

the
FREE
mag for
homeless
people

the Pavement

Invisible Youth

July / August 2019



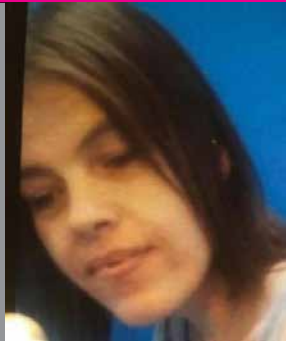
Missing



Christina Rack

Christina went missing from Chorlton, Greater Manchester on 1 October last year. She was 48 years old at the time.

Christina, we're here for you whenever you need us. We can talk through your options, send a message for you and help you be safe. Call/text 116 000. It's free, confidential and 24/7.



Julie Mackinnon

Julie has been missing from Rochester, Kent since 31 October 2017. She was 40 when she went missing.

Julie can call our free, confidential and 24/7 helpline for support and advice without judgement and the opportunity to send a message to loved ones. Call/text 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk.

If you think you may know something about Julie or Christina, you can contact our helpline anonymously on 116 000 or 116000@missingpeople.org.uk, or you can send a letter to 'Freepost Missing People'.

Our helpline is also available for anyone who is missing, away from home or thinking of leaving. We can talk through your options, give you advice and support or pass a message to someone.

Free, confidential, 24/7.

**missing
people**

Registered charity in England and Wales (1020419)
and in Scotland (SC047419)

A lifeline when someone disappears

Invisible youth

Officialdom states that 4,114 young people in London, 875 in Glasgow and 705 in Edinburgh received housing help (2016-17). Many others did not, could not or never asked. So in this issue young women and men share how to handle being homeless at a time when they felt invisible because their top priority was finding a safe place to sleep. Please remember as HY points out in her fab poem, *You won't be homeless for a lifetime* (see p15). Whatever your story *the Pavement* can help you survive until things get better, especially if you turn to the centre pages for the list of services. Stay safe.

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London/Scotland Issue 121 July – August 2019

Published by *the Pavement*
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The Pavement (print) ISSN 1757-0476
The Pavement (online) ISSN 1757-0484

Cover: *The Girls* by Frank Twahirwa taken at the *Accumulate Youth Culture* exhibition. This showed off the talent of young homeless people, some of whom have secured scholarships to Ravensbourne university. Next *Accumulate* course is November. To join, contact info@accumulate.org.uk and see p13.

© Frank Twahirwa/*Accumulate*

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This Stuff Matters from the Museum of Homelessness and the Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields is an exhibition of 70 years of hidden homelessness. See it at the Crypt at St Martin-in-the-Fields from approx 10am-6pm but ideally check times on www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/visit/cafe-in-the-crypt before visiting. Show closes on 2 September.

© *the Pavement*

Welcome to *the Pavement*: a magazine for homeless readers

We're a small charity, founded in London in 2005. Now we produce 8,500 FREE bimonthly magazines for homeless and insecurely housed readers in London and Scotland. You can find *the Pavement* at hostels, day centres, homeless surgeries, soup-runs and libraries.

We use volunteer journalists and photographers to create exclusive content that's written with our readers in mind.

We believe that sleeping rough is physically and mentally harmful, but reject the view that a one-size-fits-all approach to getting people off the streets works.

You can fundraise or donate, see how at:

- www.thepavement.org.uk

Join us

We are always looking for volunteer journalists with experience. We particularly welcome those who've been homeless.

- nicola@thepavement.org.uk

Fundraise or donate so we can keep providing *the Pavement* free to homeless people. Mags that help them at moments of crisis, as well as giving the info people may need to move on.

- www.thepavement.org.uk



Love insta? Follow and tag us on Instagram. We'd love to share your photos too. @pavement_magazine #pavementpics

Written by Jake Cudsi

Arts festival

The One Festival of Homeless Arts to be held on World Homelessness Day (10 October) will be twice as big this year. In **London** events kick off at Old Diorama Arts Centre, 201 Drummond Street, NW1 (5-9pm) with Streetwise Opera followed by singers, poets, artwork and food. Meanwhile the first out-of-London event opens on the same day at The Project Café, 134 Renfrew Street (6-10pm) in **Glasgow** and will run for a month. Organiser David Tovey, famous for his *Man on Bench Fairytale* opera, says the theme this year is “bringing the outside in”. He will be looking for art submissions (from sound scapes to paintings) from late August/early September.

- **More info** www.onefestivalofhomelessarts.com

Homeless monitor

If it's tough for a homeless person to get housing, then it's even tougher when housing associations refuse them social housing because they are a “financial risk”. Homeless charity Crisis has published a wealth of evidence in its annual *Homelessness Monitor 2019* of a rift between councils and their local social landlords who refuse to accept tenants based on fears that welfare cuts and the Universal Credit roll out



Groundswell blossoming: our friends at Groundswell have just won a bid for a £1,528,299 project from the National Lottery Community Fund for their #HealthNow project with partners Crisis and Shelter. Over three years #HealthNow aims to promote a more inclusive health system by rolling out Groundswell's award-winning Homeless Health Peer Advocacy model in Birmingham, Manchester and Newcastle.

© Sarah Hough

will leave them unable to pay rents. Councils also predicted homelessness figures would rise.

- **More info** at www.crisis.org.uk

**TURN TO PAGES A – P
FOR THE LIST OF SERVICES**

Horticulture corner

The Bishop of **Carlisle**, James Newcome, wants churches in England to offer gardening projects on their green spaces for homeless people with mental health concerns. Newcome talked up the established therapeutic benefits of gardening, noting: "There are all sorts of benefits... meeting up with others, finding a sense of belonging and purpose."

