



# 10 KEY MESSAGES ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

# 1. What does Crisis do?

- **Crisis delivers services** - working directly with people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, providing practical one-to-one support to help people access benefits, healthcare services, employment opportunities, and more.
- **Crisis takes a housing led approach** - all of us need a decent home to be healthy and to thrive. That's why one of Crisis's main goals when working with people experiencing homelessness is for them to find safe and affordable homes as quickly as possible.
- **Crisis undertakes research** - Crisis cutting edge [research](#) helps us all to better understand the scale, causes, impacts of homelessness and solutions to prevent and end homelessness.
- **Crisis campaigns** – for the policy and practice changes to prevent and end homelessness. With collective action and political will, we know we can end homelessness for good. Crisis's [campaign](#) work is shaped from direct work with people experiencing homelessness and helps tackle the societal pressures that push people to the brink.
- **Crisis collaborates** – collaborating with partners means that homelessness becomes everybody's business and by working together we can support each other's roles in preventing and ending homelessness.



# Crisis 10-year strategy for ending homelessness

## Crisis vision

In ten years, the number of people who are homeless will be going down. This doesn't mean no one will ever lose their home again. But there will be better ways to prevent it – and quick housing-led solutions when it happens.

## Crisis goals

Securing policies that solve homelessness

Deliver services that end homelessness for people and places

Building a community of people across Britain that are helping to end homelessness

## 2. What is homelessness?

**Homelessness is the lack of safe, secure accommodation - the lack of a home**

We all need a decent, safe and genuinely affordable home – to live our lives well and to thrive

**It can be visible or hidden – short or long term - homelessness doesn't look just one way**

**Visible homelessness** will include someone who if forced to sleep rough, using public transport as a safe space and living in cars or tents.

**Invisible homelessness** will include people who are sofa surfing, squatting, living in refuges, hostels and shelters, living in overcrowded housing, or being accommodated in temporary accommodation such as hotels or bed and breakfasts

**Some groups of us are more at risk than others**

When we experience discrimination, rejection or exclusion because of who we are, it is even harder to withstand the pressures that can push us into homelessness. Those of us who are LGBTQ+ and those of us from visible minority communities are more likely to experience homelessness. If we are leaving prison, the armed forces, the care system, experiencing domestic abuse, receiving benefits or are a refugee, we are also at greater risk



## Homelessness is the lack of safe, secure accommodation - the lack of a home

We all need a decent, safe and genuinely affordable home – to live our lives well and to thrive



Working together to end homelessness

### 3. Causes of homelessness

**Homelessness is caused by poverty, a lack of affordable housing and other social / political factors**

Social pressures such as, poverty, systemic inequality, and incomes that are failing to keep up with rapidly rising rents – can put **immense pressure** on people. The cost-of-living crisis has piled impossible **financial burdens** onto people, and they can find themselves grappling with **soaring** living costs.

Life events can also be a source of **considerable pressure**. This could be job loss, domestic abuse in the home, relationship breakdown – or being evicted at a time when you cannot afford the money for a deposit or rent in advance.

Mental or physical health problems or substance use **may add further strain** for some people.

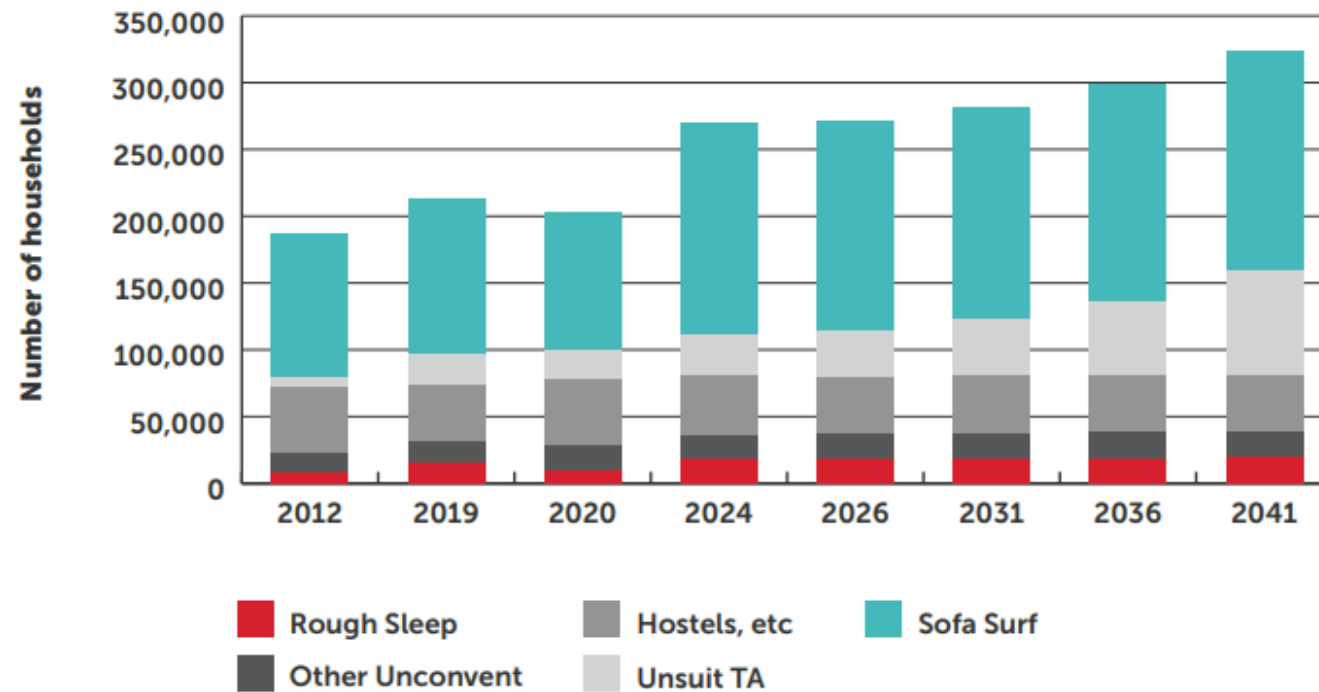
**When this pressure builds** - and is compounded by poverty and unaffordable housing - people can be **pushed into homelessness**.

