

## WAITING

A resource for engaging young people around homelessness issues



In 2010-11 PhotoVoice, in partnership with Fairbridge Glasgow, worked with 11 young people affected by homelessness in Scotland, providing them with digital photography training and the opportunity to speak out about their experiences and views. All the photographs and captions used in this resource are by these young people.

For more details visit [www.photovoice.org/waiting](http://www.photovoice.org/waiting)

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## About this Pack

Intended for use by teachers and facilitators throughout the UK, this educational resource pack is intended as a tool to engage young people aged 8-18 years on issues relating to homelessness through the use of photographs and digital photography exercises.

This pack is one of the outcomes of *Waiting*, a participatory photography project conducted by PhotoVoice in partnership with Fairbridge in 2010-2011. The project engaged with a group of young people affected by homelessness in Glasgow. The project participants were supported by PhotoVoice facilitators to use photography to explore their own experiences and their perspectives on issues relating to homelessness. An exhibition of the participants' work including a nationwide poster campaign was displayed across Scotland in 2011. Reaching an audience of nearly half a million people, the project has contributed to raising great awareness and providing new perspectives on homelessness. 20 of the participants' photographs have been included as part of this resource, as a digital slideshow online and on CD-ROM, and as a pack of postcards.



"Uphill struggle, like the one I'm having with the housing."  
**Sarah McIntyre**

The aim of this resource is to raise awareness of the issues around homelessness, to create dialogue surrounding the causes and consequences of homelessness, and to encourage empathy in young people who may not have previously considered how someone may become homeless or how the issues could ever affect them. Through groups producing their own photographs which explore and address these issues this resource also aims to inspire creativity and encourage young people to look at complicated issues from different perspectives.

This pack includes:

- 20 captioned images on A6 postcards
- 10 activity plans
- Note on the resources required and tips on how to conduct the activities
- Further sources of information

There are **10 activities within 2 categories**. 5 of the activities are focussed on viewing and discussing the *Waiting* postcard/slideshow images. The other 5 activities are focussed on a group producing their own photographic work, taking inspiration from the *Waiting* photographs and the issues explored relating to homelessness.

Topics explored in the activities include: what is a home, definitions of homelessness, possible causes and consequences of being homeless, possessions and personal identity (and potential loss of, in relation to homelessness), neighbourhood and community, emotional reactions to homelessness and where to go for help and advice.

Groups explore these topics through participatory photography, the outcome of which is an enhanced learning and understanding. Groups will also become familiar with photographic skills including composition, use of light, varying angles and perspectives, editing, captioning and display of work.

### **Tips for teaching the activities**

Activities are designed to last for between **30-60 minutes each**, depending on the time available. Ideally all 10 activities would be taught in the order below, as this will provide a well-rounded and holistic experience of the topics explored. However, if time and resources do not allow then this is not absolutely necessary.

Activities have been designed with a wide age group in mind. However, it is the responsibility of the facilitator to decide on the depth into each issue the group progresses. This will depend on the suitability of the subject, depth of prior knowledge, and the group's ability to understand the issues raised and cope with the resulting thoughts and emotions.

As many of the issues involved are emotionally challenging and may be upsetting to some, it is important that the facilitator is able to constantly monitor the reactions of the group and encourages openness and honesty, ensuring that safe support mechanisms are in place if participants need to discuss any of the issues further. There is a Further Information section in this pack for the purpose disseminating information and advice to the group's participants.

To encourage full participation of the group, open-ended questions are advisable, with support prompts to responses where necessary. These have been outlined in the activity sheets.

Statistics regarding homelessness are continually changing and are subject to debate due to the varying collection methods by public and charitable bodies. For this reason, statistics have not been included within this resource. However, if the facilitator would like to include up-to-date statistics surrounding the activities, these can be researched from the Shelter and Homeless Link websites (see Further Information).

Where possible, the photography work produced by the group as well as the resource postcards should be displayed on the walls of the room used for the activities. By the end of the project, depending on the number of activities undertaken, there will be a wall full of images, thoughts and ideas. This will be available to be viewed and reviewed by the group, enhancing a group sense of achievement and ownership and contributing to a feeling of completion of the project. Wall displays also allow for external review and peer-led education surrounding the group's work. Please note that public display and the use any work should only be done with full agreement from the group participants.

