

# HOLE IN MY LIFE

Homelessness and The Salvation Army

Key Stage 4 assembly or talk



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## Introduction

This Key Stage 4 assembly outline and PowerPoint presentation uses colourful illustrations and simple language and concepts to help secondary pupils understand why people become homeless, how it feels to be homeless and what The Salvation Army is doing to help homeless people rebuild their lives.

## Resources & preparation

- Download the **Hole In My Life** primary assembly PowerPoint presentation from [www.salvationarmy.org.uk/uki/PSHE](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/uki/PSHE)
- The **Swan Lodge** video clip can be found at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mOusbm7gfA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mOusbm7gfA)

## 1. Stereotypes

Briefly introduce yourself, what you do and the theme of the assembly - 'Homelessness'.

The second I said that word I expect you have an image in your mind similar to those on the screen. You may even be recalling a time recently when you passed someone who was homeless on the street; maybe you gave money, bought a Big Issue, said hello or simply walked on by?

But what about these people (flick through the next few slides)? Would you be surprised if I told you all these people are homeless too?

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Let me tell you about Craig. Craig had a fantastic job, wife and two kids, lovely four bedroom detached house, two cars, even a villa in Spain. Unfortunately though, his long struggle with his alcohol addiction cost him his job and he ended up with nothing. This led to him begging on the streets and living in an alleyway. Craig lost everything and he had no idea how to get back on track until he found help and support from The Salvation Army Homelessness Services. We will find out more about what happened to Craig later on.

In this talk today we are going to try to move beyond homeless stereotypes as we consider the problem of homelessness.

Is homelessness simply a lack of a 'home'?

Is it simply not having a roof over your head; or somewhere warm and dry to sleep? Imagine if we could give every homeless person a home of their own. Do you think that would solve the problem of homelessness forever?

Of course, it would certainly help, but putting a roof over someone's head is not the solution. Does that surprise you?

## 2. About Homelessness

The Salvation Army has been helping homeless people for over 140 years and today is one of the largest non-government providers of services to homeless people in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Every night at least three thousand people stay with us in one of our 89 homeless projects across the country (Make the figure of 3000 relevant to the school e.g. 'that's the same number of people in your entire school, that is ten times the amount of people sitting in this hall').

We have done a lot of research into the underlying causes of homelessness.

Let me show you some figures.....

We interviewed almost one thousand homeless people in our centres and we found out that:

- 51 % spend most of their time alone
- 26% have no close friends
- 54% have experienced physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect
- 96% are unemployed
- 37% have no qualifications

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- 74% had psychological problems, such as a post-traumatic stress, a high suicide risk, and drug and alcohol dependency, and this was highest in the 18-25 age group (51%)
  - 36% had attempted suicide at least once.
- (Statistics from 'Hole In My Life' booklet, sourced from the Seeds of Exclusion Report 2009)

(Perhaps add in here some statistics of homelessness in your own area)

People end up being homeless for all sorts of reasons. Without doubt the single biggest reason for homelessness is relationship breakdown. Sometimes for young people it is being kicked out of their family home. Other major factors include drug, alcohol and gambling addictions; domestic violence; mental health problems like depression; unemployment; or money problems.

Does simply providing someone with a roof over their head make these problems disappear?

### 3. *There's a hole in my life?*

It's probably fair to say that homeless people are not simply missing out on a home; they're missing out on life.

You see, there's more to life than a roof over your head. Life is about purpose and relationships, without these things we feel a hole in our lives.

Take a second and try to imagine your life without any relationships - no family, no friends, no one to talk to, no one interested in your existence.

(Allow a few seconds of silence)

Or what about life without purpose...no reason to get up in the morning, no opportunity to make a useful contribution to society or to the lives of others, just one boring hour after another day after day after day, stretching on into a bleak future.

(Again, allow a few seconds of silence)

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Lots of people know that The Salvation Army provide food and shelter, but actually just giving people a roof over their head is not enough, it doesn't solve the problem, because simply not having a place to live is not always the main problem.

The problem is a hole in life - usually that hole is to do with not having good relationships and not having any purpose in life.

At The Salvation Army we offer more than a bed, we get people their life back.

Here's how...

## 4. Lifehouses

We don't run hostels anymore but Lifehouses.  
(Mention specifically if there is one in your area)

Homeless people get referred to a Lifehouse via a central Homelessness service located in each local authority.

In a Lifehouse, each person gets their own room with a shower room...their own private space which helps them to regain some dignity, self-respect and pride.

Lifehouses are run by friendly and caring staff, and each person is provided with a key worker to help them make good choices about their future, access services and benefits, and face up to problems like addiction, anger, debt and broken relationships. Key workers also provide support with independent living skills such as household budgeting and cooking.

Each Lifehouse runs a programme of events, activities and training, enabling people to learn new skills and get qualifications which will help them to get a job or further their education.

Some Lifehouses run social enterprise projects, which allow people to gain work experience and learn about business. It's often the first step back on the job ladder. It also enables people to feel they have something worthwhile to offer, and something to get up for

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in the morning.

People can also get involved in voluntary community projects, giving something back to other people, which in turns raise their own self-esteem.

This might surprise you but there are a lot of fun activities in Lifehouses too, such as sport, music and outings. These activities help people build relationships, learn how to get on with other people, experience a positive side of life and feel happier.

The Salvation Army believe that we all have a spiritual part of us. So Lifehouses can also help people consider and develop their spirituality if they wish. There are opportunities to attend Christian services in the chapel or meet with the Lifehouse chaplain. Of course, you don't have to be 'religious person' to come into a Lifehouse. People of any faith, or no faith, are always welcome.

A Lifehouse is only a short term solution for each person to their homelessness. During their stay one of the main aims is to help each person move on into a place of their own. Where possible Lifehouse staff will continue to provide ongoing support and advice to ensure that they are able to keep their new home, pay the rent and bills and look after themselves properly.

As we said above, there's more to life than a roof over your head. Life is about purpose and relationships and every Lifehouse aims to offer both in everything that they do.

Let's go back to Craig, who we met earlier. Craig came into the Lifehouse from rock bottom, he had lost everything. Craig lived in a Lifehouse for 18 months, during which time he learned to be himself again through the support and encouragement of the Lifehouse staff. We're now goin to find out some more about what Craig's story by watching a short video clip.

(Swan Lodge video clip)

So Craig was able to use his skills as a trained chef in a positive way to help other people living in the Lifehouse. He managed to recover from his alcohol addiction and went to college and gained qualifications in Health and Social Care. He is now employed at the Lifehouse.

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## Why we do what we do.

The Salvation Army is a Christian church and charity and our work comes from our beliefs. Jesus cared for people who were seen as unimportant and forgotten by others and we believe that God wants us to do the same.

Our belief is that God doesn't see failures and that every human being, no matter how bad their circumstances get, has something good and positive to offer to the rest of us in society.

The Salvation Army has been looking after homeless people since 1865. The goal now is the same as it was then, that we help homeless people to have the fullest, best life that they can and that they lose the hole and become whole!