The *Daily Telegraph* quoted Newcome, the Church of England's lead bishop on health issues, saying: "In urban areas there is a real shortage of green space, and churches often have the only green space in a neighbourhood. In rural areas there are real problems of isolation and loneliness."

Pedal power

Cycling into a sixth year, the annual Carter Jonas pedalthon raised a record £22,000 for youth homelessness charity, LandAid. More than 400 cyclists took part in the pedalthon in June, which saw participants cover 30-, 50- or 75-mile routes across **Yorkshire**. The *Yorkshire Post* reported that all money raised would go towards renovating derelict buildings to create safe, affordable accommodation for young people struggling with homelessness.

- www.landaid.org



Mobile vet: In hot weather remember your dogs need shade and plenty of water. © *the Pavement*

Gujarati goodwill

Seventeen children from the state of Gujarat on the west coast of India volunteered at a charity providing meals for homeless people in **Leicester** in June. The children, from Ahmedabad, were in the city thanks to a project run by the charity Manav Sadhna and De Montfort University Leicester (DMU). DMU's Square Mile India programme sees the university sponsor children to visit the city. The children volunteered in the kitchen for Midlands Langar Seva Society (MLSS) which runs a free meal service on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at Leicester Market.

**TURN TO PAGES A – P
FOR THE LIST OF SERVICES**



In June Groundswell held a graduation ceremony for the most recent HHPA Homeless Health Peer Advocates.

© Groundswell

Bad review

Local authorities in **Norfolk** and **Suffolk** are shelling out hundreds of thousands of pounds a year to place homeless people in B&Bs. Stretched thin for funding, councils are not performing due diligence on the accommodation and are setting up homeless people in some of the worst-rated B&Bs in the area. An investigation by the *Eastern Daily Press* has also found homeless families being forced to share emergency B&Bs with drug users.

Relocation madness

Hackney council has defended its policy of relocating homeless families in accommodation outside London. The council said it “reluctantly” had

Getting noticed: Congratulations to Cambridge House in **Southwark** which was shortlisted for the Charity Awards for its Safer Renting work to stop high risk private tenants from becoming homeless. © *New Horizon*

- See ch1889.org

to continue the relocations because central government policy on local housing allowance didn't match the rise in local rents. A few weeks before the *Hackney Citizen* reported on a heavily pregnant homeless woman with two young children facing eviction. She had been given 24 hours by the council to accept a relocation to Staffordshire, or be listed as intentionally homeless, meaning she would soon be evicted.

Dereliction of duty

Oadby and **Wigston** borough council has come under fire for refusing to help a homeless mother looking to escape domestic violence reports the *Leicester Mercury*. The council rejected the woman's application for homelessness despite having previously lived and worked in the borough. An ombudsman investigation into the council's conduct subsequently took place, recommending the council pay £500 to the homeless woman and train staff to better identify and process homeless applications. The council rejected the recommendations, insisting they had done nothing wrong.



Street Storage: Provides free, accessible storage Monday–Friday to people experiencing homelessness. Street Storage has a central London unit providing document storage as well as long-term and short-term storage for anyone on the street. There's capacity for one/two large bags per person and no limit on documents. © Street Storage

- **Get your storage by calling: 07932 830 440 or email: londonstreetstorage@gmail.com**
- **Or see www.streetstorage.co.uk**

Prank fine

A judge in Spain sentenced a YouTube star to 15 months in prison for violating a homeless man's moral integrity – when filming a prank on him in 2017. The prank involved YouTuber ReSet giving a homeless man in **Barcelona** an Oreo biscuit filled with toothpaste. Custodial sentences under two years are suspended in Spain for first-time offenders, however, according to *El País*, ReSet has been banned from social media for five years and must pay his victim €20,000.

Food salvation

In co-operation with the Salvation Army, food delivery service Deliveroo will be providing free food to two of the organisation's shelters in north and east **London**. Deliveroo UK & Ireland managing director Dan

Warne told the *Evening Standard* that the: "Partnership is about doing what we can to support our local community."

Finland success

A report in the *Guardian* has again highlighted the impressive results of **Finland's** Housing First principle. Finland is the only country in the EU where homelessness is falling, while rough sleeping numbers have plummeted. The Housing First principle is simple: make housing accessible and unconditional to people who need them. Social housing is key, flats and apartment blocks have also been built to accommodate people, with services and support workers available in every building. Since Housing First's launch in 2008 long-term homelessness in Finland has fallen by more than 35 %.

Dice life

Students Jiaqi Li and Bowen use interactive storytelling to get people thinking differently about youth homelessness

Originally from China, Jiaqi and Bowen are both 23. For their MA they have made an online interactive documentary using illustration, animation, audio and text to share stories about homeless people. Bowen says: "Our *Dice Life of Homeless* demo project provides the audience with a whole new perspective on how to understand what it is to be young and homeless."

Jiaqi adds: "I rarely see young people homeless in China. At first in the UK I thought 'these are young people, so they should try to find a job to support themselves rather than begging on the street.' This made me want to know more about this group of young people. Our story concept is a very different now. I see it's how the dice rolls. Being homeless is only one of many identities of people who are or have been homeless."