## WAITING

Through the eyes of homeless  
young people in Scotland

**FAIR  
BRIDGE**  
INSPIRING YOUNG LIVES

**PhotoVoice**   
Participatory Photography for Social Change

For further participatory photography teaching methods, an extensive list of methodology and information resources are available on the PhotoVoice website [www.photovoice.org](http://www.photovoice.org)

### **Resources required for the activities:**

- 20 postcards provided from the *Waiting* project
- Suitable room with enough tables and chairs for the whole group and a clear area to display the images
- Cameras - simple point and shoot is fine. Number of cameras will depend on resources available, group size etc. If necessary 1 camera shared amongst the group can be used alongside personal phone cameras
- PC / Laptop with storage space and ability to upload images (via cable or card readers)
- Projector and viewing space to view images created
- Standard colour printer to print the participant's images
- Stationary: bluetak, pens, paper, post-it notes and blank boards



"I used to stay in that flat and the sun is making them look nicer than they are."  
**Kerry McCaughey**

**Discussion Activity 1: What is a home?**

**Activity Objectives:**

- To engage young people with issues relating to homelessness
- To encourage empathy amongst young people for other's housing situations
- To encourage a group discussion on what makes a home. What are people's 'needs' and 'wants'?

1. Show the group the following image from the postcards pack or slideshow:



2. Ask the group what 'home' means to them. Write up the responses on a board.
3. Break down which of the descriptions are 'needs' and which are 'wants'. Discuss what the group want in a home, and what they really need to stay safe and healthy.
4. Discuss how some people don't have everything they need for a home. Talk about how it is easy for many people to take their homes for granted, and how everyone with homes could appreciate the homes they have.
5. *(Optional activity, if appropriate)* Ask the group to take a few photos of their home over the weekend using their own/family cameras or phone cameras etc. Take pictures which show things they really like. They don't have to show these pictures to anybody else, just taking the photos is enough!

**Photo Activity 1: H-O-M-E treasure hunt****Activity Objectives:**

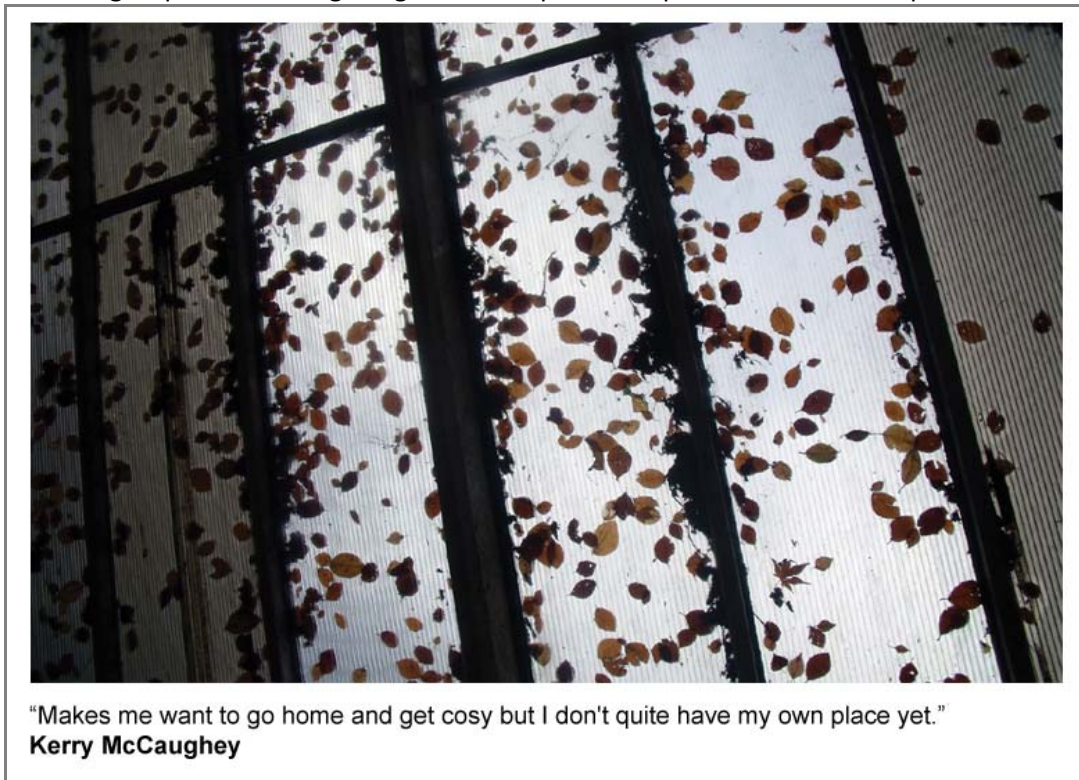
- To engage young people with issues relating to homelessness
  - To encourage a class activity on how to communicate ideas about 'home'
  - To introduce group photography work
1. Ask the group to discuss what colours and textures make them think of 'home'.
    - *(if struggling, make suggestions such as red for warmth, soft for comfort etc.)*
  2. Divide the group into 5 sets and issue each set with a letter from the word HOME.
    - *(e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> group gets H, 2<sup>nd</sup> group gets O etc.)*
  3. Ask each group to look for objects in the room that have the same shape as their letter, using the colours and textures they've discussed. They have some time to find examples and then choose the best one.
    - *(e.g. chair legs might make the letter 'H', a cushion might make an 'O')*
  4. Using 1 camera for the whole group, take pictures of the favourite options for letters. Ask the group to help take the pictures, thinking about background colours and textures too.
  5. Upload the images and print them (standard basic colour printer is fine). Ask the group to display the prints up on the wall, to make the word home.
  6. Discuss the overall look of the mini exhibition and congratulate the group on their efforts! Keep the prints on the wall for future group work, if possible!

