

Safeguarding 7 minute briefing: Homelessness

What can you do?

Create an open and approachable culture– help pupils think about the issues and attitudes behind homelessness, particularly in relation to equality.
*Be aware of the effects of child poverty *Support pupils and families
*Sign-post to supportive services *Raise any concerns with your DSL

Consider how vulnerabilities might impact on individuals –increased risk of exploitation and the barriers in place to attainment or to making safe decisions.
Consider avenues of support including local early help mechanisms.

Homelessness and safeguarding

Homelessness can be a factor in children being at risk due to the stresses and limitations it places on the family. Homelessness can (not always) lead to issues which are safeguarding matters:

- *basic needs not being met (food, warmth, clothing)
- *social isolation *impact of stress in a household (including emotional abuse or domestic abuse)
- *impact on home learning *impact of long working hours (relationships, supervision) *caring responsibilities
- *self esteem/emotional health issues (child & parent)
- *risk of substance misuse (in child and parent)

Impact of being homeless

- *Tiredness-inappropriate sleeping areas/shared rooms/long distances to travel;
- *Appearance-lack of wash areas, no facilities to wash clothes, not being able to keep track of belongings;
- *Physical health-exhaustion, lack of regular meals (shared/no cooking space), diet of ready meals/fast food;
- *Stress/anxiety-not knowing if/when going to have to move;
- *Educational attainment-no space for homework, no access to computers;
- *Self-esteem – fear of being singled out as different, not being able to join in with activities after school.

What is homelessness?

Somebody does not need to be sleeping rough, or have nowhere to stay that night, to be homeless. If a person does not have accommodation they have the right/permission to continue to occupy, or if the accommodation is not safe, affordable, suitable, or reasonable to continue to occupy, they are considered homeless.

A person or their family can become homeless/risk losing their home in many ways. This includes being served with a valid notice by their landlord, a breakdown of a relationship or fleeing domestic abuse.

What does the law say?

The Housing Act 1996, amended by The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, imposes a legal duty upon Local Authorities to provide advice and assistance to anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The law says that the LA must work with them to try to prevent their homelessness, but if that is not possible, to help them to secure alternative accommodation. Please note that that there is not a duty to provide temporary accommodation to everyone; this duty only arises for those who are in 'priority need'.

Temporary accommodation

Temporary accommodation can mean a number of different things including families staying in B&Bs, reception centres (large buildings with multiple bedsits and shared kitchen/dining facilities), converted office blocks or shipping containers. All forms of temporary accommodation come with their own issues such as:

- *Lack of space (indoor and/or outdoor) *Poor conditions
- *Issues with heat control *Distance from "home" (i.e. where the family base is, the children go to school, etc.)
- *Constantly being moved from one place to another *Others also placed in the accommodation



Temporary accommodation- issues

Because of the nature of temporary accommodation, there is often a mix of people placed there some of which come with their own additional issues (e.g. mental health, substance misuse, criminality) potentially impacting on the safety of children.

[Click link for quiz](#)

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