- See more images at: <http://www.imagestorytelling.academy/storytelling/westminster/homeless/20190401/#Home>
- You can share your story! Contact Jiaqi on email: w1670591@my.westminster.ac.uk



© Jiaqi Li & Bowen

Find your safety net

Who helps when you're suddenly homeless? Report by Nicola Baird

Although there is support for young people who become homeless, it can be hard to find. One contributor to the *Young & Homeless 2018* report by Homeless Link suggests, "I think they just get a bit lost."

The shock of being newly homeless combined with the lack of affordable housing, lack of supported accommodation and changes to benefits means that young people might first try staying with friends, sofa surfing and worse. Regrettably numbers seem to be rising as the report found there had been a 28 % increase in young women sleeping rough in their local area and a 45 % increase in young men. So, what will help you?

If you've **fallen out with family or a care giver**, mediation can help. Sometimes this is offered by schools and colleges. Lessons in life skills, healthy relationships and mental health support can also help.

The good news is that the **Homelessness Reduction Act** obliges councils to help anyone who presents as homeless or at risk of being homeless. The council should be able to refer you to a safe place to sleep, especially important if you are under 18.

If you are **18+ and just need somewhere safe to stay** tonight try Nightstop. This is a charity which

Need to know

- **Centrepoint** found that 103,000 young people during 2017-18 asked their local council for somewhere to stay because they were homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Some young people are at **higher risk** of homelessness: 27 % were BME, 22 % were from the care system 7 % were LGBTQ+. (*Young & Homeless 2018*, Homeless Link)
- **Nearly half** of young people end up homeless because their relationship breaks down with their family or care-giver.

offers temporary home stays with trained volunteers. It means that you don't have to spend even one night in an unsafe space. Nicola Harwood, who is head of Nightstop, says: "We'd like *the Pavement* readers to know that we try not to make it feel daunting going to stay with a stranger, we take your safety really serious. All our volunteers go through a rigorous training process before a young person is put with them."

Another charity, Centrepoint, supports 10,000 homeless young people nationwide each year. It offers advice, places to stay and



Imagine Stepping Stones: This homeless hostel with a co-live/work space for 25–35-year-olds was designed to ensure homeless tenants feel part of a community. It was the winning entry to the 2018 New Horizon Youth Centre’s Hidden Homelessness competition. Could talks with TfL see this concept turn into the real thing?

© *Morris+Company*

training. To this day people wrongly think the Centre Point building on Tottenham Court Road used to house young homeless people. This would be even more ironic (though untrue) as it has recently been converted into 82 deluxe apartments with the cheapest one-bed flat selling for £1.8 million. In fact, the charity’s name was inspired by the massive tower block in a wicked bid to both confuse the postman and annoy the towerblock’s original owner.

- **Centrepont offers advice to anyone in England aged 16–25. Call 0808 800 0661 (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm)**



Temporary model

London Festival of Architecture in June wasn’t just about showstopper buildings. Currently planning laws make it hard to give the green light for short-stay temporary homes. So at this year’s festival Morris+Company architects discussed how to build more affordable housing. Their dream is a new model of purpose-built temporary emergency homes so that people are placed in safe accommodation, without being displaced from their borough, local school, friendships and support networks. Miranda MacLaren, Morris+Company Director adds: “I see homelessness everywhere, but I hardly ever see a homeless shelter. If I do, they are usually where residents have been shoe-horned into buildings that were never designed with this use in mind.”

Now Morris+Company hope to team up with charities, developers and local authorities to come up with principles “for a viable, supportive and specifically tailored set of temporary homes.” ■

Aged 18–25 Need somewhere to sleep tonight?

London: Nightstop: 07767 882881
nightstop.london@depaulcharity.org.uk

Glasgow: Simon Community:
0141 4186981

Edinburgh: Rock Trust: 0131 5574059

Drama school

Meet the people running Act Now, a performing arts programme for young people, writes Ian Kalman

I am sitting in a meeting room at Cardboard Citizens' HQ with Kiri Grant the Young Person's Delivery manager who coordinates Act Now and Nairobi Official, 24, who was a member and is now a facilitator for Act Now.

Act Now is a performing arts programme aimed at the 16 to 25 age group who have either experienced homelessness or been at risk of homelessness, but also it is for young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). It is co-ordinated by drama experts Cardboard Citizens.

The advantage of being a member of Act Now says Nairobi is that: "It is very inclusive and non-judgemental. You are encouraged to step out of your comfort zone, but you do not have to if you do not want to. The atmosphere is of a community and with like-minded people so you are allowed to be yourself. When I first joined, I was very quiet. Being part of Act Now has brought me back to myself, it has helped build my confidence. My communication skills have developed and now I have no trouble talking in front of groups."

Nairobi says: "I did not have much direction when I first came here as

Centre stage: Act Now company working on *No Box No Label*, overseen by Kiri Grant (in the hi-viz jacket)
© Cardboard Citizens

a confused young person who was homeless. But I did know I wanted theatre in my career. I did not think I had the ability to lead anything, but after experiencing the workshops here it has led me to the role of a facilitator which I really enjoy."

Over the past 10 years Act Now has done many different projects including school tours. A highlight was the campaigning theatre with the title *No Box No Label*, which was about the stigma around youth homelessness. "We are now working with the charity Depaul where our members go along and work with other young people. These individuals will be invited back to our base to become members of Act Now," explains Kiri.

- **Join Act Now, which will have new shows in September, by calling: 020 7377 8948 or email kiri@cardboardcitizens.org.uk** ■

"Find a positive attitude. It's helpful because every day you'll face ups and downs. Don't give up."

