

Homelessness isn't a personal failing.

There are many reasons why people become homeless, and it's not usually something a person has much – or even any – **control** over. For instance, children who grow up in institutional care are at [higher risk](#) of becoming homeless once they turn 18 - if there's been a lack of positive relationships growing up, this can make a young person more **vulnerable** and more at risk going forward in life.

Here's some examples of why people lose their homes:

- They are fleeing an abusive relationship at home
- They lost their job and haven't been able to find a new one
- They have an addiction that has made it very difficult to take care of themselves
- They're asked to leave by the landlord (this can happen for a number of reasons, like needing the property back for personal use)
- Their rent is raised so they can't afford to stay, and there's a lack of affordable housing in the area where they live

Most often, when a person loses their home, it's a result of many of these factors put together, not just one.

[Almost a fifth of Scotland's population lives in poverty,](#)

meaning they are at **more risk** of becoming homeless. This isn't a fifth of Scotland's fault! Homelessness is a systemic problem, so it requires a whole system response to **end it**.

You can't always see it.

When we think of someone who is homeless, we often imagine a person living on the street – this is the homelessness we can **see**.

But **thousands** of people stay in what's called 'temporary accommodation' when they've lost their home and are waiting for permanent housing.

People can end up staying here for **years** without being supported into a permanent home.

If you're staying in temporary accommodation, the **conditions** can make it a difficult experience, and can include:

- **No pets or visitors** (even family) allowed in your room - This limits your freedom and stops you feeling like you have your own life
- **Chaotic environment** – For lots of different reasons some residents could be experiencing mental ill-health, addictions, and other circumstances which can create an unstable environment that's stressful to live in
- **Poor facilities** - Often, there's no kitchen or place to store food so you can't cook for yourself or your family. Sometimes, there's no washing machine available either
- **Curfews** - Curfews vary from place to place, but often, you must be out by a certain time in the morning, and inside by a certain time at night - and if you miss this deadline by even 5 minutes, you could be locked out for the night and even lose your room
- **Unstable Lifestyle** – staying in temporary accommodation means you can't get settled and create a home, making it difficult to make plans for your life

What should I do if I lose my home?

Maybe you're currently experiencing homelessness, or you've been in this situation before. Maybe you're worried that you or someone you know is at risk of not having a safe place to call home. If you find yourself without a place to stay, here are some steps you can take to get help and advice.

The most important thing is: don't blame yourself – this is not your fault! Ask for help, speak to an adult you trust - maybe someone at a sports club, youth group, or teacher in your school.

If you're under 16 and feel like you can't stay at home or go back there, as soon as you can, call [Childline](#) on 0800 1111. They are there to help you and will be able to organise a place for you to stay and people to take care of you – you don't have to face anything alone.

If you're over 16, as soon as you can, contact your local council - if you're [eligible](#), they're legally required to find a place for you to stay that night. Shelter has a very helpful [web page](#) (or call them on 0808 800 4444, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm) to get the contact details of your local council and to work out if you're eligible for help.

The council will try to find you a hostel or B&B. There's often a shortage of places to stay, and if there's no spaces left - or you aren't eligible for help - the council will put you in contact with a charity-run shelter, who will do their best to find a place for you to stay with them. This will depend on the time of year, as most shelters only operate throughout the winter months.

What should I do if I lose my home? (cont.)

There are many organisations across Scotland that can assist you, but in a **crisis** situation, you can contact:

- [Streetwork](#) in Edinburgh provide lots of different support and advice, and you can call them for free as well, on 0808 178 2323. Their [Holyrood Hub](#) is open every day of the year, and provides a laundry and showers along with workshops, referrals and many other services
- [Simon Community](#) in Glasgow provides a similar service to Streetwork, and their free number is 0800 027 7466
- [Aberdeen Cyrenians](#) in Aberdeen have a Drop In service open Monday-Friday, providing lots of different support and advice

If you're not living in one of these three cities, the Shelter website/number listed above is a **great** place to start to put you in touch with your local council and organisations in your area that can **help**.

In Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, you can **visit** a Social Bite cafe between 8-11am for breakfast, and from 3.30pm for a hot meal, as well as join our weekly Social Supper events for good food and **company**. You can get advice during one of these events (ask for details in the cafe) about other **services** you can access, and people and places that can help you out.

You can also **contact** the city organisations listed above if you see someone on the street that you think may need help - their **outreach** team will go and meet the person and see how they can help them.



Is everybody who begs homeless?

At Social Bite, we get asked a lot “*what if somebody **pretends** to be homeless to try and get free food?*” or people tell us “*people pretend to be homeless so that they can beg for money*”. What we’ve learnt is that **anyone** can end up in a challenging situation, and it’s not always what it seems. We believe **everyone** deserves food and a safe place to live, and anyone who is begging is not likely doing it because they want to. Although a **few** people beg on the streets even though they have some kind of home, by getting to know people we’ve learnt that often their lives have become so **difficult**, begging seems like their best option. What do you **think**? Is sitting on the street and begging something you would choose for yourself, if you felt like you had other **options**?

Homelessness affects mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Having nowhere to live, and not knowing when you'll have a home again creates a lack of **safety** and a sense of unrest for a person and naturally this can be extremely stressful. Not having an address makes it **harder** to apply for jobs or access medical and other services, which means that not only do people without homes not receive the support they often desperately need, but they are also often **excluded** from society in a very real way. Social **isolation** only increases severe anxiety and depression. These problems aren't inevitable for people in a position of homelessness - but they are very real risks.

In fact, **44%** of homeless people suffer from mental health problems, compared to 23% of the general population, and [suicide rates are nine times higher amongst people who are homeless than in the general population as a whole](#). People experiencing homelessness often develop physical **conditions** commonly associated with older age, which just goes to show the physical toll that being homeless has on physical and mental **health**.



We can all do something to help #EndHomelessness.

Everyone has the **power** to help. Raising money for charities that work to end homelessness is incredibly **helpful**, and you can also **volunteer** with them. A powerful thing you can do is to **understand** more about the issue of homelessness and to raise **awareness** about it, by taking part in programmes like Wee Sleep Out and reading **information** like this.

When people understand more, their attitudes start to **change** and they're compelled to help. You begin to see people as people, rather than a stereotype or label. As attitudes change, a culture **shift** occurs from one generation to the next, and our government learns what our **priorities** are and how we want them to act on our behalf. This is important because when **society** agrees on something, that is when change is most likely to happen.

In 2018, Social Bite decided to take the **initiative** and build the [Social Bite Village](#)! We did this using money raised from our 2016 CEO Sleepout event. In 2017 and 2018, **thousands** of people participated in our Sleep in the Park fundraisers, and we're using the money raised to drive a whole-system **change** to how we end homelessness in Scotland, through the Housing First policy. This will get **830** people out of homelessness and into their own home with **support** over the next two years – and then, Housing First will be rolled out across the entire country!



We can all do something to help
#EndHomelessness.

Social Bite started as one little **cafe**, and six years later we created a village, pioneered a new housing **transformation** with the Scottish Government, and are leading a movement to end homelessness in Scotland!

Imagine what you could achieve in six years?

Remember, **everyone** who is homeless is a person just like you, with their own **hopes** and fears, favourite songs, favourite snacks! A **smile** and saying 'hello' can change someone's day – it helps to remind **people** that they're not invisible, and that they **matter**.