

Tackling Homelessness
Session 1:
Homelessness
Awareness



**Young
People's
Housing
Service**

PSHE Association
Quality Assured
Resource

PSHE
Association

Tackling Homelessness Sessions

These sessions have been developed by the 16-17 year olds' Homeless and Housing Team at Cumbria County Council. We work with young people who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness, helping them to find a home.

As Baroness Hale pointed out in the Southwark judgement, very few 16-17 year olds who present as homeless will have a pure housing need. Young people often have a range of complex needs which, if they are not supported to overcome/address, can prevent them from moving on and result in a problematic housing history with repercussions for later life.

In recognition of this, there has been a significant amount of partnership work that has been undertaken in Cumbria since 2013, aimed at improving our response to young people who present as homeless, developing consistent and effective partnership working that uses good professional judgement from a range of organisations and makes best use of our evolving Early Help offer.

We have expanded our offer to enable discussions to take place at an earlier age to explain what homelessness looks like, that it is not a lifestyle choice and that a variety of support is available for those young people who have no choice but to live independently at an early age. These lessons plans are part of this work, alongside our suite of additional online resources on our website: <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/yphousing>.

This work has been made possible through funding from the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner's Innovation Fund and aims to reduce incidents of homelessness in young people by providing homelessness prevention advice to young people across Cumbria.

We are sharing these resources so we can work together as a community to support young people throughout the country. If you are in Cumbria and are interested in having one of our team support you in delivering these resources, please contact us at: CSHomelessTeam@cumbria.gov.uk.

If you have any feedback after using these resources, please contact us at: CSHomelessTeam@cumbria.gov.uk.

Overview

Legislation, government guidance and case law are clear what should happen when a young person is homeless or at risk of homelessness and they are not able to stay or return to the parental home or family network. There are some basic principles that it is worth noting to help direct learning in your lessons:

- Living independently aged 16-17 years is not a positive life choice – it is for those young people who are no longer able to stay in their family home. The experience of homelessness is damaging to young people and to their life chances: statutory joint guidance states that “it is in the best interests of most young people aged 16 or 17 to live in the family home, or, where this is not safe or appropriate, with responsible adults in their wider family and friends network.”¹
- The parents of, or those with parental responsibility for, 16 and 17 year olds are responsible for their children's welfare. Our key commitment is to keep families together in their homes wherever possible because this is best for the child.
- Young people aged 16 or 17 are still children and that as such, all agencies have duties and responsibilities to act together to protect them² if they are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

In May 2013, we undertook extensive consultation with young people in Cumbria who were experiencing or had experienced homelessness, asking what they wanted from professionals working to support them to resolve their homelessness.

These lessons plans are one element of professionals providing clarity for young people of what they can expect should they become homeless at an early age; the plans draw on and feature clips from our more recent conversations (2017) with young people who were living independently at an early age. In addition to the central aim of these sessions, other themes are likely to arise which can provide a platform for additional PSHE education learning, including:

- Friendships and peer pressure;
- Family life;
- Emotional health and wellbeing;
- Domestic abuse;
- Drugs and alcohol.

¹ Department for Children, Schools and Families (now the Department for Education) and Department for Communities and Local Government (now Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) - [Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation](#). This guidance outlines the legal duties under the Children Act 1989 and Housing Act 1996 for 16 and 17 year old young people who are homeless.

² *Working together to safeguard children*, guidance for children's services authorities and their partners published by DCSF (now Department for Education) 2010

The elements of budgeting (task 5 in lesson plan 2) offer an opportunity to develop cross curricular links to mathematics and strengthen numeracy skills.

Ground Rules

In line with the PSHE Association's guidance on Handling Sensitive or Controversial Issues and given the sensitivity of the issues under discussion, we would encourage ground rules to be established at the beginning of each session. These will help to minimise inappropriate and unintended disclosures and comments of a negative nature made towards other pupils, whether intentional or not. Suggested ground rules could include:

- Not asking personal questions;
- Respecting what people say;
- Listening to others; and
- Having the right to "pass" if you do not wish to comment.

Ideally these ground rules need to be developed together by the teacher and class and then amended as necessary. It is useful to state at the beginning of the session that if students would like to discuss any of the issues raised, they should contact their form tutor or Head of year for further support. It is also important to provide a way for students to ask anonymous questions e.g. a question box.

Disclosures

Please take time to consider the ways in which you will create a safe learning environment, including ways to reduce the likelihood of young people making public disclosures about their lived experience of abuse or homelessness issues. Ensure young people know how best to seek 1:1 support before, during or after the lesson. Any disclosures should be dealt with sensitively and in line with your organisation's safeguarding policies.