- Koffi Serge Pacome Nguessan,
from *Accumulate*



Stay upbeat when life gives you lemons

When Luke James was homeless he joined an Accumulate creative course which helped him go and study Digital Advertising and Branding at Roehampton University. "It's a dark thing being homeless, so take any opportunity that you see in any hostels or on the streets, even when you are at your worst, because there's a colourful rainbow waiting to take you on. You've just got to do it." Accumulate courses are for young people who've been homeless, and offer a chance to try photography, sculpture, sewing and making podcasts then progress to a degree course.

- To apply see accumulate.org.uk



Luke Grant © @itslukeybish07

Reasons to be cheerful

Ways to stay upbeat

Where do you go when you are suddenly homeless? At writing workshops run by *the Pavement* we asked young people at New Horizon day centre in King's Cross and the Pilion Trust in Islington, which runs the Crashpad youth shelter, to share ideas about how to pass time safely until life gets better again.

Helena Sparks, 23

Dream job: Working in film

How come you're homeless?

Kicked out

Any safety tips: Stay near where it's busy – near the stations. Or go to New Horizon in King's Cross.

How has it been? I'm a student and my university didn't understand, they wanted to give me accommodation I couldn't afford. I needed a laptop to do my work and didn't have it. It was also hard for me to sleep – I didn't like people watching me.

How to fill long days? Museums (try the Wellcome Collection, 183 Euston Road, NW1), volunteering.

Read Helena's poem on p30

Ibrahim, 23

Dream job: Any job

How come you're homeless?

Asylum seeker, then evicted

How has it been? It's hard to sleep and eat well.

How to fill long days: I like football, but you can't play football if there aren't showers.

Abel, 19

Dream job: Business man

How come you're homeless?

Asylum seeker

How has it been? Hard. I can't find a job. I don't have a bank account

How to fill long days? London is busier, nosier and smellier than my city. But I like London and like to go to the park and relax.

HY, 23

Dream job: Travel and tourism

How come you're homeless?

Family problems

How has it been? It's hard. You can't find a job since most jobs require a solid address, and it's really hard managing a job when you can't shower every morning.

Any tips: Don't make friends with the wrong people. Seek professional help at youth centres and shelters

How to fill long days: Parks, British Library, volunteer in a charity shop or with a group like Prince's Trust, try spray painting, do Open Mic and spoken word events.

They're always wrong

by HY

Do everything they said you can't:

Put them to shame by proving them wrong.

Ignore their nonsense:

They have too much time to waste.

You need to remember it's them that are worrying, while you're out showing them:

And sleeping alone.

You won't be homeless for a lifetime.



Ella from New Horizon with workshop participants. © Pavement

You're on the guest list

Most hostels and night shelters have strict opening times. You might need to check-in at 7pm and leave before 9am every day, even if you're not feeling well. They also admit all ages, which can be tough for young people. An exception is **Crashpad** (open November–May) which is a unique youth shelter for 18–25-year-olds in London. Young people using it include those leaving care or needing a safe place to sleep because of family breakdown, pregnancy, relationship breakdowns, rough sleeping or because they are runaways. This summer *the Pavement* met Crashpad fans, Brandon and Mahlechi...

Brandon designs his own clothing line: "Crashpad saved me when I had a fractured shoulder in December

2016 and needed a roof. I was always missing breakfast at another hostel because all the old people get up early and they'd have taken all the sandwiches! One night shelter in King's Cross shut at 8am but the libraries and other day centres didn't open until 9am. When it was cold and you couldn't hang around outside you'd have 20 people from the same shelter rammed up in McDonald's with all the commuters. I'd go to the library and read the newspaper just waiting for 10.30am when New Horizon opened.

Mahlechi is writing a book about black Britons: "I liked to do the cooking when I was at Crashpad. I knew about it because I was from that area of north London. I'd recommend you stay in the library until closing hours. If it's later, hang around in hospitals or casinos."



LONDON

- **New Horizon Youth Centre**, 68 Chalton Street, NW1 1JR is open seven days a week from 10.30am to 4pm. www.nhyouthcentre.org.uk tel: 020 7388 5560.
- You need to be referred to use **Crashpad's youth shelter**. Or refer yourself by going to the **Pilion Trust** at Ringcross Community Centre, 60 Lough Road, N7 8FE. Open Monday-Friday 10am-5.30pm. <http://piliontrust.info>
- So many people started staying overnight in Japan's 24-hour McDonald's that they began to be called McRefugees. But McDonald's have many pluses including free wifi, free phone charging points and toilets (but you know that!).

Pilion Trust users: Marie, Brandon and Mahlechi. Marie's tip for passing time safely is to "Look for a service that will help you in the day. Some churches offer help with food."
© *Pavement*

GLASGOW

- Doors open from 9am at **Glasgow's Crossroads Youth & Community Association**, with youth workers starting at 12 noon. It shuts around 7pm.

Manager Joe McConall says: "People tell us they catch up with friends in Crown Street when we're not open. Also, Gorbals Library has computers and is meant to be a community space." Address: **Crossroads, Barn Youth Centre, 37 Abbotsford Place, Glasgow G5 9QS.** www.cyca.org.uk

Drink up

1,001 ways to stay hydrated by James Quigley

If you're finding it difficult to drink eight glasses of water a day (approx 2 litres), then look out for public taps in some train stations. For those with phones there is an app called Refill which shows shops which will refill water for free. It is still in the process of being developed but may be useful. Some McDonald's, pubs and friendly shops may also provide free water refills. If you can hold on to a big refillable bottle, then you won't need to move to fill it up as often. Here are more tips from *Pavement* readers.

