

Crisis resource sheet



LESSON PLAN 1: Exploring the meaning of home and homelessness

CASE STUDY: Kate

By her 16th birthday, Kate was already on the move: "At 14, I hightailed it... Do you know what, I don't even think my mum knew I was gone. I thought, 'she doesn't care about me. So that's it—I'm off'."

Kate immersed herself in the 'homeless lifestyle'. Hitch-hiking down to London aged 14, she spent the next 3 years in a squat, under the wing of a man who had befriended her when she first arrived in the capital: "I met a really nice man, who I told what had happened to me. He said, 'Go home and sort it out'. I said 'I can't'. So after a while, he said, 'OK, live with us in our squat'."

Kate paid her way through a series of casual jobs until the squat was closed down when she was 17. She tried to contact her mother, but with no success. Kate was to spend the next 3 years stuck between the street, the hostel and the squat.

At 20, Kate spent 4 years travelling the country with a man, visiting seaside places during the summer for work, and spending the winter in London. At 25, Kate met another man. This relationship turned her towards drugs and resulted in physical and mental abuse until she had had enough of it.

Too old to stay on a friend's floor, Kate was back on the streets; but she soon found a place in a London hostel: "I always seem to have people around me who know what's good for me instead of me telling them what I would like. I just want my own space to do things my own way at my own pace. I wonder if this will ever happen."

CASE STUDY: Narinder

Narinder lived with her parents and 2 younger sisters until she was 18. In the small house there were arguments all the time. Narinder shared a room with her sister but spent alternate nights sleeping in the lounge and in her bedroom. When Narinder was 17 she started suffering from severe stress; this manifested itself as anorexia and soon she weighed only 6 stone. Narinder's parents had wanted her to work and not study. She had many arguments with them. They repeatedly told her to move out.

She went to a local homeless action group which referred her to Crisis SmartMove, which decided to accept her as soon as she was 18. They found her accommodation after a couple of months, in a house shared with 2 other girls. Narinder would have her own room, there was Sky and a dishwasher—it seemed perfect.

Narinder moved in and now loves living there. Her health has improved and she has gained weight. She no longer feels depressed, and her relationships with her parents have improved. She spends some weekends at home.

Narinder just needed distance. Now she has her own accommodation she has decided to go back to college, studying a performing arts course. She has taken control of her life, dealing with benefit applications and other responsibilities with the help of SmartMove.

Narinder has learned to do lots of practical things like cooking and cleaning. She feels really grown-up. "I remember I used to think that I couldn't see anything good in my life and I didn't know why I was alive. Now I know the future looks good."

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Fighting for hope for
homeless people

LESSON PLAN 2: Hidden Homelessness

CASE STUDY: Tim

Tim is 18 years old and has been homeless for 2 years. Tim is currently sleeping on the floor of a friend's bedroom in a supported accommodation scheme in London. Tim has stayed with his friend for 6 months, apart from the odd night he has spent with other friends, who he stayed with to give his friend a 'break' from him and some 'space'.

"By rights I shouldn't even be living there. He's allowed to have overnight guests but not people living there so I stay as an overnight guest."

Tim was therefore very restricted in the amount of time he could spend in the flat during the day, resulting in him spending time visiting day centres and walking the streets. "A typical day is you get up, go to the day centre, get your clothes washed, get a shower, and then just kill time by walking the streets, basically."

Tim is not paying his friend to stay. "If I've got money, I'll put money in for food and that, but he doesn't want digs."

Tim was grateful to his friend, but was clear that he wanted a place of his own. "I want my own things. I don't want to have to sleep on somebody's floor. I want to have my own key for my own door."

STATISTICS EXERCISE

These statistics are taken from the **Crisis** document *Key Statistics About Homelessness*, available at www.crisis.org.uk/schoolchallenge. The term 'young people' refers to people in the 16–25 age group.

1. There are around 380,000 single hidden homeless people in Great Britain. This includes those staying in hostels, B&Bs, squats, on friends' floors, and in overcrowded accommodation.
2. The average time between the 'triggers' that lead to homelessness, and when homelessness finally occurs, is 9 years.
3. After only 4 weeks, rough sleepers become used to life on the street and it becomes more difficult for them to move back into mainstream society.
4. It is likely that several thousand young people experience homelessness without having any contact with local authorities in England each year.
5. Family conflict is the main immediate cause of homelessness amongst at least two thirds of homeless young people.
6. 86% of young homeless people are forced to leave home rather than choosing to.
7. Two thirds of young homeless people leave school with no qualifications.
8. Young people who become homeless are more likely to have lived with step-parents, foster parents or relatives by the age of 12 than those who do not become homeless.
9. 45% of young homeless people have experienced violence in the family home on more than 1 occasion.
10. One third of young homeless people have attempted suicide.
11. Around 10 to 25% of single homeless people on the streets and in hostels are women. The proportion of women among young single homeless people is however higher – 20 to 40%.