**Why Does Homelessness Still Occur in the UK Today?**

Homelessness is a frequent problem in the UK with around 280,000 people being homeless. That is 1 in every 200 people in the UK, therefore it is comprehensible that homelessness is an issue that needs to be tackled. However, to deal with this problem, people must understand situations that can lead someone to become homeless and understand what it really is.

What is homelessness? To be homeless you must lack suitable accommodation in which you can live. Usually this means someone who resides on the streets or someone who lives in temporary accommodation, but it can also mean someone who is in an unsafe environment at their home due to situations such as abuse.

**What Are The Key Causations Of Homelessness?**

Frequently, homelessness is caused by a poor financial situation (self-inflicted) which leads to the person being unable to afford appropriate housing. Although this is a common stereotype around homeless people, this is not always the case, it can also be things like flooding (which destroys their home), lack of housing in the area, lack of job opportunities and many other causes.

If we follow the stereotype that homelessness is largely self-inflicted, we can see some of the choices a person can make which can lead them to become homeless. Another common stereotype is that the person abuses drugs or is an alcoholic. Drug and alcohol abuse can cause the person to lose sight of their other needs in order to satisfy their addictions, often spending their money on alcohol and drugs instead of things such as food and rent.

Addiction is a hard thing to escape from as many people suffer from withdrawal symptoms if their addiction is not satisfied, which can lead them to selling things in their house, or even selling their house altogether in order to be able to afford drugs and/or alcohol.

‘But the most common reason for homelessness is the loss of a private rented home. According to [Homeless Link](https://homeless.org.uk/facts/understanding-homelessness/causes-of-homelessness), the percentage of people losing their home due to the end of an assured short-term tenancy rose from 15 per cent in 2011 to 29 per cent in 2015. [Annual statutory homelessness figures for England](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923123/Annual_Statutory_Homelessness_Release_2019-20.pdf) backed up this trend in 2019/20. The loss of a private rented assured shorthold tenancy accounted for 43,260 households who required help from councils to avoid homelessness. That is still around the 29 per cent figure seen five years earlier.’’ [1] Personally, I agree with this statement but not to the extent that it is the most common reason for homelessness. There are many different situations which can lead someone to be homeless and I personally believe that one way or another, a person becomes homeless when they lack the money to accommodate themselves, which leads into being evicted from a private rented home and is why I partially agree with this statement.

**What measures are currently in place to tackle homelessness?**

There are many establishments and charities in place to help tackle homelessness, each with different methods and focusing on individual aspects of homelessness such as drug addiction and lack of job opportunities. Some establishments are more effective than others however, with some being more of a short-term solution to homelessness, while others offer a more permanent resolve.

An example of a charity/ establishment that offers a short-term solution to homelessness would be a homeless shelter. While homeless shelters can be very effective at getting people off the streets, in the end, the homeless people will be placed back on the streets as homeless shelters lack resources to permanently accommodate residents, also there are frequently other people waiting to get a room in a homeless shelter, therefore making it unfair to permanently accommodate certain homeless people. Overall, I think homeless shelters are largely ineffective against solving homelessness and instead offer a much more temporary solution, which fails to help homeless people get off the streets permanently.

However, an example of an establishment that I believe is much more effective against homelessness would be an organization that offers social workers. Homeless people can benefit from organisations that offer social workers because they are able to cater specifically to an individual and offer them the right advice and help to fit their situation. In my opinion, this is much more operative than many other establishments and charities because in many cases, homeless individuals have very complex situations which have caused, and continue to cause them to be homeless. Often, common charity offered to them cannot help as it does not delve deep enough into the individual’s situation. Therefore, social workers are very effective at tackling homelessness, as they can give specific help to homeless people.

**But How Do We Prevent Homelessness?**

‘The first thing you should do is contact your [local council's housing team](https://www.homeless.org.uk/search-homelessness-services). Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, councils have a duty to find a home for families or individuals who are found to be homeless and to meet ‘priority need’ criteria. Councils must also help prevent or relieve the homelessness of all eligible people threatened with homelessness within 56 days.’[2] This source suggests that the first thing someone threatened with homelessness should do is contact the council, as the council can help relieve some issues which may lead someone to become homeless. Personally, I agree with this statement as preventing homelessness in the first place is a key solution to ending impoverished living as there would be less people to get off the streets.

‘Research shows that effective early interventions reduce the personal and financial cost of homelessness. If 40,000 people were prevented from becoming homeless for one year in England it would save the public purse £370 million. In 2012 the [cost of homelessness in England](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7596/2200485.pdf) was reported as being up to £1 billion (gross) a year. Comparative research in the [USA](http://www.feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/article-4.pdf) and [Australia](https://www.ahuri.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2032/AHURI_Final_Report_No218_The-cost-of-homelessness-and-the-net-benefit-of-homelessness-programs-a-national-study.pdf) shows that the cost of preventing and solving homelessness is less than the cost of doing nothing at all’ [3] This study shows that a major solution to solving homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place via early interventions. It also shows that it would cost less to help the homeless, than to ignore the issue completely.