Ace: "You need water to survive but most places will give it to you if you ask for it nicely."

Martin: "A lot of people give me water and there are a few drinking taps around. There's one round the back of a supermarket that I use. It isn't very clean, but you can drink it."

Lucas: "I get given water a lot for me and my dogs. They really need it when it's hot."

Becks: "I have to use the big toilet in the shopping centre to wash as I'm disabled, just because I'm homeless doesn't mean I have to be dirty. I can get some water from there."

- refill.org.uk
- www.waterforlondon.org



Lucas with his dogs
© James Quigley



Martin
© James Quigley

James has just turned 24 and wants to work for a homelessness organisation.

Being young isn't easy

In this youth issue Deputy Editor Mat Amp shares his own “too much too young” experiences

Although I was homeless for a short time when I was 19, I didn't end up on the streets until I was nearly 45. It was easier when I was young, I wasn't a drug addict for a start, and I was more resilient and hopeful. Confidence is what I lacked.

My head was wracked with questions about myself as a teenager, but I lost my mum aged 11 and my dad at 18 so that figures. To survive, I developed a 'tuff' front to mask the turmoil bubbling away inside. It was just a mechanism to hide the uncertainty that plagued me in the wake of losing my family. I was on my own and only half-equipped to handle the complexities that made up the maze of human society and how to best get along in it.

I'd had so much growing up. We had money, we travelled and there was a lot of love flying around. So, when my parents died it was like being pitched into a world where nothing was certain anymore and nothing could be taken for granted. I had to grow up quick and soon realised that people were too busy to help me. It wasn't their job to care, it was my mum and dad's. And they were dead.

I was born in Hereford. My dad was Nigerian and we moved to Nigeria when I was eight-years-old with my mum. She died a few years later, two days short of her 30th birthday. Before I was 20 my dad was killed in a horrendous car accident and I found myself in England, with no support and no money, struggling to come to terms with my racial identity. That was before it got trendy in London to have brown babies. Back then it felt that growing up mixed race was to grow up unwanted. I didn't much care – I was born to be an outsider. I kind of thrived on it, but that mindset can destroy you if you're not careful, and I wasn't careful.

A long and ultimately self-destructive relationship with drugs followed. I can't lie – there was a lot of fun at the beginning. We were all in it together, but for me the party never stopped and I started to come down on a Tuesday with heroin. Tuesday became every day. Once you absolutely have to use drugs every day your options are slowly taken away from you. And that's what happened to me until I ended up homeless at the age of 43 and in a pretty awful state.

These days it's easier to be different in this country. Women have better jobs, it's not illegal to be gay and in London at least, mixed race people have started to forge an



identity of our own.

But it's not all good, this liberal dream of ours. The economy has produced a fixed game that has seen wages freeze while house prices have rocketed. Sure, you can buy any amount of cheap plastic crap to distract from your problems because it's made in sweat shops abroad where people are exploited. The only thing we can no longer afford is the one thing we actually fucking need – a home.

And I still hear old people talking about the young generation in that way we hated when we were kids.

Patronising, belittling and full of generalisations like, “they’re all so vacuous, addicted to social media and self-obsessed.”

I try to look at young people and remember what it was like to be young. The uncertainty and self-doubt, sure, but also the unbelievable feeling of having it all before you. Because that's what you have if you're young – you have it all before you.

■
“The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.”
- Dolly Parton

It's a crime

The first target of the Labour Homelessness Campaign is repeal of the 1824 Vagrancy Act which criminalises the poor, writes Jacqueline Messih

The Vagrancy Act passed into law in 1824 to deal with soldiers returning from the Napoleonic wars. Nearly 200 years later the Government uses it to criminalise people who are homeless.

Launched in December 2018, Labour Homelessness Campaign is a grassroots campaign focussed on repealing this law. Tom, a member of the Labour Homelessness Campaign, says: "The Vagrancy Act is just one way being homeless is criminalised. A third (34%) of local authorities in England and Wales use the Vagrancy Act, but far more use anti-social behaviour legislation against people for begging and sleeping rough including public space protection orders, dispersal orders, criminal behaviour orders and community protection notices."

Tom explains that under the Vagrancy Act a person can be fined up to £1,000 and end up with a criminal record. "The Act is so broad that theoretically it could be used to prosecute people for walking the streets while unemployed! What that means for people experiencing homelessness is that they are always under threat."

In a nutshell

- The Vagrancy Act was passed in 1824. It has been repealed in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but is still in use in England and Wales.
- Between 2014-16 more than 3,000 people went to court thanks to the Vagrancy Act. (Layla Moran MP, Lib Dem website)
- Section 3 of the Act forbids begging. Around 1,000 arrests happen each year across the country mostly under section 3, for "aggressive begging". Some councils define the term "aggressive begging" as begging within 30 feet of a cash point, even if you are not trying to solicit money.
- Section 4 of the Act prohibits people from sleeping outside or wandering around without any visible means of sustenance. Basically, if you're poor you're a criminal.
- Even the police call the Vagrancy Act "archaic". (BBC news 4/6/19)

Tom considers the use of this Act now to be very short-sighted. "One local authority will use it to try and push people into another local

authority's turf, making it somebody else's problem. It's an attempt to drive the poor out of our public spaces."

Abolishing the Vagrancy Act is still not going to make homeless people feel safe in public spaces or be treated like members of the community.

