

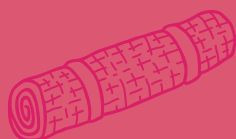


understanding
HOMELESSNESS

REALITIES OF HOMELESSNESS

Education – Awareness – Prevention

KEY STAGES 1 & 2



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Realities of Homelessness

Introduction

This lesson aims to stimulate pupil thinking, discussion and reflection on the negative labels, stereotypes and misconceptions commonly associated with homelessness.

Pupils have opportunities to identify and consider the difficulties those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and their families may experience.

The activities in this lesson enable pupils to:

- become more compassionate, caring and empathetic towards others;
- reduce stereotypical thinking and judgemental attitudes; and
- recognise the need for support and initiatives that community organisations and charities provide to help those in need.

Main Areas of Curricular Focus

- The World Around Us
- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
- Language and Literacy
- The Arts

Suggested Learning Intentions

Pupils will:

- be aware of homelessness as a societal issue;
- begin to develop empathy for people experiencing homelessness;
- realise the importance of shelter as a basic need;
- appreciate that a home is more than just a building;
- begin to recognise how families and homes can differ;
- begin to appreciate the difference between needs and wants;
- begin to link cause and effect; and
- recognise their own and others' feelings and emotions.

Realities of Homelessness

Issues to consider

It is important to be aware that lessons on home, families and homelessness can include sensitive and controversial issues. Certain content covered within this resource may affect some of your pupils. It is therefore essential to be well prepared and have established a working relationship with your pupils. Schools have policies, such as child protection and pastoral policies, for dealing with controversial issues. You can use these and work with your school's Education Welfare Officers and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators to ensure that you teach this topic sensitively.

You can also find advice on how to approach teaching controversial issues in a safeguarded environment in the classroom and at a whole-school level in these guidance documents:

[Personal Development and Mutual Understanding for Key Stages 1 & 2](#) CCEA (2007)

[Teaching Controversial Issues at Key Stage 3](#) CCEA (2015)

Guidance on Supporting Learning with Severe Learning Difficulties at Risk of Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties CCEA (2018)

Activity 1: What is Homelessness?

This activity determines pupils' knowledge or awareness of homelessness and begins to explore any early misconceptions or negative labels or stereotypes they may have. Repeat or review this activity after your pupils have completed all activities to evaluate how their understanding of and attitudes to the issue of homelessness may have changed.

Learning Intentions

Pupils will:

- be aware of homelessness as a societal issue;
- begin to develop empathy for people experiencing homelessness;
- realise the importance of shelter as a basic need;
- begin to appreciate that a home is more than just a building;
- begin to appreciate the difference between needs and wants;
- begin to link cause and effect; and
- recognise their own and others' feelings and emotions.

Vocabulary

Homeless, labels, stereotype

Ask your pupils to draw a picture of what they think about when they hear the word homeless.

Then ask your pupils to discuss their drawing. Record their feedback on a board, dividing it into positive, negative and neutral descriptions.

As a class, discuss the similarities and differences between the drawings. Did pupils have any stereotypical views or labels such as men that sleep rough on the street, it's their fault or choice to be homeless, lazy, jobless or dirty.

Ask your pupils to keep their drawings in a folder, as they will refer to these after completing the activities on homelessness.

Reflection

Use a **Know – Want to Know – Learned** (KWL) method to establish pupils' knowledge of homelessness and what they want to know more about. Keep your pupils' feedback from this activity, as you will refer to this at the end of this lesson.



Realities of Homelessness

Conclude the activity by highlighting to the class that nearly anyone can lose their home and become homeless. This includes families, women or men, rich, poor, young or old. Highlight to your pupils that help and support is available for people who become homeless. People can recover from homelessness and move on to have happy and fulfilling lives.

Extension



As a follow-up activity, pupils could create a [Graffiti Board](#) related to the issues they have discussed.

Activity 2: Who Is Homeless?

In this activity, pupils take part in a quiz on homelessness. This is a great way for pupils to learn about homelessness and counter the myths and misconceptions about this issue.

Preparation

Display **Resource 2.1: Who is Homeless?**

Learning Intentions

Pupils will:

- explore and develop their understanding of homelessness;
- be aware of homelessness as a societal issue;
- begin to develop empathy for people experiencing homelessness;
- understand that people have negative attitudes;
- explore issues of prejudice and stereotypes; and
- know some factors that can cause people to become homeless.

Resource

Resource 2.1: Who is Homeless?