If at any point there are concerns for the young person's safety, possible child exploitation risks, safeguarding concerns or if a young person is homeless tonight, you should contact your Safeguarding Team and action this in line with your school's Safeguarding Policy.

AIMS

- Develop an understanding of homelessness issues.

OBJECTIVES

- To raise awareness of homelessness and related support.

OUTCOMES

- Explain the kinds of situations covered by the term 'homelessness.'
- Identify reasons why people become homeless.
- Assess the benefits and challenges of living at home.
- Describe the support available if a person is at risk of homelessness.

RESOURCES:

- Laminated resources
- Worksheets
- Flipchart paper
- Flipchart pens
- Wipe able marker pens
- Laptop for videos and projector

| | Section | Suggested Minutes | Cumulative Minutes |
|----|---|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1a | Introduction & ground rules | 15 | 15 |
| 1b | What is homelessness? | | |
| 1c | Celebrity handouts & questions | | |
| 2 | Homeless situations task | 5 | 20 |
| 3 | Reasons for leaving home (2 tasks) | 10 | 30 |
| 4a | Living at home: the benefits | 10 | 40 |
| 4b | Living at home: the drawbacks | | |
| 5 | Homeless tonight: what should someone do? | 5 | 45 |
| 6 | Evaluation & Assessment | 5 | 50 |

| Task | Time | Teacher's Notes | Activity | Resources |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|-----------|
| 1a. Introduction & ground rules | 15 mins total (3 tasks) | <p>Read out the session aims, learning outcomes and objectives.</p> <p>Agree ground rules.</p> <p>Remind students that if they would like to discuss any of the issues raised, they can contact their Form Tutor or Head of Year for further support.</p> | <p>AIMS Develop an understanding of homelessness issues</p> <p>OBJECTIVES To raise awareness of homelessness and related support.</p> <p>OUTCOMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain the kinds of situations covered by the term 'homelessness'. - Identify reasons why people become homeless. - Assess the benefits and challenges of living at home. - Describe the support available if a person is at risk of homelessness. | |

| Task | Time | Teacher's Notes | Activity | Resources |
|----------------------------------|------|--|---|---|
| <p>1b. What is homelessness?</p> | | <p>Use this baseline activity to adapt the lesson content.</p> <p>Sofa surfing is an example of 'hidden homelessness', whereas, images 1&2 are visible examples.</p> <p>See resource Session 1 1b "What is Homelessness" – Teacher's Notes for each image.</p> | <p>Ask students to draw a homeless person and include on their pictures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - short notes about why this person became homeless; - where they are sleeping; - what support they have (is anyone helping them, who is that likely to be?). <p>Ask students to share their ideas with the person next to them/the rest of the class. Use flipchart or white board to record answers during the discussion.</p> <p>Is this what it looks like? (Images 1&2)</p> <p>What is this? (sofa surfing image 3)</p> | <p>Flipchart / white board, pens</p> <p>Session 1 – 1b</p> <p>What is Homelessness images</p> |

| Task | Time | Teacher's Notes | Activity | Resources |
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| 1c. Celebrity handouts and questions | | <p>Daniel Craig – ‘Slept on park benches in London for 8 weeks while a struggling actor’</p> <p>Halle Berry – ‘Slept in a shelter in NYC for 6 weeks when her mum refused to send her money’</p> <p>Amy Winehouse – was never homeless and always received support from her parents</p> <p>Kelly Clarkson – ‘Slept in a car and shelter when a fire forced them out of their flat’</p> <p>Key messages: homelessness doesn't always present or look the same and cannot be judged purely based on external appearance so avoid stereotyping. Becoming homeless is not the end of someone's life, it may be a low point but many people go on from this to get appropriate help and to be very successful. However, it is important to equally avoid suggesting homelessness is an encouraged option.</p> | <p>Explain task – 4 pictures of celebs (identify who they are for those that don't know)</p> <p>At least one has been homeless, and at least one has not.</p> <p>Pairs/tables to decide who has/hasn't been homeless, and to give the reasons for their decisions.</p> <p>When completed, go through each picture and background with the group.</p> | <p>Session 1 – 1c Celeb combined pictures OR use PowerPoint pictures on laptop.</p> |

| Task | Time | Teacher's Notes | Activity | Resources |
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| 2. Homeless situations | 5 mins | See Session 1 – 2 Homeless Situation task teacher's notes. | <p>Ask students to look at the situations described on the sheets and decide in pairs/tables whether the situation is homeless or not homeless by circling your choices</p> <p>When completed, go through each situation with the group.</p> | <p>Handout Session 1 – 2 Homeless Situation Task</p> |

