Why does homelessness still occur in the UK today?

There is not a way to easily define the term homelessness. Most people if asked would define it as a person who sleeps on the street, in parks or on benches. This is not always the case; this is called rough sleeping and is only one of the many ways people can be homeless. This type of stereotype is sometimes the reason some people in various situations of homelessness are often denied or do not have access to help they may desperately need. Most people form an unconscious bias towards homeless people due to the stereotypes that often regard them, these are often to do with the ideology that all homeless people are all either addict, ex criminals or have mental health issues and have put themselves in this position so therefore can get themselves out. Not many people actually question that it could be structural injustices in society that will negatively impact individuals putting them in these awful situations. There are many issues within this society that still have not been resolved and until people start being educated on this matter the society will continue to negatively impact a large amount of people by putting them in these position

Having a broad definition of the term homelessness is really important as it means that people will understand that there are so many more homeless people out here than only rough sleepers and that even though the government are tying to make people believe that they are working really hard to tackle this problem that the statistics are much higher than they are leading people to believe. People don’t consider that situations where people can be considered homeless include squatting, sofa surfing and even if someone does actually live in house if their house is unsafe for them and they do not have anywhere to escape to such as someone who suffers from domestic abuse.

The explanation of homelessness can fall into two categories: individualistic, which focuses on homeless peoples’ vulnerabilities and behaviours: such as mental health and addictions. And structural, focusing on more broad forces such as an inadequate welfare system, social mobility and capitalist economy. When talking about where the blame falls for how people become homeless the easiest option for people is usually going for the individual causing this themselves rather than really thinking into our society and all the structural injustices that come with it. Of course every situation is different and some peoples individual deficiencies can lead them to being homeless but I do not think that this would be entirely their fault because this could be due to the environment they were brought up in, any traumatic experiences they may have lived through or maybe just them having giving after unfair treatment or the rejection of society. with homeless people experiencing feelings of loneliness and isolation, the potential of drug use, mental and physical health problems increase. Evidence suggests the longer someone is in this position the more difficult it can become to get back on their feet. (<https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/understanding-homelessness/impact-of-homelessness>) I agree with this statement as the longer someone lives in these conditions the further they become from society and they may feel like the trust and reliability of people disappeared and seem so fake to them after the situations they have been in. Some homeless people feel so out of place in society that even if charities or people try to reach out to help them, they just will not accept it. They feel let down by people and can no longer trust anyone. Some homeless people do not know how to deal with being in their situations so turn to drugs and alcohol as a form of escape from their lives, these things can easily turn into addictions and they can become dependent on them for warmth and comfort. There is a 53% chance that someone could be involved in street drinking. (<https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/understanding-homelessness/impact-of-homelessness> ) most people drink to forget things and to make the long days of sitting in the cold mor bearable. Once they get into this habitat it is really hard to get out relying on it to feel something

One of the structural injustices that homeless people face is capitalist economy. People in the working and lower classes voces are not always heard by the people running this country. The government only back the interests of their wealthy supporters and their decisions hardly ever benefit people of the lower classes, most decisions only lead to the rich becoming richer, which is how the wealthy stay in charge and benefit each other while some people in the lower classes continue to suffer and have no way to get their voices heard, creating much larger inequalities between the classes. This is part of the reason why homelessness is such a big issue in this country because capitalism exploits the lower classes to the point where people can have multiple jobs but still not be able to support their families. The government also put money that could have uses to help homeless people and charities, towards replacing functional benches for anti- homeless architecture which further bars them from being the most comfortable they can be. Neoliberalism is an issue because it makes people in lower classes and in poverty unable to afford basic housing and they do not receive much help in the matter. Housing, however, should be a basic right that everyone is given.

Patriarchal society is a way for men to assert their dominance and power over women, this can cause a lot of problems within households because it puts the thought into peoples minds that it is okay for men to show that they have more power. Domestic violence is another awful kind of homelessness as it means people are terrified to be in their own house without a safe space to escape to. People that suffer from domestic abuse can feel as if they have no one to trust and nowhere to go so they stay even though they are getting hurt. Domestic abuse is an issue that should be spoken about way more as it is such an awful thing that can happen to someone. Around 32% of women who are homeless say that one of the factors in that has been domestic abuse in their lives (Jacob- 2017). People in these situations can feel ignored from society and that there are no better options for them, so they stay in these kinds of environments. More charities and organisations should be easier to access to people in need of support because many people in these situations often do not know organisations such as women’s aid exist.

