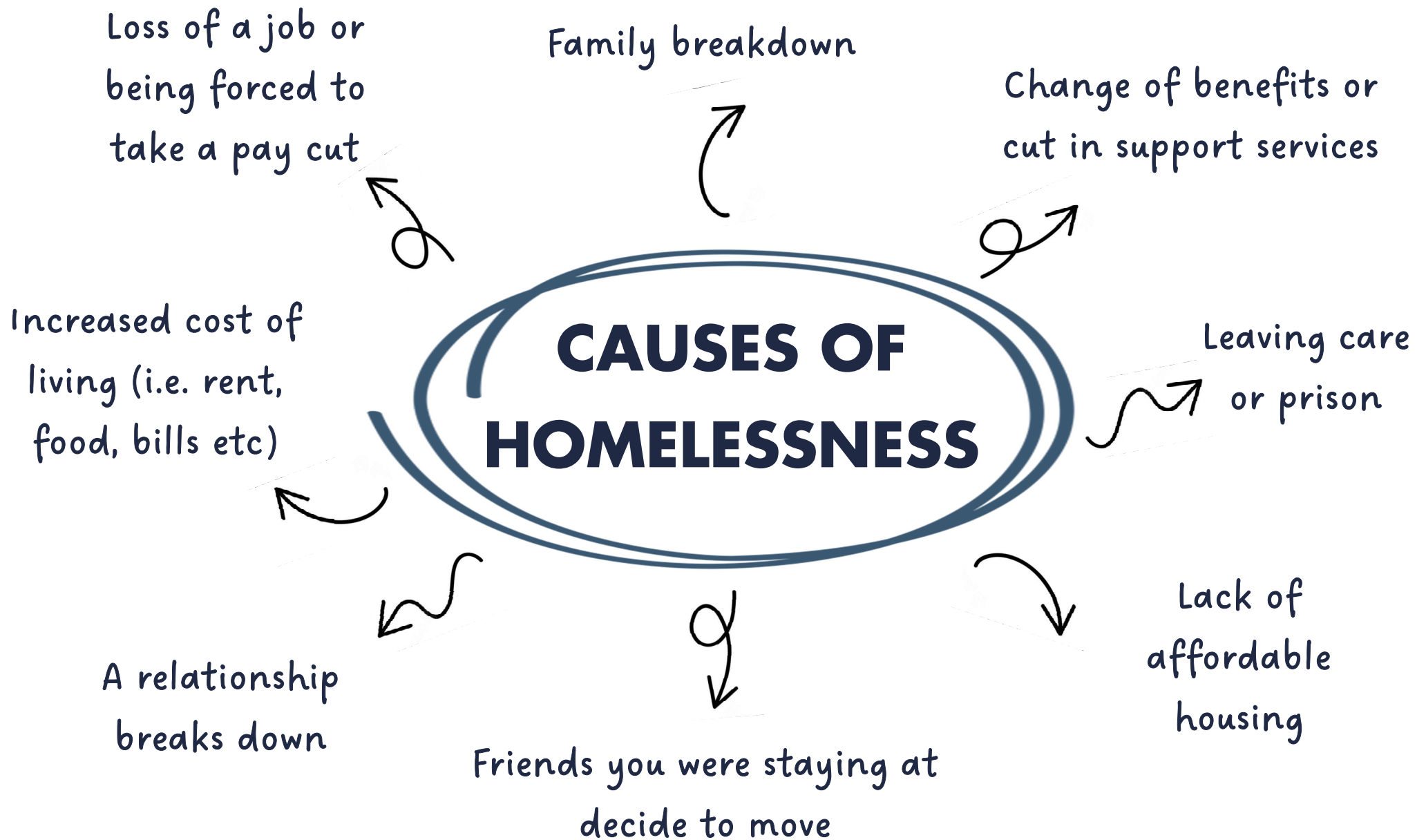
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CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS





DIFFICULT CHOICES

Below are a list of questions that can be used for the difficult choices activity.

The Questions

- **Forced to go without soap/shower gel for the rest of your life or without toothpaste?**
- **Eat a burger at every meal for a year, or not eat a burger for a whole year?**
- **Live with a donkey in your bedroom or six sheep in your bathroom?**
- **Always have bad wind or always have bad breath?**
- **Be able to shrink down to the size of an ant or grow to the size of a skyscraper?**

- **Have cold shower every day for a month or not have a hot meal all month?**

This is sadly a choice some people don't have. Many people who are homeless don't have access to warm showers OR warm meals. Whilst the thought of going without one of these for a month to us may seem like hard work, for many going without both can sometimes be a reality.

- **Have enough money for food or enough money to pay for a home?**

This is just one of the many causes of homelessness – particularly in a cost of living crisis. Some people have to make this difficult decision for real. Rent & mortgage rates are particularly high at the moment, alongside other costs which are all going up. Some people therefore have to decide if to prioritise their home or their ability to eat. This can only ever be a short-term decision though, with people in this position often ending up homeless due to their inability to pay the bills.

 - 60% of all UK adults across the UK find it a heavy burden or somewhat of a burden to keep up with their bills.
 - 25% of adults in the UK (12 million) currently have low financial resilience – meaning they could be in serious trouble in meeting bills should their financial situation change slightly.

- **Sleep in a room full of strangers or sleep alone on the street**

It is thought that over 250,000 people are considered homeless. Many are therefore faced with the only option of living in temporary accommodation provided to them by the council. Temporary accommodation can often be unsuitable and sometimes even dangerous. This is a situation getting worse due to a lack of funding and increased demand.

Some people aren't able to access this option and therefore end up on the street, sleeping rough.