## Discussion Activity 2: What is homelessness?

### Activity Objectives:

- To engage young people with issues relating to homelessness
- To encourage empathy amongst young people for other's housing situations
- To encourage a group discussion on what being homeless can mean

1. Show the group the following image from the postcards pack and read the caption:



2. Ask the group how they feel about the photograph, and the person that took the image.
3. Discuss the definition of homeless: You don't have to be **living on the street** to be homeless. You may be legally classed as homeless if you are **sleeping on a friend's sofa**, **staying in a hostel**, **suffering from overcrowding**, or other **bad conditions**.
4. Ask the group to discuss whether the following people are homeless. These situations can be written onto post-it notes and then the group can attach them onto boards labelled either homeless or not homeless. Ask the group to discuss their decisions.
  - **A** is sleeping on a friend's sofa because they rowed with their parents all the time and they were thrown out.
  - **B** has been sleeping on the streets for 6 months and has no money.
  - **C** is a single parent with 3 children living in a council flat with not enough room.
  - **D** has been made redundant and can't afford to pay the rent. Their landlord is threatening eviction.
  - **E** and their partner are living in B&B accommodation. They don't feel they can cope with living in just one room anymore.
5. Tell the group about support services available to help homeless people and how people can contribute to homeless organisations. (*see support services list in Further Information*)

**Photo Activity 2: Who am I and what's in my pockets?!****Activity Objectives:**

- To engage young people with issues relating to homelessness
  - To encourage consideration of possessions and identity
  - To develop photographic skills, including thinking about lighting
1. Ask the group to get into pairs and provide each pair with a camera (*camera phones can be used if necessary*).
  2. Ask the pairs to choose 5 items from their pockets or bags, which represent them or their lives in some way. Display the items in cupped hands, while the partner takes a photo, with the camera flash on.
  3. Swap over the roles so that both people have the opportunity to show their items in their hands and take a photo with the flash on.
  4. Now ask the pairs to switch their camera flash off and retake the photos using a natural or ambient source of light (e.g. light from a window or lamp).
  5. Compare the images. Which looks best? How does using different light change the photo?
  6. Ask the pairs to choose their favourite photo and upload each pair's best photo to a PC (*and a projector, if available*).
  7. View the slideshow of the best images as a group and discuss the images.
  8. Ask the group to discuss how their possessions represent them and contribute to their sense of identity. Ask them to consider how they would feel if they didn't have these items.
  9. Discuss how many homeless people have very few possessions to live their lives with and consider how that might affect their lives and sense of identity.
  10. If time and resources allow, print the images and display a mini exhibition. Praise the group for their work!

