Before I get started, let me define what homelessness truly is. Homelessness is not just living on the streets like many people think it is, homelessness has a much wider range. People who are sofa-surfing, squatting or even women who are being domestically abused are all classed legally as homeless as long as they do not have a place or a safe place to go back to. But if we know this is what homelessness truly is, why is it still happening in the UK? It continues to happen in the UK due to many reasons, ranging from government action, the general public’s views on homelessness, businesses and companies and how they deal with it and many more.

To begin with let’s look at the causes of homelessness.

Source 1 states that people may be homeless due to systemic issues in the country, such as lack of affordable housing or rising unemployment, and with the recent pandemic the impacts of the systemic issues continue to be felt.[1]

Source 1 also states that peoples personal challenges can also lead to homelessness. They mention that mental or physical health problems and substance misuse can see people struggle on to their home while the loss of a job or the breakdown of a relationship can mean that people cannot carry on covering rent or are forced to find a new home. Furthermore, they mention that those who leave prison, care or the armed forces can also with no home to return to find themselves homeless too. [1]

Personally, I agree with source 1 in that homelessness is a complex mix of both structural issues and the individual’s issues, and that this leads to a misunderstanding of people who are homeless as those who see someone on the street tend to think that they caused it themselves, and the more people who think like this, the greater the issue of homelessness is. All of this links to the Mad vs Bad theory and the Individual vs Structural theory. Over all this also links to the huge problem that is the misunderstanding of homelessness is people’s eyes.

Moving on from causes of homelessness, let’s take a look at what the British Government are doing to tackle homelessness in the country.

Source 2 mentions that in the last year £310 million was pledged into reducing and helping towards the problem of homelessness. It describes where and how the £310 million will be used in different areas. It says funding will be targeted more towards areas with high numbers of homelessness, those at risk of homelessness, or those in temporary accommodation, and that in the year £47 million will be invested making the total invested into tackling homelessness over £750 million. [2]

Source 2 also mentions The Homeless Reduction Act and that The Homeless Reduction Act has prevented and relieved over 270,000 houses from becoming homeless. The £47 million invested also supports The Homeless Reduction Act as it gives local councils the money that they need to be able to offer help for those who are homeless or bound to be homeless. [2]

However, Source 2 does not state the downsides of Government action which is that the government passed a law allowing police officers to arrest those on the streets and therefore diminishing the person’s pride.

To continue onwards, let’s look at the organisations and multi-agency organisations and their help towards ending homelessness.

First let’s look at singular organisations, Source 3 talks about the organisation, HousingFirst which is an organisation that aims to get people off the streets or out of the situations they are in before talking about payment and how to fix their problems. Its supports people by giving those who have experienced homelessness and chronic health and social care needs a stable home from which they can rebuild their lives. They provide intensive, person-centered, holistic support which is open ended. Finally, they place no conditions upon the person, however they should desire to have a tenancy. To end with, Source 3 states according to statistics from across the world, HousingFirst ends 70-90% of homelessness for people. [3]

These types of companies help hugely towards ending homelessness, but of course with advantages comes disadvantages. The disadvantages of companies like HousingFirst are that they primarily focus on those on the streets, and wait for them to reach out to them, instead of them reaching out to those who need them.

Companies that recognise those who are legally homeless would be those like Women’s Refuge who are set up to help women who are being domestically abused in their own homes, making it an unsafe place to be living.

Source 4 gives information on a different type of company/ housing. Homeless hostels provide short term housing for those who are homeless, usually ranging between one and six months. Most homeless hostels are aimed and set up for homeless and single adult men, but there are few who are set up for specific groups like homeless females, younger or older people who are homeless, people who have experience domestic abuse, those who have slept on the streets for a long time and those who have mental health, alcohol or drug problems. They offer at least one meal a day for those who are staying in their hostel, which is usually breakfast or dinner. They also offer up laundry machines to wash and dry your clothes, a kitchen for you to use at your own time, heating to keep you warm and shared bathrooms. On top of all of this, you usually get a support worker who can help you find stable housing, help end any substance misuse, find any work or education, get an ID and more. [4]

However, their disadvantages is that they charge rent , which some people will be able to get benefits to help with, and they charge between £10-£35 pound to use their facilities, which some people may not be able to afford or get benefits to help pay for.

Occasionally, companies will choose to cooperate with one another and work towards tackling homelessness. This is known as multi-agency collaborations. Source 5 gives an example of a multi-agency collaboration in Chelmsford, those working together are Chelmsford Town Centre Team, Chelmsford City Council, CHESS, Helping Hands, Open Road, the NHS, Phoenix Futures, Jobcentre Plus and Peabody. They show that it seems to be beneficial as they show that during their first intervention hub, 6 people showed up which was encouraging. Their goal is to keep people save and off the streets by helping them securing housing and addressing any substance misuse. The community-led initiative is also support by Essex Police Assistant Chief Constable Andy Prophet, who is the national policing lead for anti-social behaviour, homelessness and arson. [5]

I personally think multi-agency collaborations like this one is definitely a way forwards towards the end of homelessness. However not every agency can agree to each other’s terms, or would have good chemistry with each other in general, which obviously means if these companies were to work together towards decreasing the amount of homelessness nationally, it wouldn’t work due to company instability.

In conclusion, homelessness is still occurring in the UK today due to many significant issues, including how the government responds and deals with homelessness, like funding and passing the law that allowed those on the streets to be arrested and damaging their pride by posing them as deviants, how companies reach out to those who are homeless and the groups they pick out of the crowd, multi-agency collaborations and the issues that come along with them like disagreements and instabilities and how people have a very stereotypical view on homelessness as a whole. There is a way forward into ending homelessness in the UK and it’s for companies to work together, instigate a trust between them, reach out to those who are homeless instead of waiting for them to reach out to them. For the government to pledge more money not just into the local councils but to the companies who are working to decrease rates of homelessness. For people to have greater education on what homelessness truly is, throughout school in lessons like CRS and PSCHE.

Reference List:

Source 1 [1]: Geraghty, 2021, What is the main cause of homelessness?, The Big Issue

Source 2 [2]:  [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government), [Kelly Tolhurst MP](https://www.gov.uk/government/people/kelly-tolhurst), and [The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP](https://www.gov.uk/government/people/robert-jenrick), 2020, Government pledges further £310 million to tackle homelessness, Gov.uk

Source 3 [3]: HousingFirst, 2021, About HousingFirst, hfe.homeless.org.uk

Source 4 [4]: NO NAME, 2018, Housing Advice Homeless Hostels, emgland.shelter.org.uk

Source 5 [5]: Ferris, 2020, Multi-agency approach to supporting homeless people in Chelmsford, yellowad.co.uk