

Lesson 2

What is homelessness?

Third and fourth level

SOCs: 3-15A, 3-16A, 4-15A, 4-16A, 4-16B

Learning Intention: To begin to understand homelessness in Scotland and the homeless process.
To consider who is considered homeless.

Success Criteria:

- I can define homelessness.
- I can use the information I have learnt to explain how homelessness happens.
- I can use the information I have learnt to explain what steps a person takes if they are homeless in Scotland.

Teachers' Notes

Please note that the statistics in this lesson are correct as of October 2017.

For this lesson, you will need enough dice for each pair or group.

What is homelessness?

Homelessness means not having a home. You don't have to be living on the street to be homeless – even if you have a roof over your head you can still be without a home. This may be because you don't have any rights to stay where you live or your home is unsuitable for you.

Where do you go if you're homeless? To the council, who have a duty to accommodate you and will undertake a homeless assessment.

Every 19 minutes a household in Scotland is assessed as homeless.

Which situations mean you're homeless?

- Sleeping on the streets – although homelessness is not only rough sleeping
- Staying with friends or family
- Staying in a hostel or bed and breakfast hotel
- Living in overcrowded conditions
- At risk of violence in your home
- Living in poor conditions that affect your health
- Living in a house that is not suitable for you because you are sick or disabled

Reasons which might lead to a person becoming homeless

- Being evicted by your landlord
- Losing your job
- Health problems
- A relationship breaks down
- Harassment by your neighbours
- A disaster such as fire or flooding.

What do Shelter Scotland do?

Shelter Scotland help people in crisis, who are at risk of losing their home. We offer advice and support to anyone in Scotland who is homeless or in bad housing. We believe that everyone should have a safe place to call home.

The homeless process

By 1999, Scotland had its own Parliament. Over the next few years, new rights for homeless people were introduced. This means that Scotland has different housing laws to the rest of the UK.

In Scotland pre-2012, accommodation for a homeless person was determined by “priority need”. Priority need is an assessment that the council carried out on people to see if they were in urgent need of a home. This meant that the council only had a duty to find people homes if they felt the person was vulnerable. This was abolished in 2012, meaning that everyone in Scotland has the same entitlement to a home. Unfortunately, priority need still exists in England.

Section 24 Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 – determines whether or not a person is homeless:

- A person is to be treated as having no accommodation if it is unreasonable to continue to occupy.
 - Cannot gain entry.
 - Occupation would result in violence towards them.
 - Overcrowded.
 - A caravan or mobile home with nowhere to put it.
- In addition, if a person is threatened with homelessness, that person should also be considered as homeless, and a homeless application made up to 2 months before they are made homeless.

Making a homeless application

- A person is entitled to make a homeless application to any local authority. Section 28 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 advises the Local Authority that they cannot refuse to take this application IF it believes the applicant may be homeless.
- Under Section 29 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 an applicant is entitled to temporary accommodation while the Local Authority is investigating their homeless application.

What do the council do?

1. Are you homeless – The first thing the council must find out is whether you actually are homeless or about to become homeless.
2. Intentionally Homeless – Did you do, or did you not do, something that caused you to be homeless? E.g. left your parent’s house.
3. Local Connection – The final test when you make a homeless application is ‘local connection’. This is to establish whether you have any links with the area.

All Scottish councils must provide temporary accommodation to anyone who needs it whilst their homeless application is assessed.

If the person is assessed as being 'intentionally' homeless, the council must provide the household with advice and assistance, and temporary accommodation if the person needs it to give them time and help to find a new home.

If the person is assessed as being unintentionally homeless, the council must provide the household with temporary accommodation if the person needs it until the council can provide them with a permanent home. This could be a council house, a housing association house, or a private rented house.

If the person doesn't have a link to the local area, for example if they're from Aberdeen but they apply in Glasgow, Glasgow City Council might ask Aberdeen to help the person instead.

Katie's story

- Displaying the case study on the screen, read aloud the Katie's experience. This is based on a Shelter Scotland client experience, 2017. The aim of this is to get the class thinking about what might lead to someone becoming homeless.

Katie and her mum Jenny moved a long way from their old home. They couldn't stay there anymore because Katie's mum was scared of her boyfriend who was not behaving well.

Katie's mum had a friend in Glasgow who let them live with her. The friend was kind but the house was small. Katie's mum had to sleep on a sofa and was often tired and worried. Katie really wanted to have her own room again.

Katie's mum went to Glasgow City Council for help to find a new home. The council should help people like Katie and her mum but it made a mistake and turned them away. Katie's mum heard about Shelter Scotland and went to them for help. Shelter Scotland's lawyer spoke to the council and Katie and her mum were given a home and ongoing support to be allowed to stay there.

Pie charts

- Go through the final pie charts, reflecting on what the class have learnt in this lesson.

Activity

- Next, move onto the Chance not Choice board game. This game is designed like snakes and ladders. The snakes represent something that might lead to a person losing their home, and the ladders represent something that might lead to a person maintaining their home.
- Print enough snakes and ladders games for pupils to play in small groups
- After a set amount of time playing the game (10-15 minutes), ask everyone who stood on a snake to stand.
- Ask each group some detail about which snakes they stood on, what happened in their life to make that happen, and how it would make them feel if that happened.
- Use this discussion to explain to the class that homelessness is a chance not a choice, that it can happen to anyone irrespective of their choices.

Extension

- This [link](#) provides an option for further investigation, containing information on homelessness in your local authority.