**Discussion Activity 3: What makes a community?**

**Activity Objectives:**

- To engage young people with issues relating to homelessness
- To encourage empathy amongst young people for other's housing situations
- To encourage a group discussion on what makes a community within a neighbourhood and how we can each contribute

1. Show the group the following image from the postcards pack and read the caption:



2. Ask the group what 'neighbourhood' means to them. Ask the group what 'community' means to them. What things happen in their neighbourhood? Is there a community? Write up the answers on a board.
  - *(If struggling suggest things like going to the local shops, schools, community centres, groups like Brownies or local football teams etc.).*
3. Ask the group to write on post-it notes:
  - a) Good things about their neighbourhood and community
  - b) Things that could be better.
 Now attach the post-it notes onto 2 boards, one for 'good things' and the other 'could be better'.
4. Ask the group to consider how they might help make things better in their own communities. Write these suggestions on post-it notes and attach them over the top of the 'could be better' post-it notes.

### Photo Activity 3: PhotoMap your neighbourhood

#### Activity Objectives:

- To engage young people with issues relating to homelessness
  - To encourage the group to see their neighbourhood differently
  - To introduce the group to photo documentary
1. Ask the group to describe features of their local neighbourhood (e.g. shops, school, playground etc.).
  2. If possible split the group into 2's or 3's and provide each person or group with a camera (or phone camera). Ask each group to spend 15 minutes walking around the block taking pictures of local features. Ask them to get a picture from crouching down low, standing up and from high up on stairs, to get interesting angles and different perspectives of the features. (Go with the group if necessary).
  3. When the groups return upload the images and print out the best 3 from each group. Ask the group to vote for and select their favourite images.
  4. Display the prints on the wall, creating a visual map of the local area. Discuss how the group feels about the images, whether the different angles change the way they look at things. Congratulate the group on their hard work!



"Toryglen: I love to hate it and hate to love it."

**Sarah McIntyre**

**Discussion Activity 4: Experiences and emotions from being homeless**

**Activity Objectives:**

- To engage young people with issues relating to homelessness
- To encourage empathy amongst young people for other's housing situations
- To encourage a group discussion on the possible experiences and emotions from being homeless

1. Show the group the following image from the postcards pack and read the caption:



2. Ask the group what they see in the picture. How could the objects in the image illustrate how the photographer feels?
3. Ask the group what kind of issues the photographer might have had to think about, when planning for her future? Write answers on a post-it note and attach to a board on the wall.
  - *(If struggling suggest things like money, food, getting a job etc.).*
4. How would the group feel if they had to go through the same thing? Do they know where to turn to for advice?
5. Put up a list of homeless advice and support agencies for reference. Discuss how people can contribute to organisations who are working towards improving the situations of homeless people by giving to or buying from charity shops like Shelter or Barnardos.

### **Photo Activity 4: Picture Emotions**

#### **Activity Objectives:**

- To engage young people with issues relating to homelessness
  - To encourage the group to consider the emotions of others
  - To introduce the group to expressive techniques in photography including abstraction
1. Ask the group to write a word on a post-it note to describe the biggest emotion they've felt recently. Ask for the answers to be put up on a board.
  2. Ask each person to go up to the board and choose a post-it note which describes someone else's feeling that wasn't the same as their own.
  3. Ask the group what colour that emotion might be? If it was a texture would it be soft or hard? Cold or hot? Bright or dark?
  4. Ask each person to take a photograph of something in the room which illustrates the emotion they chose. It can be as simple as a close-up of a colour or the texture of a material.
  5. Upload the images and view the slideshow together as a group. Looking at the images, try and guess which emotion the photographer was illustrating.
  6. Discuss how you can't always know what someone is feeling, by the way they look or the way they behave. Every person is unique, but we all go through similar feelings and emotions at some point.
  7. Discuss some emotions a homeless person might feel and how this might be portrayed in a photograph using colour, texture etc.
  8. Print the top 10 images chosen by the class and display on the wall. Praise the group for their exhibition!

