

Tackling perceptions about homelessness should be part of the solution to the UK poverty crisis

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UK charity Chief Executive responds to latest Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on poverty

A UK homelessness charity has spoken out about the need to tackle public perceptions about what it's like to be homeless and in poverty, as part of the solution to the UK's growing poverty crisis.

This week, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation released its comprehensive [UK Poverty report](#), revealing for the first time how many thousands of pounds are needed by families to escape poverty, and how that has got worse over time.

The report highlights how around 6 million people were in deep poverty in 2021/22, with 1.5 million of them being children, 3.8 million being working-age adults, and 600,000 being pensioners.

The [International Network of Street Papers \(INSP\)](#) is the UK charity representing *The Big Issue* and all other all newspapers and magazines worldwide that are working to tackle poverty and homelessness. 92 street papers operate in 35 different countries, providing people in poverty with opportunities to earn a dignified income.

INSP's Chief Executive, Mike Findlay-Agnew, says: "The latest picture of poverty in the UK is stark. With deep poverty worsening, rising to 3.8 million, the real casualties of the crisis are some of country's most vulnerable people including, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and lone parent families.

"We all need to wake up to the reality. Poverty is not a hidden part of our society that is 'over there', but it impacts a large part of our country's populations. It's our colleagues, our friends, our families that are impacted by poverty.

"Despite this, too many people in the UK deny the extent of our poverty problem. This is why tackling perceptions about homelessness and poverty should be part of the solution to this major social issue. Public and media narrative around homelessness and poverty often focusses on a simplistic view of the world, reducing people to unhelpful labels such as 'benefits scroungers', or assuming the full extent of the problem is rough sleepers.

"It's time we changed the narrative and language in relation to homelessness and poverty. We need to be hearing from, learning, and adapting our policies based on the views and experiences of the real experts of poverty: those that have lived through it, first hand. Doing so will allow us to get to grips with the complexity of the issues, and create solutions based on what the harsh reality is for many people living in deep poverty right now.

"*Homelessness is a policy choice* is a mantra we often hear, highlighting how first world governments sometimes fail to address the issues associated with poverty on their own doorsteps. With the UK's general election due within the next year, there needs to be political consensus and commitment to take on the issues head-on. Tackling perceptions and changing the narrative around homelessness is an essential part of this."

Due to the increased prevalence of the poverty crisis globally, more solutions are required to meet the challenges head-on. The International Network of Street Papers (INSP) has confirmed that the [Global Street Paper Summit](#) will be hosted in Liverpool in the UK between Monday 9 and Friday 13 September 2024, where international delegates will be invited to debate and discuss solutions to the poverty crisis.

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International Network of Street Papers

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