

The Upper Classes tends to consist of people with inherited wealth, and includes some of the oldest families, with many of them being titled aristocrats. The upper classes are not only defined by their title, but also by their education, and their pastimes which includes the traditional sporting life involving hunting, shooting and fishing, as well as a great deal of horse riding for both leisure and as a competitive pursuit.

The Middle Classes are the majority of the population of Britain today. They include industrialists, professionals, businesspeople and shop owners. Working class people are mostly agricultural, mine and factory workers. You can tell which class people belong to by the way they speak (accent), their clothes, their interests, the way that they educate their children, or even the type of food they eat."

Although these people who are sleeping rough in doorways are the most visible, homelessness also includes those who are placed in hostels, bed and breakfast or other temporary accommodation, or local authority housing.

It is difficult to understand how people become homeless and research shows that they are all ages, from all areas and backgrounds. There are charities that support the homeless and Centre point is a national organization that focuses on young people. It provides emergency night shelters and short stay hostels. Their research shows that more than 80% of the young people who turn to Centre point for help are homeless due to family breakdown, abuse or eviction.

Some young people become homeless following the death of a parent. It seems a double blow to be bereaved and homeless. However, often these vulnerable young people find themselves sleeping rough before seeking help.

Many of these 16 to 20 year olds have no qualifications or means of supporting themselves financially. I feel that if our society wants these people to become self-sufficient, it is essential to offer help in the form of housing, and assisting them to either return to school, or to gain qualifications through training programmers to improve their chances of finding worthwhile employment.

Tragically, many homeless young people are "befriended" by drug addicts or encouraged into prostitution. For those who have run away from home as a result of abuse, one wonders how bad their home circumstances must have been if they would prefer to face the risks of addiction and sexually transmitted disease.

Of course it is not only young people who become homeless. Older people can face homelessness when they lose their jobs and are evicted from their homes because they cannot pay the rent. Sometimes these people have physical or mental health problems as well. Unfortunately in some

circumstances these people either have no family, or their families are unable or unwilling to help them. Single homeless people are not a high priority for housing assistance and are therefore more likely to be sleeping rough, huddled under a bridge, trying to keep warm with newspapers.

Other homeless people are ex-offenders. They have paid for their crime and yet they find themselves unable to find a job and therefore without resources. It is sad that many people coming out of prison have nowhere to go and may eventually end up in prison again. Often these people have been exposed to drugs in prison and will resort to dealing as a means of making money.

Anyone is capable of turning to crime out of desperation, ending up harming others in an attempt to steal money. If people become homeless as a result of family breakdown or employment problems, should we not as a society make a stronger effort to help these people? Homelessness and having no money creates a climate for crime which is what we want to prevent. One of the ways of preventing it could be to offer more support to people before they find themselves homeless. For example, young people could have anonymous safe places to go to if they are in abusive situations. They should know that there is at least one adult at school who they can talk to, or a number they can phone. Although there are charities offering phone line assistance, it is not sufficient.

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