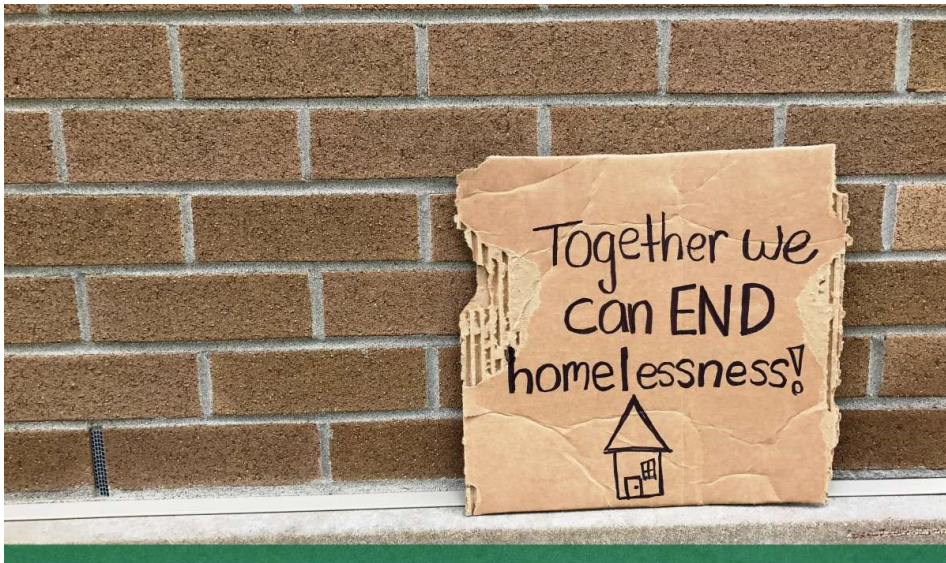




Picture 7. Valley of the Sun United Way (No Date).



Picture 8: Albl (No Date).

A Guide to being Homeless



Picture 1: Harper (2014).

‘Of all human needs, shelter is one of the most fundamental’

Blakemore and Griggs (2007) p. 200.



Picture 2. Brown (2018).



Picture 3. Gaines (No Date).



Picture 4. Whitehouse (2015).

What does being homeless mean?

Being homeless is more than just not having a roof over your head (Larkin, 2009). Liddiard (2001) cited in May, Page and Brundson expand by describing that living in unsatisfactory housing conditions can also define being homeless. Whilst Alcock and May (2014) describe being homeless as being barely tolerable.

Crisis (No Date) comment that sleeping rough is the most common form of homelessness, there is statutory homelessness, where the local authority must assist in securing a home for some groups of people, there is also the hidden homeless, the ones who are not entitled to housing assistance, these most often stay at squats, overcrowded accommodation or living on friends or families' floors or sofas.

‘Having a home is a basic human need’

Alcock & May (2014) p. 142.

Support for the Homeless.

Mind (2017) notes that support from local social services may be available if there are self-care problems, and there should be a Needs Assessment carried out by the local authority. Although Shelter Cymru (2018) state that social services may only have duties to these following groups:

- Young people under 18
 - People who have been in care
 - People with disabilities
 - People with mental health problems
 - Older people
- (Shelter Cymru, 2018).

Streetlink (No Date) describes that housing authorities have a moral obligation to provided suitable accommodation for rough sleepers during extreme cold weather periods, this is known as the Extreme Cold Weather Periods (SWEP). SWEP is actioned when temperatures at night-time is predicted to drop zero degrees or below for a consecutive of three night, this is to prevent the rough sleepers from dying due to the weather conditions (Streetlink, No Date).

Shelter Cymru (2018) says that homeless people are entitled to claim benefits, if they do not have bank accounts, then payments can be made to a Simple Payment Card.

Should a homeless person need help?

If someone homeless seems to be in immediate danger then 999 should be called, in other circumstances such as a housing situation is worrying then Shelter provide a free helpline and can be contacted on 0800 800 4444 (Crisis, No Date). Mind (2017) also provide a helpline that can be contacted on 0300 123 3393 or there may be a local Mind centre that can help with some problems. Mind (2017) suggests that an advocate can help to speak on behalf of a homeless person or finding the information that will help overcome homelessness.