Tom says: "If people start making a noise the Government will have to make a choice between doing the minimum for human decency and repealing the Act or giving into businesses and all of the special interest groups which want to keep the ability of just moving people on when they don't fit the middle class profile that they want for their high street".

The campaign aims to fight austerity and stand in solidarity with the people most marginalised. Tom is clear that: "It is a complete failure of economical and social systems which has led to the homelessness crisis. Yet the answer of the powers-that-be is to say that these public spaces are only for the public who we like. And if you're poor, we'll put you out of sight and out of mind."

 **The Pavement says:**

It is good news that several political parties have pledged to repeal the Vagrancy Act if they come into power.



Tom, from the Labour Homelessness Campaign looking to camera.
© Labour Homelessness Campaign

Change the law

To ditch the Vagrancy Act, take these steps for change:

- labourhomelessness.org.uk has plenty of material, and you can join their up-coming protests.
- Push through motions at your local authority.
- Write letters to newspapers.
- Register to vote, see p23

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Doorstep lessons

Melanie Onn, Labour MP for Great Grimsby discusses being homeless with Sarah Hough

Melanie Onn MP, who is 39, recently stepped down as the Shadow Minister for Housing. During her time in the role she advocated for homeless people because she experienced homelessness when she was a teenager.

“When I became an MP, I wanted to speak up for people, particularly young people, who are facing homelessness and encourage the Government to make sure there is enough support. I think people end up quite early on in a cycle of insecure housing and never really getting a level footing, so then they are much more at risk of this just repeating itself through their lives. So having gone through that, and lived that experience when I was 17, and having no idea about any of the benefit systems, no idea that there was even a charity out there that could specifically help me, it probably has given me a little bit more insight into how things can go wrong even in ordinary circumstances,” says Melanie. It’s clear she knows about the stigma surrounding homelessness and how she challenges negative perceptions as they are presented in the media and at times in Parliament.

“Before I resigned, I was asked

In a nutshell

- Melanie Onn was elected MP for Grimsby in May 2015
- Aged 17 she was given support by Doorstep, a charity in Grimsby helping young homeless people. Facebook: @GrimsbyDoorstep
- She’s got a degree in politics, a background in trade unionism and backs renewable energy.

about some MPs who’d made a complaint about people sleeping rough in the subway under Parliament. They were asked to move along, and the police had said we’re going to use this really ancient piece of legislation, the Vagrancy Act. I said on the radio, parliamentarians shouldn’t be saying ‘they didn’t want to see it as they walked into work’ because that isn’t the kind of attitude I’d expect of any parliamentarian,” she says.

Melanie cites the global economic crash of 2008 as the catalyst for rising homelessness, austerity and reduced spending by the Government. This resulted in the termination of Supporting People funding, the loss of many youth services, the introduction of other punitive policies like the bedroom tax and zero hour contracts which have drawn people into rent arrears

and poverty. The controversial roll out of Universal Credit has resulted in long delays in rent and benefit payments for many people and their families. While others have become homeless for being unable to pay their rent after failing to budget a large sum. Homelessness has increased for people from all walks of life, many who are working, but still can't afford the high rents of the unregulated private rented sector, especially in cities like London. This is compounded by the severe shortage of social housing and affordable housing.

"There have been lots of policy decisions in the last 10 years that have made it more likely for people to fall out of the housing system. In London particularly, and some of the other big cities, once you're out of it, getting back in is just so hard," she says.

Melanie regards the Homeless Reduction Act positively. But she also recognises its limitations and the increased responsibilities Local Authorities have to complete the preventative work, but without the funding to match.

"I feel like it's the Government delegating its responsibilities and I would have much rather seen a national ministerial led task force to deal with homelessness, rather than just saying to Local Authorities, 'you just deal with it'."

Melanie predicts an increasing



Melanie Onn MP in her constituency, Grimsby © Katie Burgess

reliance on charities to try to fill some of the gaps: "Charities need to make inroads in the political arena. I think it's really important. Groundswell is a grassroots organisation which is rooted in the community. It's doing really excellent work and it's providing a forum for people to air their concerns and to get right to the heart of where changes can be made, whether that's in Local Authorities with counsellors or whether it's in Parliament with MPs."

- **Even if you are homeless you can vote, but you need to register your details with your local Electoral Registration Office, try: www.gov.uk/get-on-electoral-register** ■

I'm still standing

Top tips for knee to toe care over the summer, by Legs Matter champion Dr Jemell Geraghty

Most of the time our legs and feet work well. For this reason, we tend not to pay much attention to them. But, when we experience a problem with our feet or legs such as a blister, cut or soreness they soon let us know. As a nurse I know the importance of looking after my feet as I spend long hours on them every day. Here are some ways to keep your feet and legs healthy:

1. **Check your feet when you get up.** Look at the soles of the feet and in-between the toes. Make sure there is no broken skin or sore areas, swelling or build-up of hard skin. Look for changes in the shape of your feet.
2. If you have **difficulty bending**, use a handheld mirror to look at the bottoms of your feet to check if you have small cuts, blisters, or ingrown toenails.
3. If you **notice anything unusual** with your feet or legs, don't hope it will go away. Instead ask your GP to deal with it fast.
4. If you want to use cream apply it well to the heels. Avoid using **cream** in-between the toes as this is a sweaty area and can cause fungal skin infections.

