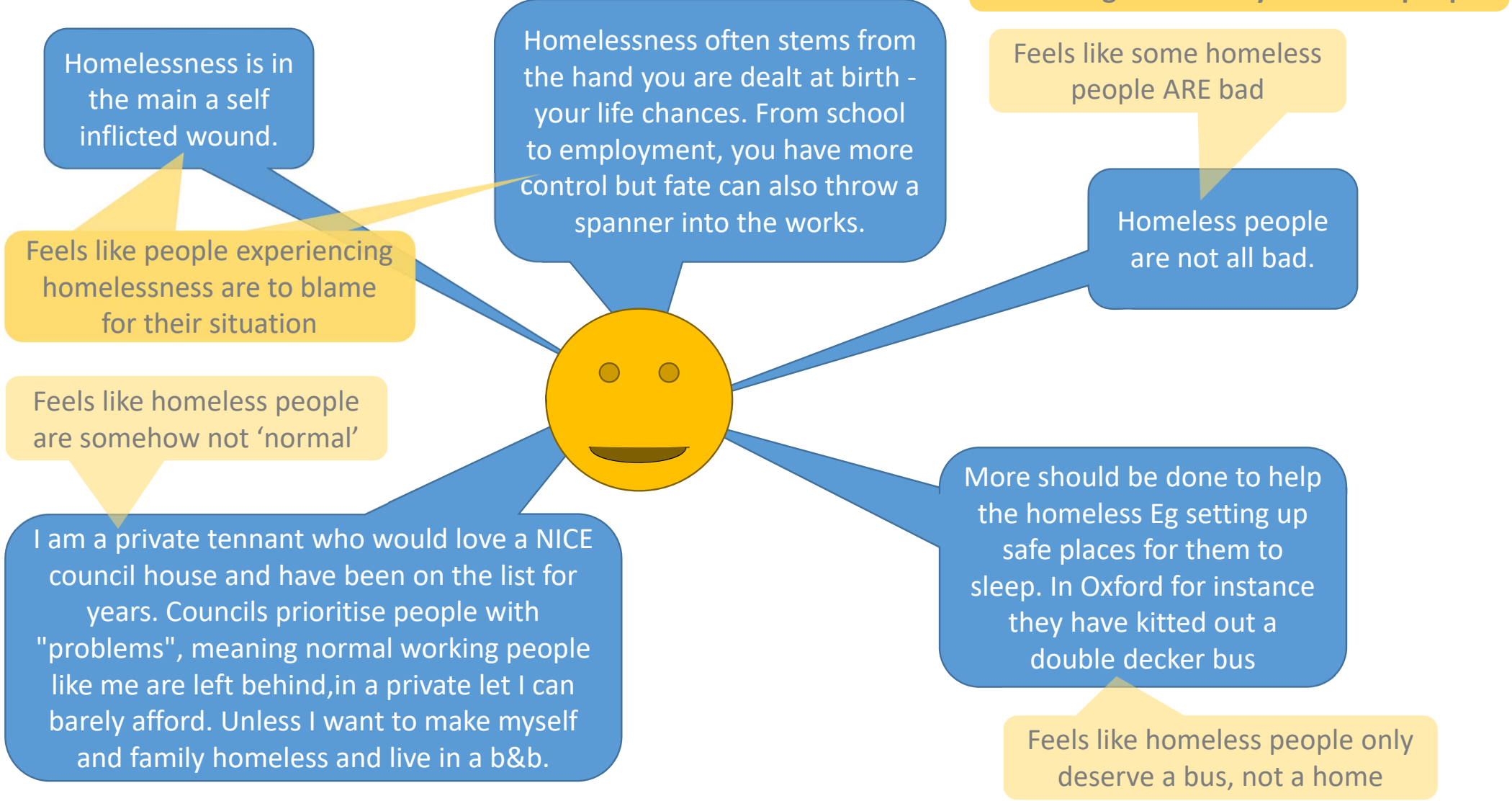


Public perceptions of homelessness

Scottish Government Homelessness Team

JHPDG, 13 June 2019

Real verbatim responses from a survey about people's perception of homelessness (2017)



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Some of the subtext which contributes to the stigma faced by homeless people

The local authority has an obligation to provide accommodation to residents. Most people are only truly homeless long term because they have refused the accommodation provided by the local authority. The root cause of the issue is usually a combination of substance addiction and mental health issues.

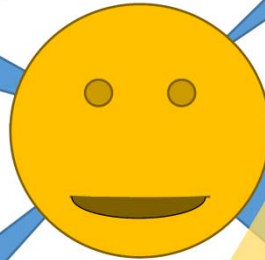
It is increasingly difficult , due to issues like organised begging, for ordinary people to discern genuine homelessness

Feels like people experiencing homelessness are to blame for their situation

Too many beggars on the street who only want money for drugs or drink are undermining the people who are genuinely homeless and need help.