**What Are Some Unavoidable Causes Of Homelessness?**

Unavoidable causes of homelessness are causes that are not self-inflicted, they are usually caused by an extremely unlucky event such as a natural disaster (flooding etc.), lack of income due to poor job opportunities, robbery, and a multitude of different situations. If your home is destroyed and you have no where to live, there is not much you can do about it unless you have the financial support of previous savings or the generosity from others. Commonly, the case is that after such an event, the individual lacks the money to accommodate themselves and ends up becoming homeless. Once the individual becomes homeless, they become trapped in a state of poverty and are looked down upon by society as the people who contribute nothing to the state and the people who rely on others to support them. In my opinion, this really is not fair as unless you know a homeless person’s situation, you should not make assumptions about how and why they are homeless, as some situations are unavoidable and unforgiving.

**Once someone is homeless, what keeps them homeless?**

As stated above, once someone is homeless, they become looked down upon by society and are seen as worthless individuals who are homeless because they cannot be bothered to work. This stigma around the homeless often leads homeless individuals to lose faith in society and feel let down, which then causes them to lose the motivation to work and get themselves off the streets. This can also lead to drug misuse as homeless people often become depressed due to their place in society and their impoverished state.

Even if the individual is actively trying to work, it is usually unlikely that they find a job once again due to the stereotype around homeless people that they are uneducated and unable to do the same quality of work as a fully accommodated individual or an average member of society. So, the solution to homelessness is not as easy as telling them to get a job as assumptions and stereotypes prevent it from happening.

**Can Homeless People Benefit From Multi-Agency Collaboration?**

Multi-agency collaboration is where two or more agencies work together with the common goal of getting people off the streets. Commonly, this does not work out as agencies often have their own ideology about the solution to homelessness and they do not incorporate well with others. Furthermore, it is not unheard-of agencies successfully collaborating and achieving their target to help homeless people become a normal member of society, but it must be specific agencies who work together if this goal is to be reached.

An example of two agencies which I think would work well together would be an organisation offering care workers/social workers and an organisation such as a homeless shelter. My reasoning behind this being that, with an estimated 280,000 people being homeless in the UK, it is important to get them off the streets just while they look for a way to support themselves. Usually, most homeless shelter’s accommodation is extremely temporary, but I believe that if they worked together with social services to accommodate the individual while social workers help get them a reliable source of income, it would be much more effective. This is because the homeless person would not have to focus on where they are going to sleep for the night and would mean that they could fully focus on the instructions given to them by social workers. I believe this would be enhanced by the collaboration of a soup kitchen; this is because it would mean the individual would not have to focus on getting food either.

Back to what causes homelessness, it is clear there is not just one answer to the question, as situations can be diverse and vary massively between individuals. However, there can be common underlying factors which play into many of the situations. One of these factors is poor education. Poor education is a common stereotype around the homeless, and it can be true in some cases as a poor education leads to a poor job which then leads to poor income, which can eventually lead to homelessness. Poor education can also make it hard to even find a job in the first place, as often in society you need certain qualifications to be able to work in specific places, and with a poor education, there is not much to offer in terms of qualifications.

Another factor which contributes to homelessness is poor decisions and money choices. If you did have a good education, a good job and reliable income, the most likely way you become homeless would be through bad choices. Although it is possible one of the unfortunate events that I discussed earlier could happen, these are extremely unlikely to occur. Bad choices can mean a variety of things, and commonly it is poor use of money. Poor use of money is spending money on unnecessary items such as drugs and alcohol etc. It is also having poor money management, spending too much money on non-essential items can lead to you not having the money to pay for the essentials such as food, water rent and bills.

In conclusion, the majority of homelessness occurs due to bad choices made by the individual at some point in their life, whether it’s a poor use of money, poor education, or just poor choices in general, it usually comes back down to choices. In some situations, homelessness is not self-inflicted. However, it is much more unlikely that homelessness is caused this way as there are many precautions you can take to avoid such events from happening. So that is why I believe the main cause behind homelessness is bad choices made by the individual.

Source Material

[1] <https://www.bigissue.com/latest/what-is-the-main-cause-of-homelessness/>

[2] <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/help-if-you-are-facing-homelessness>

[3] <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/cost-of-homelessness/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIktzOltCC8QIVC7vVCh3q4wR0EAAYAiAAEgItTvD_BwE>