

**Social problems and issues**  
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### **Session two: Homelessness**

In 2013 there were nearly 2 million people waiting for housing on local authority registers. These are the 'officially homeless'. The number of 'hidden homeless' could be three times as much. In 2011 homelessness went up, some due to repossessions but also because of being unable to pay private rents or unable to stay with relatives and friends. Despite what can only be described as a housing crisis these issues rarely make the headlines. Yet the social problem of affordable permanent housing for families and single people on low incomes is an urgent one.

Successive governments have looked for cheap short-term solutions to homelessness. The 'bedroom tax' introduced in April 2013 is an example of this. People who receive housing benefits have their homes assessed. If they are deemed to have too many rooms for their needs they will face a benefit cut. They will have to find the extra money or move out. The government argues that this is a way of freeing up larger properties for families that need them. Campaigning organisations like Shelter, argue that this affects the elderly, the disabled, and those that have had their roots in a particular neighbourhood for many years.

### **Further reading**

Chapter 4, section 5, (4.5) of 'Social Problems in the UK: An Introduction' by Stuart Isaacs, David Blundell, Anne Foley, Norman Ginsburg, Brian McDonough, Dan Silverstone, Tara Young  
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