| Task | Time | Teacher's Notes | Activity | Resources |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <p>3a. Reasons for leaving home: group discussion</p> | <p>10 mins total (2 tasks)</p> | <p>Ask students to give reasons why young people may leave home and record answers on the board. Exercise could be done in small groups with each group feeding back 2 answers to the class.</p> <p><u>Prompts:</u> Think back to the first activity and the reasons we heard for why the homeless characters you created had become homeless. Are there any common themes?</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u> Aim for students to come up with their own key ideas e.g. positive experiences are often planned, YP may become homeless if finding themselves in very difficult circumstances where they need help and the complexities of those situations. Be sure to reinforce positive safeguarding messages, e.g. while it is tragic that someone may become homeless because of domestic violence, making the decision to leave and go to safety is a positive choice. Homelessness may be a low point in someone's life but they can get support and go on to be successful in whatever way success looks like for them (it may not be becoming a famous movie star, it may be about having a safe and secure home of their own and a family they love and who love them).</p> <p>*In the experience of the Cumbria CC Youth Homelessness and Housing Team, young people may be asked to leave due to events such as unplanned pregnancy or a disclosure around sexual or gender identity. However, it is very important that young people are not caused to fear talking with their families about such matters. Therefore, teachers may wish to consider these points if young people raise them in discussion but should avoid doing so if this is not student-led. Lessons focusing on these topics are a better place to expand on managing prejudice, for example.</p> | <p>What do you think are some of the reasons why YP would leave home? May include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - go to college/uni - to find work - to live with a partner - to join the forces - to go travelling - to move into own house/flat in a planned way - domestic abuse - family breakdown (parents' separation) - drug/alcohol misuse - told to leave* - bereavement (death of parent) - fall outs/arguing with parents/siblings/step-parents (money, housework, independence, homework, girlfriend/boyfriend) - behaviour of young person - Parents nagging/rules. | <p>Flipchart, white board pens.</p> |

| Task | Time | Teacher's Notes | Activity | Resources |
|--|------|---|--|--------------------------|
| <p>3b. Reasons for leaving home video: group discussion.</p> | | <p>Link to 'Real Stories' on website Video from youth homelessness website, 'why do YP leave home' http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/yphousing/intro.asp</p> <p>Key message: everyone is an individual and has a different set of factors that have contributed to them becoming homeless. For many young people it can be factors out of their control, which have led to them becoming homeless.</p> | <p>Explain that these young people are real young people, who have accessed support to live independently at an early age in Cumbria, telling their stories. Ask students, what someone in a situation like those in the clip could do to help reduce the likelihood of them becoming homeless or to help them find suitable accommodation sooner.</p> | <p>Laptop, projector</p> |

| Task | Time | Teacher's Notes | Activity | Resources |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| 4a. Living at home: the benefits | 10 mins total (2 tasks) | <p>There is a difference between those young people who NEED to leave home (to keep themselves safe) and those young people who WANT to leave home. There are a number of benefits, as well as drawbacks of living at home, and we are going to look at these to help us recognise those really clearly.</p> <p>Record comments on left hand side of board</p> <p>Look at answers (go through any of the answers opposite if missed)</p> <p>Given any class may include some young people whose parents are less affluent or neglectful and who perhaps can't/don't provide food, pay for activities or mobile phone contracts, it may be useful to encourage some small group discussions with some groups feeding back to the class.</p> | <p>Ask students what are the ways young people may benefit from living in their family home?</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own room and space • Food/meals provided • Pay for heating and bills • Pay for internet and Wifi • Pay for mobile contract • Buy you clothes/ trainers/ make up etc. • Lifts to friends • Pay for activities – dance class/football/gym • Provide cash • Safe place to live • Get support • Company, someone to talk to. | Flipchart / white board & pens. |

| Task | Time | Teacher's Notes | Activity | Resources |
|--|------|--|--|-----------|
| <p>4b. Living at home: the drawbacks: group task</p> | | <p>Lead to write comments on right hand side of board.</p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No space; • Always asked to do stuff; • Nagging parents/carers; • Curfews; • Fall-outs with parents/carers/siblings; • Doing household chores. <p>Teenage years can be difficult for many families. Young people may develop ideas, values and beliefs that are different to those of their parents. This is part of the normal process of moving towards independence. Parents may struggle with how much independence they should allow their children at different ages and in different circumstances.</p> <p>Communication between teenagers and their parents changes as a result and this can cause conflict and stress. For teenagers, thinking about how you can communicate positively with your parents/other family members can be an important part of maturing and can significantly reduce the conflict/stress in the home.</p> | <p>Ask students what are the disadvantages some young people may see when living in their family home?</p> <p>Ask group to look at the lists of advantages and drawbacks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do our lists of positives and negatives compare? • Do people sometimes focus too much on the problems without thinking about all the benefits of living in the family home? | |