## Discussion Activity 5: The “Waiting” Exhibition

### Activity Objectives:

- To engage young people with issues relating to homelessness
  - To encourage a group discussion surrounding the issues and thoughts faced by some young homeless people
  - To learn about the power and use of captions in photography
1. Display all 20 images from the postcard pack on the wall. Ask the group to look at all of the images.
  2. Have all of the captions written onto pieces of paper. Ask the group to match the captions with the displayed images.
  3. Turn the postcards over to reveal the true captions. Place the correct paper captions next to the images.
  4. Does the group now feel differently about any of the images, now that they know the real captions? Does it change any of the meanings of the images for them, or communicate any ideas in a clearer way?
  5. Ask the group to arrange the images into groups according to theme. (e.g. some images talk about housing, some about feelings, some about people’s history and lives)
  6. Discuss the images. How do the photographs and captions make them feel? Do the image captions help the group to understand what the homeless young people may have been going through at the time of taking the images?



Waiting Exhibition, Edinburgh Library 2011 | Photo: Kate Watson

### Photo Activity 5: Words & Pictures

#### **Activity Objectives:**

- To engage young people with issues relating to homelessness
  - To encourage the group to consider the photos they have taken and add more meaning to them
  - To learn about the use of captions within photography
1. Have a fresh look at the images created previously by the group, displayed on the wall if possible. (The group may have done all of the previous exercises, which would mean that they have photographs of the word H-O-M-E, What's In My Pockets?, a Photo Map of Our Neighbourhood and abstract Picture Emotions).
  2. Ask the group to return to their photographs and write captions for each image they have taken or were partly responsible for. Captions can be descriptive ("this is where I go to school"), emotional ("this makes me feel happy because...") or metaphorical ("this symbolises hope because...").
  3. Once the group have finished all of the captions and stuck them next to their images, ask the group to look again at the full exhibition.
  4. Does the group feel differently about any of the images now, being able to read the captions? Does it change any of the meanings for them, or make the ideas clearer or stronger?
  5. Recap on the themes the activities have explored: home, homelessness, possessions and identity, community and neighbourhood, where to go for advice on homelessness and how individuals can help.
  6. Praise the group for all their fantastic hard work!

#### **At the end of the project**

If possible, invite others to come and view the exhibition and have the group describe what they did throughout the project.

Provide everyone in the group with a copy of the group's work saved onto a CD. Also give the group their printed images to take home to remind them of the project and keep for reference.

### **Further information and advice on homelessness available from:**

- **Shelter:** housing and homelessness charity
  - i. <http://www.shelter.org.uk/>
- **Crisis:** homeless charity
  - i. <http://www.crisis.org.uk/>
- **Homeless Link:** membership body for organisations and individuals working with homeless people around England
  - i. <http://www.homeless.org.uk/>
- **Centrepoint:** homeless charity working with young people
  - i. <http://www.centrepoint.org.uk/>
- **Princes Trust** (Previously was Fairbridge, now part of Princes Trust): helps young people with a variety of issues, including homelessness
  - i. <http://www.fairbridge.org.uk/>
- **Emmaus:** homeless charity
  - i. <http://www.emmaus.org.uk/>
- **The Big Issue:** Charity helping homeless people with legitimate income, creating a magazine focused on homelessness issues
  - i. <http://www.bigissue.com>

There are also many locally-based homeless charities operating in specific regions throughout the UK. A simple google search will identify a homeless charity based in your area.

For more information on participatory photography programmes, teaching methods, guides and tips, please see PhotoVoice: [www.photovoice.org](http://www.photovoice.org)

### **About PhotoVoice**

PhotoVoice's vision is for a world in which no one is denied the opportunity to speak out and be heard.

PhotoVoice's mission is to build skills within disadvantaged and marginalised communities using innovative participatory photography and digital storytelling methods so that they have the opportunity to represent themselves and create tools for advocacy and communications to achieve positive social change.

Working in partnerships with other charities, NGOs and community organisations PhotoVoice designs and delivers tailor-made participatory photography, digital storytelling and self-advocacy projects for socially excluded groups. Our pioneering approach brings together the arts, media, development and social change agendas to work with hard-to-reach groups on projects that amplify voice, build skills, provide platforms for advocacy and work towards sustainable change.