Vocabulary

Overcrowded, hostel, unsuitable, safe

Open **Resource 2.1: Who is Homeless?** Tell your class they are going to complete a class quiz. Show the first slide from the presentation. Ask your pupils to raise their hand if they think the person or people on the slide are homeless.



Ask different pupils for reasons for their decision. Display the next slide, revealing the correct answer.

Continue this activity until you have shown all the slides. Then, encourage your pupils to share their thoughts and feelings about homelessness. Ask them whether any of the answers surprised them and why.

As a class or in groups, discuss how homelessness for people is different to homelessness for animals. For example, humans may have:

- family who can help;
- alternative housing options; or
- help and support from organisations.

Realities of Homelessness

Class Definition of Homelessness

Encourage the class to define homelessness. Record pupils' words and ideas. They may refer to:

- shelter;
- temporary accommodation;
- overcrowded or unsuitable accommodation; or
- reasons why someone may flee their home.

The [European Commission](#) defines homelessness as:

'Beyond sleeping rough, homelessness may include situations of living in temporary, insecure or poor-quality housing'.

Reflection

Many people and families are without a home in Northern Ireland and around the world. Anyone can be homeless for many different reasons. It is important to remember that no one chooses to be homeless. Help and support is available to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Extension

Use books and ICT resources to find out about homeless organisations in your area. Invite a representative from a homeless organisation to talk about homelessness.



Activity 3: Homeless Myth Buster

In this activity, pupils take part in a quiz on misconceptions about homelessness. This activity aims to counter some of the common myths and misconceptions about homelessness. The quiz provides information to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of homelessness.

Preparation

Display **Resource 2.2: Homeless Myth Buster**.

Learning Intentions

Pupils will:

- explore and develop their understanding of homelessness;
- be aware of homelessness as a societal issue;
- begin to develop empathy for people experiencing homelessness;
- understand that people have negative attitudes;
- explore issues of prejudice and stereotypes; and
- know some factors that can cause people to become homeless.

Resource

Resource 2.2: Homeless Myth Buster

Vocabulary

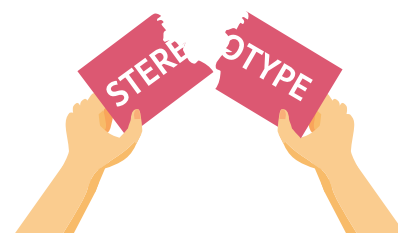
Hidden homeless, unhealthy, dangerous, stressful, organisations, charity

Open **Resource 2.2** on the whiteboard. Tell your class they are going to take part in a homelessness quiz. Show the first slide from the presentation. Ask your pupils to raise their hand if they think the person has ever been homeless. Ask different pupils for reasons for their decision. Display the next slide, revealing the correct answer.

Reflection

Continue this activity until you have shown all the slides. Then ask your pupils:

- Did anything in this quiz surprise you?
- What have you learned?
- Do you think stereotypes of those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness are true?
- Can anyone become homeless?
- Have you considered that those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness may have jobs?



Realities of Homelessness

- Are those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness:
 - beyond help?
 - born homeless?
 - deserving of government help?

Key Facts

Homelessness means having nowhere to live or no permanent place to call home.

People can be homeless if they are sleeping on the streets, staying with friends or family or in temporary accommodation such as a bed and breakfast.

Homelessness is an issue in Northern Ireland.

In 2021/22 there was a total of 15,758 households who presented as homeless with 10,135 of these households accepted as statutorily homeless.

Anyone can become homeless, including families, women, men and young or old people.

Homelessness can happen for many different reasons.

Every homeless person has a different story; there is not usually a single reason for becoming homeless.

It is important to remember that no one chooses to become homeless.

Activity 4: Daily Routines

In this activity, pupils explore what life would be like without a home and the daily hardships those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness face. The main purpose of this activity is to develop pupils' awareness and empathy for people experiencing homelessness. The thinking process in this activity should enable pupils to reject the idea that those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness are intrinsically different to them.

Learning Intentions

Pupils will:

- explore and develop their understanding of homelessness;
- be aware of homelessness as a societal issue;
- begin to develop empathy for people experiencing homelessness;
- understand that people have negative attitudes;
- explore issues of prejudice and stereotypes;
- recognise if they have stereotypical or prejudiced attitudes; and
- know some factors that can cause people to become homeless.

Resource

Resource 2.3: What are your Daily Routines?

Vocabulary

Needs, wants

Divide the class into groups of five. Give each group **Resource 2.3: What are your Daily Routines?** and ask them to discuss their daily routines.