The combination of soaring rents, the lack of supply of social housing and increase in the cost of living, is forcing more and more people into homelessness. Many councils are at breaking point and are struggling to find suitable accommodation. This means that across every country in Great Britain, the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased significantly.



## 4. Homelessness is not just rough sleeping

Figure 5.4: New with-COVID-19 baseline projection of core homelessness by category, England 2012-41



Just as an illustration:

The table shows that sleeping rough is just the tip of the iceberg and that there are many other forms of homelessness.

**Without action, things are likely to get worse with more people experiencing all kinds of homelessness.**

## 5. Homelessness is a societal issue and is not down to individual choices

Homelessness doesn't just impact individuals, it affects us all because we are common members of an interconnected society. We know just how much we rely on each other to get by.

There is a significant human cost to homelessness. Having a decent home is vital for good health and wellbeing. It makes it easier for people to succeed at work and in education, to maintain relationships with their family and friends and to contribute to their community.

Making sure that everyone has a secure and affordable home benefits us all, creating a stronger society where everyone can play their part.

Some of the main reasons that people present to a local authority homelessness team:

- Being asked to leave by family and friends
- Relationship breakdown
- Domestic abuse
- End of private rented tenancy
- End of social housing tenancy
- Being discharged from a state institution – hospital, leaving care or prison





## 6. Homelessness is not inevitable

We know that homelessness isn't inevitable. There may always be incidents of homelessness, but they can be made rare, brief and non-recurring.

There are proven solutions to end it, such as:

1. **Ending homelessness with homes:** Ensuring everyone has a safe, secure and affordable home. We need to build 90,000 social homes per year to help end homelessness.
2. **Urgent action to support people experiencing, or at risk of, the worst forms of homelessness.** This means investing in evidence-based housing and support models targeted at people at highest risk of rough sleeping.
3. **Fixing the system for the long-term:** Reforming the welfare, health and homelessness legal system so they work effectively to prevent homelessness in the future and react quickly when it does occur.



## 7. Preventing homelessness

The best way to address homelessness is to stop it happening in the first place. There is a significant human cost to homelessness. Repeated and long-term experience of homelessness damages people's physical and mental health, relationships, employment prospects and life chances. None of us should have to experience this.

- Homelessness prevention is about reducing the pressures on those at risk of homelessness to avoid their situation turning into a homelessness crisis.
- Where homelessness can be predicted, it should always be prevented. For example, when someone leaves a state institution, such as a leaving hospital, the armed forces, care or prison.
- Not everyone knows when, how or where to access help, and some may not realise when they might be at risk of losing their home
- People facing housing problems may be involved with a range of other services before they contact homelessness services, so there are opportunities for earlier interventions
- We can work together and learn to spot the early signs and act within our roles and abilities to help or support whether it's being able to provide that support directly, signposting to other local services or by providing advice, information or advocacy.



## 8. The importance of language

Framing means making choices in the words and images we use to communicate about an issue. The way we talk about homelessness can challenge perceptions, deepen understanding and build demand for change

How we think about and understand homelessness will determine the way that we talk about and respond to it

- Sometimes the language we use can make it seem like people experiencing homelessness are somehow different and only defined by their experience of homelessness. We call this othering

Use language that puts people first:

- So instead of using phrases like 'the homeless' or 'rough sleepers', we try to describe the person first e.g. 'people experiencing homelessness' 'a person who was pushed into homelessness due to external pressures', or 'a person who was forced to give up their tenancy'
- It's important to remember that homelessness is transitional, a moment in someone's lifetime and that it doesn't define someone.