| Task | Time | Teacher's Notes | Activity | Resources |
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| <p>5. Homeless Tonight – what should someone do? Video and group discussion</p> | <p>5 mins</p> | <p>Purpose: to ensure young people know what is available as emergency accommodation if they are 'homeless tonight'. Ask the group what they think someone should do if they were homeless tonight, i.e. someone had an argument with their parents and were told they couldn't go back. Record the answers on white board or flipchart.</p> <p>After this, ask who has heard of Nightstop then play the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLApz7pZzbE.</p> <p>After the video, ask the group what their opinions are of Nightstop.</p> <p>Ensure all students write down Nightstop and their details in their books or provide a link on the school website in a place young people know to look. It may be beneficial to do some research in advance to establish what the options are in your area; your local housing team (in the relevant district or county council dependent upon your locality) would be a good starting point.</p> | | <p>Laptop, projector. Flipchart/ white board.</p> |

| Task | Time | Teacher's Notes | Activity | Resources |
|----------------------------|--------|--|---|---|
| 6. Evaluation & assessment | 5 mins | <p>Remind students that if they would like to discuss any of the issues raised, they can contact their Form Tutor or Head of Year for further support.</p> <p>For details of national sources of support (and support specific to Cumbria), please see the following page of this resource.</p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you learned anything new today – what? • Has this session changed your views (on homelessness or on leaving home early?) <p>Revisiting the baseline activity allows students to demonstrate progression.</p> | <p>Hand out Session 1 Evaluation & Assessment Form.</p> <p>Ask group for additional verbal comments on session and take notes.</p> <p>Ask students to revisit their homeless characters they drew at the beginning of the lesson and make any changes to how they described them in a different coloured pen.</p> | <p>Session 1 Evaluation & Assessment Form</p> |

Further Advice and Information

If a young person finds themselves homeless between the ages of 16 and 17 years old, they are likely to have additional needs other than a pure housing need. The earlier we can start to work with a young person and their family the better.

If at any point there are concerns for the young person's safety, possible child exploitation risks, if there are safeguarding concerns or if a young person is homeless tonight, an urgent safeguarding referral must be made; please refer to the Safeguarding Policy in place at your school and contact your school Safeguarding Team/your Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Cumbria Safeguarding Hub can be contacted on **0333 240 1727**.

If you need to signpost a young person to sources of support, you could consider the following:

National Sources of Support

- **Your local contact** - Each housing district, borough or county will have a contact person, who can explain the support on offer for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in their area. Your local Children's Services is the best starting point for discussions on young people who are aged under 18 years and homeless or at risk of homelessness (or who are aged 16-24 years and are care leavers).
- **Shelter** - A national charity providing help, support and independent housing advice to anyone experiencing housing issues or homelessness. <http://england.shelter.org.uk> .
- **Centrepoint** - A national charity which aims to give homeless young people a future and end youth homelessness. Centrepoint has a free phone line and will offer advice to anyone in England aged between 16 and 25 years. The helpline is open Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm and can be contacted on 0808 800 0661 (they will also offer advice to anyone who is worried about a young person). Further information can be found on the website at www.centrepoint.org.uk.
- **Childline** - A national service provided by the NSPCC, it exists to help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through. Childline is free, confidential and available any time, day or night. Childline can be contacted via phone on **0800 1111**, via email or through the website which can be found at www.childline.org.uk/get-support.
- **The Mix** - The UK's leading support service for young people. Their website covers a wide range of topics including mental health, money, homelessness, finding a job, relationships and drugs education. In addition to providing information, young people can talk to them via online using their free, confidential helpline. Find out more: <http://www.themix.org.uk>.

Support Local to Cumbria

- **Cumbria County Council Young People's Housing** - This website contains sections specifically aimed at young people; their parents/carers and professionals and can talk you through what is available in your local area and who to contact. Find out more: <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/yphousing>.
- **Cumbria Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)** - This website provides information, guidance and details of training opportunities for anyone working with or concerned about a child in Cumbria. Find out more: <http://cumbrialscb.com>.



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