Support for the Homeless.

Being homeless can impact on the social support which others find access to much easier (Larkin, 2009). Crisis (No Date) work alongside many homeless people each year with the aim to help the re-establish their lives.

Welsh Government (2015) state that the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is aimed to ensure that the homeless or people that may be facing homelessness is able to receive help at the earliest possible time. Crisis (No Date) and Mind (2017) both explain that advice has to be provided by the local authority to assist on a current housing situation and to what other housing options are available. The local authority is likely to have a duty to help stay at your home if there is a risk of being made homeless, or in finding alternative accommodation, this can be different depending on circumstances (Crisis, No Date). Homeless people can be referred to a hostel or shelter for a bed from many services (Crisis, No Date). Bines (1994) suggests that once suitable accommodation has been provided, further support is required to overcome the physical and mental health issues.

Mind (2017) assert that support from local GP practices is available for physical and mental health problems, they can evaluate for mental health issues, then provide further information, may even prescribe medication or refer to other specialists. However, Bines (1994) discovered that many had access to healthcare although this did not necessarily mean that the services were being used.

‘A home is vital for good mental and physical health’

Mental Health Foundation (2015).

‘There is no national figure for how many people are homeless across the UK. This is because homelessness is recorded differently in each nation, and because many homeless people do not show up in official statistics at all’ Crisis (No Date).

Reasons for Homelessness.

Larkin (2009) state that people are homeless due to many different reasons, and these can be split into reasons due to personal factors or reasons outside of an individual’s control. Giddens and Sutton (2017) strongly agrees and comments that there must be a number of misfortunes that accumulate at the same time to cause homelessness.

Unemployment - Being unemployed is very common amongst the homeless, they do not have many of the basic skills and qualifications, the homeless have also been identified to have a higher rate of learning difficulties, whilst not having a permanent address is a barrier to being able to secure employment (Larkin, 2009). Giddens and Sutton (2017) comments that being from a lower working-class background, due to not having job skills, can make a person more vulnerable and at risk of becoming homeless.

Low Income/ Poverty –Having a very low income and being in extreme poverty has led to people becoming homeless, even accessing welfare benefits can become a challenge for the homeless (Larkin 2009).

Victims of Abuse - Being in an abusive or violent relationship with parents or partners can lead to homelessness (Crisis, No Date; Larkin, 2009).

Crisis (No Date) states that people can become homeless when they leave prison, care or the army as they have nowhere to go to.

Giddens and Sutton (2017) states that some reasons for becoming homeless may be due to marriage breakdown, loss of employment, a younger person may have issues with home life and flee to an area and then discover they have no means of support. Crisis (No Date) agree with Giddens and Sutton (2017) but also comment that health issues, physical or mental, and even misuse of substances can even be reasons for becoming homeless.

Definition of Mental Health.

‘Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community’ World Health Organization (2018).



Picture 6. MJ Sloth Speed Recovery (2017).

‘Housing and mental health are often linked. Poor mental health can make it harder to cope with housing problems, while being homeless or having problems in your home can make your mental health worse’ Mind (2017).



Picture 5. Scottish Housing News (2018).

‘Homelessness can be a devastating experience which leaves people isolated and vulnerable’

CRISIS (No Date).

Giddens and Sutton (2017) acknowledges that homeless people are most often in danger. Bines (1994) observes that physical health deterioration in the homeless are high and that more often than not they have more than one health problem at any one given time along with mental health problems.

Physical Health Issues:

- Chronic chest or breathing problems
- Frequent Headaches
- Wounds, skin ulcers and other skin complaints
- Musculoskeletal problems
- Eyesight and hearing problems
- Fits and loss of consciousness

(Bines, 1994).

Mental Health Issues:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Drug dependency
- Heavy drinking/alcohol related problems

(Bines, 1994).

Larkin (2009) suggests that the mortality rate for the homeless is very high, the age of between 42 and 53 is average for age for death. Whilst Crisis (No Date) suggests that the average age of death is 47.

Crisis (No Date) states that violence is high in the homeless population with them being violently hit, kicked or worse. Giddens and Sutton (2017) states that a survey from 1999 discovered that 4 out of 5 homeless people were victims of crime, but many homeless are excluded from the legal system and from police protection.

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