## 9. Taking a trauma informed approach

- Research has shown us that trauma is often a direct trigger for homelessness, and that experiencing homelessness can itself cause further trauma.
- Trauma is one of the pressures that can build up and push people into homelessness. In fact, early childhood trauma dramatically increases our chance of experiencing homelessness. If we have experienced trauma in our lives, we may struggle to complete tasks which may seem simple or easy to others.
- Not everyone experiences or responds to trauma in the same way, but it can have a significant impact on our daily lives, ranging from affecting our ability to trust others, how we think and feel and behave towards ourselves and others.
- All of us can help decrease the pressure people are facing by being sensitive to people's experiences and creating environments that give people space and time to think. We may also struggle to complete tasks which may seem simple or easy to others.
- At Crisis we take a trauma-informed approach to our service provision and to creating psychologically informed environments
- To work in a trauma informed way is to not jump to conclusions about someone's situation and treat people as individuals, with dignity and kindness, so that people feel that they have some agency and control over their lives and so that you can try to help as best you can, within your own capacity... and if not to be honest about that too.



# 10. How can I help someone who is sleeping rough

- We know that there are lots of reasons that someone may be pushed into sleeping rough. Crisis research has also shown that people sleeping rough are far more likely to be victims of crime than perpetrators.
- As individuals we all deserve dignity and respect, and we all have our own needs. Which means that there is a no 'one size fits all' way to offer help to people who may be sleeping rough
- Crisis encourages everyone to consider the human aspect of rough sleeping. We know from speaking with our clients that when a person experiences homelessness in this way, some people simply stop seeing them as human.
- Rough sleeping is already extremely dangerous and damaging to people's well-being and physical health and in some cases, it can be deadly. Without a place to shelter from the extreme weather conditions, people who are sleeping rough have to endure these conditions, putting their health and lives at risk.
- Everyone has the right to feel safe, respected and supported

It is important to note that if you think the person you are concerned about appears to be under 18, in danger or at risk of harm, call the appropriate emergency service, such as the police or ambulance service on 999 if it's an emergency, or 101 for a non-emergency



# How can I help someone who is sleeping rough

There are things that you can do to help people sleeping rough.

- What you do and how you respond will depend on the person's situation and on how safe and comfortable you feel
- Sometimes we feel nervous about approaching someone sleeping rough because we don't know how to help or what to say, but hopefully the information below will give you some tips on how you can respond to people sleeping rough.
- It is not recommended to try and physically wake up someone who is deeply asleep, you don't know how long they've been asleep for or how they will react to the shock of being woken up.
- A key thing you can do is to reach out and find a way to connect with a person. It's important to remember that when someone is experiencing loneliness and isolation, something as seemingly small as a conversation can make a real difference.

**You should not approach someone if you do not feel safe and comfortable to do so**, but if you do, here are tips on how you could start a conversation:

- Hi there, my name is [X], I just wanted to check if you are okay?
- Are you happy to tell me your name?
- I noticed you have been here for a while and I don't think I've seen you around before, do you have anywhere to go?
- Did you sleep here last night?
- Would you like to tell me a bit about what's happened? I might be able to direct you to where you can get help?
- Have you spoken to anyone about what has happened, any support services, or the council?
- I could get some contact for different agencies that might be able to help, **would you like me to do that?**

It's important to check if a person would like to accept an offer of advice and or help to find support



# Should I give money

- Do what makes you feel comfortable. Giving money is a personal choice
- We should all be able to live safely and with dignity
- Not everyone who is sleeping rough begs and not everyone who begs is homeless - Both issues are driven by experiences of poverty
- As a society, we should support people, so they are not forced to sleep rough or beg
- If you're concerned about giving money, you could ask if there's anything else the person, you're talking to might need. Things like food or drink, vouchers or phone credit can be a big support to someone who is sleeping rough
- Remember people's need will differ in extreme weather conditions
- Alternatively, you could donate to or volunteer with a local or national charity who support people experiencing homelessness
- Whatever you do, remember that each person is different and will have different needs. So, ask people what they would find most helpful



# Additional information and links

If you're aware of someone sleeping rough, you can use the below contacts to alert the relevant services.

- In England and Wales, you can send an alert through the [StreetLink website](#) – this will enable you to report that you have seen someone sleeping rough, and they can be connected with support services
- You can find information relating to Scotland, on the [Shelter](#) website
- You can find information relating to Northern Ireland, from the [Simon Community](#), [Housing Rights](#) or the [Housing Executive](#)
- Additional information for each Nation can be found here: [England](#) [Scotland](#) [Wales](#) [Northern Ireland](#)





# Additional information and links

It's helpful to know about what services are available in your local area

Some of the agencies that may be able to support people at risk of or experiencing homelessness are:

This list is not exhaustive:

Local Council homelessness team	Local rough sleepers outreach team	Local homelessness charities
Shelter	Citizens Advice Bureaux	Department for work and Pensions (Job Centre)
Day centres	Food banks and places that are serving food at different times of the day	Faith based organisations who support people experiencing homelessness
domestic abuse services	substance support services	mental health services
tenancy support services	Debt and financial advice services	Fuel poverty support agencies
Probation	Police and Police Community Support Officers	Business Improvement District team
Community centres		



# Ways to support Crisis on their mission to end homelessness

Campaign – [Campaign to end homelessness | Crisis UK](#)

Donate – [Donate to Crisis](#)

Educate – [Learn more about talking about homelessness](#)

Fundraise – [Fundraise for Crisis](#)

Volunteer – [Volunteer with Crisis](#)