

The Rising Number of Homelessness in Cambridgeshire and the U.K

Local News Correspondent Eloise

It seems to be a constant debate about how many rough sleepers we actually have on the streets. Are we all really doing everything we can to help that number decrease? Rough sleepers are reduced to having to beg illegally, just to be able to eat. It is estimated that 4,751 people sleep rough on the streets of the U.K every night. So around 1 in 200 people are homeless or sleeping rough. London alone has 1,137 people living on the streets.



Photo credit: Tom Dorrington

“Bear in mind any street count is in a limited area, even within a city, and may not capture people outside city centres. E.G Stourbridge in Cambridge.”

Comment made by Housing Support Officer at Jimmy’s Night Shelter Cambridge, Zoe Allen.

Jimmy’s night shelter in Cambridge city centre, was founded in 1995 when Jim Dill, “Jimmy” was found sleeping under the bridge at junction 13 on the M11. Due to his hearing difficulties, Jimmy managed to get some sleep but it was apparent this could not be his permanent residence. Joan and Richard, “Jimmy’s” founders, knew him well and made it their personal mission to prevent other people from having to live like Jim Dill had to. Cold and forced to listen to the sound of traffic roaring past him constantly, the charity was named in his honour. Their logo represents the bridge in which “Jimmy” once

called home. Shockingly, the average age of death for a homeless man is only 46 and 43 for homeless women.

Some of the main reasons so many people are on the streets are:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Family and Relationship breakdowns
- Domestic violence
- Physical and/or mental health problems
- Loss of job/income
- Being discharged from a branch of the armed forces
- Private Tenancies coming to an end and not being renewed
- A drug or/and alcohol addiction



Photo credits to South Cambridgeshire Council

Chris Dade (Housing Support Manager) “We can help make the numbers decrease by petitioning laws to stop evictions when the tenant hasn’t breached the tenancy but the landlord wants to sell the property; also build more social housing. As well for deeply entrenched people, introduce more “Housing First” properties. In other words, they start addressing addictions etc. after they gain tenancies. Also a law to ensure empty properties are brought back into use quicker would help.

“We can best support street homeless or inadequately housed people by making outreach services operate around the clock and not just Monday-Friday 9-5, (Swansea have now introduced a seven day outreach service) ensure even rough sleepers have an address they can use as no address means they cannot connect with some services or even be considered for employment.”

Overall the number increases quite dramatically each year and homeless shelters across the U.K are often stretched to their limits. You can help by donating to:

Donate to Jimmy's Night shelter: <http://www.jimmyscambridge.org.uk/donate>

Donate to Shelter From The Storm: <http://sfts.org.uk/donations/>

Donate to Emmaus: <https://www.emmaus.org.uk/donate>

Donate to The Samaritans: <https://www.samaritans.org/support-us/donate-online>