In a nutshell

- Soaking and washing your feet in a bowl of warm water daily is recommended. Dry well in-between the toes. A wet wipe can also be used to freshen up.
 - Clean, dry feet = happy feet.
 - Any problems? See a GP.
5. **Socks are really important.** Ensure they fit well and do not rub you. If you have two pairs you can wear one while you wash one.
 6. **Wear well-fitting shoes** that protect and support your feet and don't wear shoes with bare feet. Always check your shoes before you put them on so you know that there is nothing inside that may cause pressure, friction or potential skin damage.
 7. **Look after your toenails.** Don't cut down the sides of your nail as this can lead to ingrowing toenails. If you have any difficulty with your footcare, ask to be put in touch with your local podiatrist (chiroprapist).
 8. If you are **on your feet all day** your legs can get tired and swollen, so rest is really important.

The Legs Matter coalition is working to increase awareness about lower leg and foot conditions.

- www.legsmatter.org/

Get help

If your legs or feet are causing you problems, you should see your GP. Look out for legs or feet with these signs:

- Swelling
- Tired, throbbing and painful legs
- Redness and skin marks from clothing
- Cramp or pain after walking
- Tingling sensation
- Dry, itchy and scaly skin
- Raised veins in the lower leg (varicose veins)
- Hard skin, cracks or fissures on the heel
- Sores and knocks that are not healing.
- Thread veins. These small veins are present in everyone but are not normally visible until they expand and show through the skin.
- Reddish or brown staining patches of skin between the knee and ankle, which can in the early stages often feel hot and painful, and can be misdiagnosed as infection.

Even if you don't have exactly these symptoms, it's important to seek advice. Your GP will then refer you to a specialist healthcare professional, such as a vascular nurse or your local leg club (www.legclub.org) who will be able to do some simple tests to find out how to treat any problem you might have.

If you are a diabetic it is important that your feet have an initial assessment, and you attend your annual foot review. More information can be found at www.diabetes.org.uk

Dr Gemell Geraghty works at Camden Health Improvement Practice and King's College London. Follow her on Twitter: @woundnurseUK



Dr Gemell Geraghty (left) with trustees from the Legs Matter campaign on tour. © Legs Matter

Read all about it



There's no normal when you lose your home. This piece by Matthew Hobbs is inspired by the recovery theme of our last issue (Issue 120)

'Recovery' is the language I was conversant in, as a therapy worker, prior to my own experience of homelessness when I was 24-years-old. But looking back now, what the fuck did I know about 'recovery'?

Nothing I learnt prepared me for dealing with the loss, rage and downright despair I felt when I lost my home. My solid world had lost all sense of stability and security. Overnight I was no longer a healthcare provider, but rather someone crying out for this same care and support. Nearly four years on I'm still grappling to 'recover'.

In quaint Cambridge, where I grew up, I would see the homeless characters around town, acting out what I understood to be 'their' pantomime of perceived personal failing. There was Wolfie, the wheelchair-bound Glasto-burnout warning us to "just say no" as he rolled by, and an infamous former Don who sadly didn't heed this message. I could cook dinner at the night shelter or offer a few coins and pat myself on the back for doing my bit: I was not one of 'them', whoever 'they' might be.

Considering this narrative, my own

In a nutshell

- There is nothing normal about homelessness. But homelessness has become increasingly normalized.
- Being homeless is a shock for you and the people around you. It breaks friendships.
- No one with a home is any better than you are.

experience of homelessness came as a shock. I did not see myself in this homogenous mass of misfits. My gaze had been diverted away from the 'behind-the-scenes' of this social drama; distancing me and definitely otherising 'them'.

The hidden reality was a labyrinthine system of well-meaning support, but filled with hoops and hurdles that seemed intent on knocking anyone in it down. My shock, cloaked in the therapeutic language of trauma, was explained as a normal response to an abnormal situation. Yet there is nothing normal about homelessness, even if homelessness has become increasingly normalized. My previously averted gaze to those 'other' was about an unwillingness to confront the unpalatable truth of this social injustice.

The trauma of homelessness

severs social bonds, sending us spiraling from crisis to crisis. Yet rather than recognizing these crises as the result of battling a broken system, they are lampooned as personal maladjustment. It is clear that new narratives are needed so we see the experience of homelessness more clearly, and in-turn ourselves. It was only through connecting with others with similar experiences, meeting their eye and sharing our stories that I found 'recovery'.

After much grappling I have realized that whatever I lost was not worth having to begin with. Admittedly, that's easy for me to say having now returned to the nine-to-five chai-latté grind of 'respectable society'. But as I write, my fingers tapping the keys, I can't help but feel the floor could give way beneath my feet sending me out to some South London street, and for this I'm grateful. I don't wish to relive my brief chapter of homelessness, nor do I wish for you to be living yours. But I do want to keep alive that the separation of being here with a home, or there on the street without a home, is paper thin. For me it's a pay-cheque, in fact.

- **If you are homeless there are places to tell your story: Cardboard Citizens, see p14; Groundswell, see p5.**

What's in your bag?



"I had a Fred Perry beach bag when I was homeless. In it was a towel, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, 2 pairs of socks and underwear, phone charger, sunglasses, eye drops and my documentation. I used to sleep on a yoga mat covered by a medical foil blanket (like runners get after finishing the London Marathon) which kept off insects and the rain. Some days in the summer it was fun travelling like this," says **Brandon**. He now has a place to live and is involved in Cardboard Citizens' youth theatre, see p12.

