

## Is enough being done to help the homeless?

Thousands of people in the UK don't have a home; not everyone agrees they're getting the support they need.

### What you need to know

- There are different types of homelessness. Rough sleepers are the people we see sleeping on the street, but many more live in temporary accommodation. Others (known as the "hidden homeless") find shelter elsewhere, such as on the floors or sofas of friends and family.
- Oxford City Council has recently been criticised for threatening rough sleepers with fines of up to £2,500, for breaking antisocial behaviour laws.
- Earlier this year, Parliament passed the Homelessness Reduction Act, a new law aimed at preventing people from becoming homeless.



Thousands of people sleep rough.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
In 2015, Oxford City Council's attempt to ban rough sleeping was overturned after 72,000 people signed a petition against it.

In autumn 2016 there were estimated to be around 4,000 people sleeping rough on the streets in England – more than twice as many as in 2010. Although high, this number doesn't begin to reveal the true scale of the homelessness crisis in the UK. A charity, Shelter, says that there are more than 250,000 people living without a home in the UK, including over 120,000 children. Most homeless people don't live on the streets, but in temporary accommodation or with friends or family. Recently, Oxford City Council attracted criticism for threatening rough sleepers with fines for leaving their possessions in doorways in the city centre. The council claims that the possessions are blocking fire escapes, but many people said the fines were an attempt to "intimidate" the city's homeless. In spring, Parliament made a new law to try to prevent people becoming homeless – but is enough being done to help them?

### Yes – homeless people get lots of help

The Government has promised that over the next four years, it will halve the number of rough sleepers on the streets. By 2027, it plans to have stopped rough sleeping entirely. A new law called the Homelessness Reduction Act puts pressure on local councils (which are responsible for housing in their area) to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place. The Government has also pledged £550 million for local councils to use to help prevent homelessness. The Government and local councils aren't the only organisations looking out for the homeless. The UK is home to lots of charities, such as Shelter, all focused on stopping homelessness and providing support for people who have nowhere to live. Others, including The Big Issue Foundation, aim to help the homeless get back on their feet. Homelessness in the UK is a problem – but it's being solved.

### No – homeless people need more help

The idea that the homeless are getting the support they need is laughable. Oxford City Council's threat to the area's rough sleepers is yet another example of society's lack of care for its most vulnerable citizens. In the run-up to the general election in June, the Conservatives promised to build more social housing – houses for local councils to rent at low rates to people who need them. It quickly went back on that promise, however, and said that the homes wouldn't necessarily be affordable to everyone. Local councils aren't able to help everyone who needs it, because they don't have enough money, and nor do charities. Some charities get money from the Government, but they also rely on public donations, and people can't always afford to give. In any case, it's the Government's job to look after its citizens – people shouldn't have to rely on charity.

### YES Homeless people are getting lots of help

- 1 The Government's new Homelessness Reduction Bill forces councils to act early to prevent homelessness.
- 2 It has also promised to invest £550 million in tackling homelessness by 2020.
- 3 Charities and other organisations provide the homeless with strong support, in the form of advice and help.

### NO Homeless people are not getting the help they need

- 1 There aren't enough houses – and the Government isn't doing enough to build more affordable homes.
- 2 Local councils don't have enough money to help every homeless person.
- 3 Charities struggle for money, and anyway they shouldn't be relied on to take responsibility – the Government has a duty to care for its citizens.

### THE WEEKLY POLL

To find out what everyone is voting on this week visit:  
[theweekjunior.co.uk/polls](http://theweekjunior.co.uk/polls)

YES

NO



### What do you think?

Each week we ask our readers to vote in our The Big debate poll. You can find out what we're voting on at the moment by visiting [theweekjunior.co.uk/polls](http://theweekjunior.co.uk/polls).

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