Feels like some people are more deserving of help than others

There are a lot of reasons for homelessness, most are caused by some form of addiction, mainly alcohol and drugs. In today's Scotland there are more than ever people looking for something for nothing. Take Food Banks, they have a high profile but it's mainly people getting something for nothing. We need to be honest about these situations. We need to separate the people who are really homeless, from the people who could be housed by family members. There also must be an easy way of finding the genuine people using Food Banks from those who see it as a "Gravy Train".



Real verbatim responses from a survey about people's perception of homelessness (2017)

Which, if any, of the following do you think are causes of homelessness in Scotland?

Unemployment/job loss	918	85%
Relationship breakdown	819	76%
Debt	925	85%
Addiction to alcohol	991	92%
Addiction to drugs	1008	93%
Addiction to gambling	838	77%
Lack of affordable housing	733	68%
Government policies	491	45%
Physical health problems	431	40%
Domestic abuse	752	69%
Mental health problems	925	85%
Personal choice	293	27%
Lack of safe housing	487	45%
Other reasons (please say what)*	44	4%
No reason in particular	6	1%
Don't know	7	1%

A selection of 'other' reasons:

- Greed, ignorance and selfishness.
- Council ineffective at dealing with bad remnants. Far too many rules protecting these people
- Heroin
- No motivation to get a job
- Anti-social behaviour
- bad at money managing
- Ex-forces personnel trying to cope on their own after years of service
- Ex prison/ Services
- EX Service personnel

REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS

Main reason for making an application for homelessness (2017-2018 statistics)

DISPUTE WITHIN HOUSEHOLD:
NON-VIOLENT 18%

DISPUTE WITHIN HOUSEHOLD:
VIOLENT OR ABUSIVE 13%

OTHER (EG HARASSMENT,
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) 22%

RENT ARREARS AND
MORTGAGE DEFICIT 5%

ACTION BY
LANDLORD 11%

DISCHARGE FROM
PRISON/HOSPITAL/
OTHER 6%

ASKED TO LEAVE 25%

Actual reasons...

(SEE BETA.GOV.SCOT/PUBLICATIONS/HOMELESSNESS-SCOTLAND-2017-18)

Some impacts on people and services

- Because they feel embarrassed, people don't access services until they reach crisis which makes it harder for services to help them and less likely they'll be able to avoid long term impacts
- People stay in unsuitable or dangerous accommodation or situations longer because they feel the stigma and uncertainty of being homeless is worse
- People tell us they can be viewed with suspicion by public services including housing providers because of their status – the system shows no confidence in them, so they feel destined to fail.

What we're doing


- Work to challenge the public perceptions of homelessness is a priority for the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group.
- National aims have been developed and a programme of work is being developed to challenge the national conversation about homelessness.
- We need to focus on people's lived experience, and are talking to people who have experienced homelessness and worked in services.
- Tools are being created, including to support organisations to change their own language.

What can organisations do to help?

Consider what it would take to take forward these draft aims in your own organisation.

Most people have compassion and want to help, but aren't aware that they might be stigmatising people

OBJECTIVE: TO CHANGE THE CONVERSATION AROUND HOMELESSNESS	
Aims	Outcomes
<p>People believe that homelessness is not inevitable or acceptable and that there are always collective solutions to homelessness.</p>	<p>People working in public services recognise when someone is at risk of homelessness and are empowered to signpost and support them towards relevant services</p> <p>People at risk of/experiencing homelessness are supported, connected to their communities and treated with dignity and respect.</p>
<p>People recognise that while homelessness is a problem, people who are homeless are not a problem.</p>	<p>People at risk of or experiencing homelessness don't feel stigmatised or embarrassed and know that they have a right to seek help from services.</p>
<p>People at risk of/experiencing homelessness know their rights to housing and support and which services to approach for help.</p>	<p>People at risk of/experiencing homelessness are empowered to seek support in a way which facilitates their choice and control over the level and type of support provided.</p>
<p>People know that homelessness is the result of inequality, poverty and systems, not individual fault or failing.</p>	<p>People empathise when they think someone is at risk of homelessness and do not judge individuals.</p>



I think people need more understanding of homeless people. They are not on the streets by choice. Local press could do more, in getting rid of misinformation.

Housing provision alone is not the answer, mental health and addiction are important and a lot of time, effort and resources and ongoing support are needed to get a homeless person in a stable long term situation. There are no quick fixes.

These responses from the same survey show that some people do have a better idea about what homelessness means.