



Key skills communication Level 3 - Homelessness

Tuesday 18 November 2003

Source Booklet

- This booklet contains source material for the level 3 communication test, November 2003
- The test questions will be based on this material
- You must hand in this source booklet at the end of the test, along with your question paper and answer booklet

The level 3 communication test will assess your ability to:

- select and read material that contains the required information
- identify accurately, and compare, the lines of reasoning and main points from the text and images
- synthesise the key information in a form that is relevant to the purpose
- select and use a form and style of writing that is appropriate to the purpose and subject matter
- organise relevant information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate
- ensure text is legible and spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate so that meaning is clear

Think twice about giving to beggars

Britain's biggest youth homelessness charity has launched a campaign to discourage Londoners from giving money to beggars on the street.



In a move that signals a radical new approach to dealing with the young and destitute, Centrepont is urging those moved by the plight of the homeless to “think twice” before handing over cash.

It gives a warning that money given direct to beggars is only making the situation worse because they have less incentive to seek help which is often available nearby. Donors put beggars in danger because on the street they remain vulnerable to the risk of assault or being sucked into a life of vice. The cash also exacerbates the problem of young homeless beggars addicted to drink or drugs.

The charity says that those who really want to help should channel donations through a recognised organisation. They should also be prepared to give beggars advice about where they can go to receive help.

A spokesperson for the charity said, “Begging wrecks lives. We are not saying never give to beggars because that is a personal choice. But we are saying think about it because it doesn’t always help.

“We need to get a debate going about why people beg. I am trying to discourage people from a kneejerk reaction and from assuming that giving to beggars is good.”

The spokesperson added, “If you are on the street and someone gives you a few pounds every day, that becomes a disincentive to get off the street and get involved in a programme which may be difficult at first, but will ensure you never have to go back on to the streets again.

“Telling people where they can get help is a better way to become engaged with the homeless than buying off your conscience with a few pounds. We have to re-educate the public.”

Government figures suggest the number of people sleeping rough is declining in London and across Britain, although many professionals believe the statistics vastly underestimate the true position.

However, much work is being done by charities that lack the resources to mount a sustained assault on the problem. Many organisations run shelters but most lack the funds to conduct long-term support work, which would stop young homeless people drifting back on to the streets and back into begging.

Centrepoint’s campaign is calling for more clean, safe housing, fast-track detox programmes for young people begging to feed a drug habit, more support to help addicts stay drug free and more chances for the homeless to train for a job or enter education.

Source: *London Evening Standard*, September 2000

Introduction

For young people who have the choice, many are staying at home longer due to the difficulty in accessing affordable housing. However, for some young people, staying at home is not a viable option.

Homeless young people cite a variety of reasons for their current predicament. However a breakdown in the relationship with their parent(s) or partner was the most recurring.

Homelessness has a wide range of definitions. It may include rough sleeping, squatting, living on a friend's floor or shorthold tenancies.

Running away from home and rough sleeping makes young people more vulnerable to crime, drug and alcohol problems, serious illness and premature death.

When young people run away from home due to drug and alcohol problems, the cause and consequences of homelessness can become a bitter and perpetuating cycle of social exclusion.

The Rough Sleeping Report (1998) estimated that some 2,400 people spend time sleeping rough in London, of which 1,800 are new arrivals. Many seek out hostels and alternative modes of accommodation, and many continue their pattern of intermittent rough sleeping combined with staying in hostels.

Outside of London, an estimated 2,000 sleep rough in England with a probability of 10,000 people experiencing periods of rough sleeping over a 12 month period. Exact figures are hard to come by as data collection methods vary from street counts to local authority estimates.

The scale of homelessness

With only informed estimates as an indicator of the scale of homelessness, an accurate picture is hard to obtain.

Recent studies show that there are young, homeless people in every part of the country. This means in rural as well as urban areas, in the north and south, and in both affluent and depressed areas.

As well as the most visible homeless, who sleep on the streets or in accommodation established for homeless people, many more live in squats, hotels or sleep on friends' floors. They are known as the 'hidden homeless', and are very difficult to count.

Some surveys by charities indicate young people could represent 50% or more of the homeless population. Surveys also show that homelessness among young people is growing faster than for any other group.

Homelessness & family background

The absence of a supportive family background is an important index of disadvantage.

Research has shown that there are links between lack of parental supervision and truancy and school exclusion. Disaffection from education brings with it increased vulnerability towards offending, misuse of drugs and alcohol, worse employment prospects and the longer-term likelihood of social exclusion.

The family context for homeless young people is particularly significant. Although homeless people come from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances, family conflict is a key cause of homelessness amongst young people.

In many cases, physical, emotional and sexual abuse is the key reason for leaving home. One study reported in the Social Exclusion Unit report found that 40% of young women who had become homeless had experienced sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence.

Crisis, the charity working for homeless people, talks about 'the want of conviviality', conviviality being the support network made up of family and friends. It is the breakdown of conviviality that leads to homelessness and its continued absence reinforces the sense of social exclusion.