It is really difficult for people to change their place in society, their social class. It is even harder to move up social classes due to the lack of social mobility. People that go to private schools tend to get a better education and therefore get better jobs than people that are educated in state schools and poorer families. People in states schools often have less opportunities than people in the higher classes. Allowing people from state schools poorer families the opportunities in which private schools have to offer will give them more of a chance to succeed in life, this will limit the educational barriers put to stop people from doing the best they can in life. These types of opportunities ensure that the wealthy are on top and stay on top while some people are still struggling.

Many women, children and men live in unstable circumstances or are homeless. Although all kinds of homelessness for everyone involved can be a stressful and traumatic time in their lives, there is still some differences in the experiences between men and women; Women are less likely to be rough sleepers than be apart of the “hidden homeless”. But women are more likely to be assaulted or abused in any form of homelessness than men. It is estimated that nearly one in four female rough sleepers have been sexually assaulted in the past year (safe lives, no date) , this statistic doesn’t even count the amount of “hidden homeless” who could be suffering from this as well. There should be more accessible support for people stuck in situations like these.

There are a few charities and organisations in place for homeless people, but most are generally not very effective in their ways of providing help. Civil injunctions are one of the ways the government have tried to fix the problem. However, all this does is give policemen the power to move people away from one place on the street to another. This is not helping to “fix” or reduce any problem as people are still rough sleeping just in a different place until the next time they get moved on. They may even be moved away from somewhere that is relatively safe and comfortable to an area that could be really dangerous. Giving policemen the power to deal with homelessness is based on the ideology that homelessness is a deviant act and that they are bad people. Some people even find the conditions of being homeless so bad that they will purposely try to get themselves locked up as at least it will be more comfortable and be protected. There is hardly any support for ex criminals and most end up on the streets and some can’t handle it so do stuff to end right back in the justice system which can then become an endless cycle.

The homeless reduction act is another response set up to try and tackle the issue of homelessness, this is where government gives power to local council to come up with an individualised plan for each person that comes to them for help. This strategy does not actually help the majority of homeless people and hinders the progress of tackle because of the use of a generic template that is only slightly altered for each individual case. This means that most issues that different people have are not accounted for as they are not on the generalised template. This method also requires people to go out and “fix” their own problems. For some people this is impossible considering what their issues are; people with mental health issues and addictions possibly unable to help themselves and it is unfair, when they have tried to seek help in the first place, to make them attempt to do it themselves.

Strategies such as night shelters and drop in shelters are useful for the facilities they offer to the homeless, however they are for limited amount of time and even if they went there the day or night before it does not guarantee a place the next time they go there. I think there should be more creative solutions to these problems that are not just based off of generalisations such as multi- collaboration as this will ensure that more than one need will be focused on. In my opinion there should be multiple homeless shelters in each city which caters to all the individual needs they may have for example a place where people can go to sleep eat and use facilities such as: showers, toilets and somewhere to keep their belongings. There should also be people that help people get jobs and educate people who need it. I feel as if a response like this would be way more beneficial than ones that only get people of the street as it would actually help them and could encourage them to make change their lives and give the support so they are able to do that.

Another way homeless people get help is relying on the generosity and kindness of individuals in their town and cities. There are a few ways that the average person can help a homeless person: giving them money, buying them food or drink, or buying them necessities. Last month my sister and her friends held a car boot sale to raise money to go toward helping the homeless, they then went and brought a few necessities such as blankets, toothpaste, toothbrushes, food and water. They went to Cambridge and walked around for one hour and managed to find 7 homeless people and gave them the items they needed/ asked for. This just puts into perspective how many homeless people there actually are. If you can come across 7 homeless people an hour in every minor and major city that would make thousands of people in the UK who are in need of help.

Homelessness is still a problem in the UK today because of how many inequalities there are among people in this society. The issue is also so big because of the governments unwillingness to use resources to help. I feel like the government have just accepted that homelessness exists and is probably always going to exist so have started to neglect the fact that they may be able to tackle this problem more if they used resources used to keep homeless people away into actually helping them. I also think that only focusing on rough sleepers and not putting any energy/ resources towards the “hidden homeless” contributes to the issue of how many homeless people are.