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Double crisis

Newcastle-upon-Tyne is thousands of miles away from the American city of Trenton, New Jersey, but both cities struggle with a similar issue: homelessness. How do these cities look after people rough sleeping? Report by Jared Kofsky

Government's role in addressing homelessness at the local level differs between Trenton and Newcastle, though both cities offer some similar services.

TRENTON: The City of Trenton opened the Coordinated Entry and Assessment Services Center in 2015 while the Newcastle City Council maintains the Housing Advice Centre. Both facilities offer assistance to homeless individuals and those at risk of homelessness. "Rough sleeping" is not a term we use in the US but it seems to be the equivalent of what Americans call "unsheltered."

NEWCASTLE: Overall, local government entities tend to play more of a role in addressing homelessness than in the Northeastern USA, in part because of the UK's Homelessness Reduction Act. For example, Newcastle City Council reported (in July 2018) that 4,876 cases of homelessness in Newcastle were prevented in 2017-18.

In a nutshell

- In north eastern England (Newcastle-upon-Tyne) and north eastern USA (Trenton, New Jersey), homelessness is a crisis.
- Both cities are major transportation hubs and have an industrial heritage.
- "Unsheltered" is the US term for rough sleeping
- Each city's strategies for assisting people experiencing homelessness vary.

How are the cities trying to end homelessness?

NEWCASTLE: Last year, Newcastle's Street Zero initiative was formed as a collaboration between agencies like the NHS and the Northumbria Police along with charities, religious groups, and corporations. What sets Street Zero apart is how there has been a marketing campaign to spread awareness of homelessness locally and that the initiative aims to end rough sleeping in Newcastle by 2022 through three steps: prevention, response, and transformation. There is also a homelessness hotline, which does not exist in Trenton.

TRENTON: There is a smaller program in Trenton called the Continuum of Care. It consists of government agencies and organisations that come up with ways to alleviate homelessness.



Streetlight is a newspaper for homeless people in Trenton, partly funded by the American university where Jared Kofsky studies (he's currently on an exchange at Northumbria University which has a campus in Newcastle). Jared, 21, is the managing editor. He says: "We print around 3,000 copies of each issue and distribute at 60 locations including libraries, shelters, food pantries, and government offices." © Jared Kofsky

The UK and the USA have similar ways of determining the number of people who are homeless.

US: Designated American groups hold a "Point-in-Time" count in every county on one January day as part of an annual requirement from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. 479 people were found to be experiencing homelessness in the Trenton area during the 2018 count.

UK: The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government facilitates a similar nationwide annual count that is conducted every autumn. The most recent count found that there were 66 rough sleepers in the North East, though the actual number is likely to be far higher since (unlike in the US) this number does not include the number

of people experiencing homelessness who are residing in shelters.

Newcastle and Trenton both have non-profits that are involved.

EMERGENCY: Trenton's sole general-population emergency shelter is the Rescue Mission of Trenton while Newcastle has resources like Shelter North East.

YOUTH: Both cities have similar organisations working to provide assistance for young adults experiencing homelessness, with Youth Homeless North East serving Newcastle and Anchor House serving Trenton. ■

- Check out the *Streetlight* at thestreetlight.pages.tcnj.edu
- **Newcastle helpline:**
0191 278 3899



I am the person you do not see

I am the person you do not see
This is not the home I thought it
would be.

My numbness has returned
Along with the memories I thought I
had burned.

The longness of wanting my life back
Is split into like a massive crack.

I am the person you do not see
Why can't you just look at me!
Am I a reflection of my dad
That when you see me it makes you
mad?

I know I did things too
But not that bad that it split our
family in two.

I am the person you do not see
Just talk to me is what I plea!
I wish the things that happened
never did
And go back to being happy like we
were kids.

I am the person you do not see
Mainly because you choose not to
see me.

I am like the annoying thing at the
corner of your eye

That you wish would get up and
leave and say goodbye.

I think I preferred when no one was
around

Where there was silence and no
sound.

Alone undisturbed and in peace
Here my anxiety would decrease.

Why can't you see me? I am here
As bright as daylight and I am near.
I am that footprint on the beach
And the tide is coming in as far as it
can reach.

I am almost gone from sight
But I know that it will be alright.

As I am the person who you cannot
see

And now is my time to get up and
flee.

From these dreams of mine

I know I will be just fine.

But give it time and I will come home
And I will come back to my throne.

I need to get away from this place
And store the memories in a book on
a bookcase.
I am the person you don't see. You
are just carefree!
I no longer have anything
I feel like I'm in a boxing ring.
Fighting the same fight. Every night.

But what is the point?
I think I have made it to the
checkpoint.
It's time for a new start
So I can slowly mend this heart.
As I am the person you will no longer
see
Perhaps that's the way it should be.

In this situation? For help see p10 | by *Helena Sparks*

Housing in England: Your Rights

Your local council does not always have to help you find emergency accommodation if you are homeless.

If you need help right now, please try these numbers below.

Ask them to help you make an emergency housing application.

For free help with your emergency housing application:

1. Streetlink

- Phone: **0300 500 0914**

2. Shelter

- Web: www.shelter.org.uk
- Phone: **0808 800 4444**
(8am–8pm Monday to
Friday, 8am–5pm weekends)

3. Citizens Advice Bureau

- Web: www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- Phone: **03444 111 444**

If your application is rejected:

- You should appeal the rejection if you think it is wrong. You have 21 days to do so.
- Shelter and Citizens Advice Bureau can help you with your appeal.

Visit www.thepavement.org.uk
for a more detailed version of
your housing rights in England
and Scotland.