Homelessness is a multi-faceted problem with more than one solution. Some long-term solutions include the provision of more affordable, good quality and secure accommodation, as well as supportive services for mental health and substance dependency problems.

Source: The Prince's Trust, August 2002

Press Release

Friday, 03 November 2000

National Homeless Alliance (NHA)

**BEGGING DEBATE MUST ADDRESS WIDER ISSUES OF POVERTY,
ADDICTION AND ACCESS TO SERVICES**

The debate about homelessness and begging is in danger of stereotyping people on the street as “drug using scroungers”, says national homelessness charity National Homeless Alliance. It’s necessary to understand why people beg in order to address the very difficult circumstances that homeless and other vulnerable people face daily. The debate about homelessness and begging could be in danger of oversimplifying the issues at the expense of very vulnerable people on the streets of our cities.

There are many complex reasons why people beg or end up on the street. Many have spent much of their life in institutions and find there is a lack of support when they leave the care system, prisons or the army. Some may have a mental health issue which they’re not getting support for. Many will be escaping some form of violence or abuse. Many 16–17 year olds have great difficulty in getting benefits, as they are severely restricted for this age group. A number will also be dependent on drugs or alcohol for many reasons relating to their negative experiences and vulnerability. No one likes to see beggars and those who beg find it demeaning and don’t want to do it – using it as a means of last resort.

Dominic Fox, Chief Executive of National Homeless Alliance, says, “We have to address the complex reasons why people beg and why they may be homeless. We have to prevent these very vulnerable people needing to beg by providing adequate services to support them with the complex problems they face.”

“We have to ensure that these people, who are some of the most damaged in our society, are not demonised and seen as undeserving through their dependency on drugs or alcohol, but are offered adequate support, quickly when they need it, to help them.”

“It is positive that the public are being encouraged to give to services to help these people. However, we need to ensure that this money is additional to services and is not what enables them to function. This is the government’s role. The worst thing that could happen would be that the public give to services thinking that would enable vulnerable people to stop begging, and the services are still not adequately enough resourced to meet the demand.”

NHA members urge the public to join them in calling for significant improvements in the provision of drug and alcohol services and for the adequate statutory resourcing of all support services to vulnerable people.

Source: National Homeless Alliance, November 2000

THE BIG ISSUE

Becoming a Vendor

The Big Issue is a news and current affairs magazine written by professional journalists and sold on the streets by homeless vendors. Currently the circulation figures stand at over 253,000 copies.

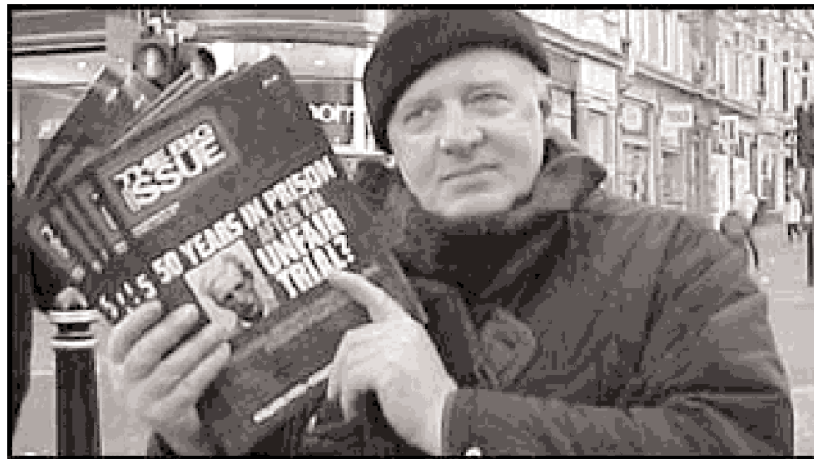
The Big Issue aims to:

- Enable homeless people to earn an income through self-help
- Invest profits to benefit homeless people
- Provide homeless people with a voice in the media
- Produce a quality magazine which interests and informs readers
- Provide an example of a socially responsible business

In order to sell The Big Issue, you must be homeless or vulnerably accommodated. When a prospective vendor comes to The Big Issue, they are asked to provide proof that they are homeless (e.g. receipts from any hostels that they have been staying in).

Training and the Vendor Code of Conduct

Vendors undergo a training session in which The Big Issue's services are explained in detail. All vendors complete a training period and sign the vendor code of conduct. This is made up of the basic rules to which they must adhere whilst selling the magazine, including no begging, no drinking, no swearing and no harassment of the public. They are also informed that they need to declare their earnings to the Department of Social Security.



Selling The Big Issue

In London, after being 'badged up', vendors receive ten papers, but this policy varies across the country. Thereafter, in most areas they buy copies of the magazine for 40p each and sell them on the streets for £1.00, keeping the 60p profit.

Vendors are not employed by The Big Issue. They are retailers, and as such, are responsible for their own tax, bookkeeping and timekeeping etc. This is in keeping with The Big Issue's ethos of self help, and helps vendors to learn new skills at the same time as earning an income.

Source: The Big Issue website, September 2002