Ask your pupils to consider how their daily routines may be different if they did not have a home. Ask them to refer to these questions in their discussion:

1. Where would you sleep?
2. Where would you wash, brush your teeth?
3. How would you cook or get food?
4. How would you stay dry?
5. Where would you do your homework?
6. Where would you keep your belongings such as clothes and toys?
7. Would your friends be able to visit you?



Realities of Homelessness

Encourage your pupils to express their thoughts and feelings on the effects not having a home may have on their daily routine or life. Ask them to consider these questions:

- How would they feel?
- What might other people think of them?
- What would they miss the most from their daily routine?
- Who would they miss most?



Reflection

Highlight to your pupils that people who are homeless face daily challenges to meet their basic needs. Ask them if they are aware of any organisations or charities that provide support to those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. Examples may include:

- Simon Community or DePaul providing food, support and shelter;
- soup kitchens that provide regular food and drink; or
- initiatives to raise awareness and support, such as fundraising sleep outs.

Activity 5: Needs and Wants

The main purpose of this activity is to enable pupils to understand that there is a difference between needs and wants. Pupils consider what is essential in life and what is a luxury.

Pupils consider how the possessions most of us take for granted can become vitally important for those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. The most basic items, such as food, water or clothing, can be critical to their survival.

Learning Intentions

Pupils will:

- explore and develop their understanding of homelessness;
- be aware of homelessness as a societal issue;
- begin to develop empathy for people experiencing homelessness;
- understand that people have negative attitudes;
- explore issues of prejudice and stereotypes; and
- know some factors that can cause people to become homeless.

Resource

Resource 2.4: Needs and Wants

Vocabulary

Needs, wants

Recap the previous daily routines activity. Remind the class that daily routines are much more difficult when you do not have a home.

Explain to the class that they are now going to explore the difference between what we **need** to live and what we **want**.

Needs are what we rely on to live; and

Wants are not essential to our life or health; they are objects that we like to have.

Give your pupils **Resource 2.4: Needs and Wants**.

On the first worksheet, ask your pupils to identify if the picture is a need or a want.

Realities of Homelessness

On the second worksheet, ask your pupils to think of all of the objects in their home and consider which are needs and which are wants.

Once they have completed the worksheet, ask your pupils to form groups of four. Use a [Thinking Card](#) to encourage pupils to discuss:

- the objects they identified as a need or a want;
- whether there are more objects in the wants or needs category and if so, why;
- whether they were surprised by this;
- whether the needs of someone who is experiencing homelessness are the same or different to their own needs; and
- whether those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness have difficulty meeting their basic needs.

Reflection

When all the groups have completed this activity, bring the class together to compare their results.

End this activity by telling the class that housing is a basic human right. Ask your pupils whether they think it is fair or right for some people not to have a place to call home.

Extension

Many organisations and charities around the world provide those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness with survival kits. These packs include everyday items to meet their basic needs and include information on where they can go for help and support. Ask the class to develop a homeless survival kit.

Pupils could also design a poster campaign to encourage public donations towards the survival kit.



Activity 6: Reflection on Homelessness Activities

This activity gives pupils an opportunity to reflect on what they have learned about homelessness. Having participated in the lessons and class discussions, pupils should have gained a deeper understanding of homelessness as a societal issue.

Preparation

Pupils will need access to the homeless picture they created in Activity 1: What is Homelessness?

Learning Intentions

Pupils will:

- explore and develop their understanding of homelessness;
- be aware of homelessness as a societal issue;
- begin to develop empathy for people experiencing homelessness;
- understand that people have negative attitudes;
- explore issues of prejudice and stereotypes; and
- know some factors that can cause people to become homeless.

Resources

Large piece of paper or card
Markers

Review of Learning

Ask your pupils to refer back to the picture they created in Activity 1: What is Homelessness? Encourage them to complete another drawing and write a short paragraph to explain it.

In groups or pairs, ask your pupils to discuss whether their opinions have changed and if so why.

Then, bring the class together to share their findings.

Action to End Homelessness

Everyone has a part to play in ending homelessness. Ask your pupils to write a letter to or create a presentation for a local government representative, emphasising the urgent need for action to end homelessness.



Realities of Homelessness

Extension



Organise a school assembly focusing on homelessness. Invite someone from a homelessness organisation to share information and local experiences of homelessness. Encourage your pupils to talk to their friends and family about the causes of homelessness and how to prevent it.