



Something has to be done and fast but what? I spoke to Wayne Smith (pictured, right), a Homeless Project worker to find out.



**1) As a Project Worker what actually is your role?**

Well I'm a project worker for a Christian centre in Waterloo; I get into work at around 7:30 to 8:30am and set up all the breakfast things. When people start arriving at around 9am I serve tea and coffee. During the rest of the day I create orders for clothing and showers.

**2) Do you think the government have done anything particularly effective in trying to both prevent and help the current homeless situation?**

I have mixed feelings on this. The government seems to think that homeless centres are prolonging homelessness. They think that as long as these people get a meal and a shower they don't need to get a job, so they are closing centres down. This is ok only if they open rehab centres. A lot of people use

the homeless centres as a place to build relationships and gain self-esteem. If you have been on your own for a long time it is a hard thing to do. Some people just aren't ready to get a job. If they have been homeless for 15 years, that is 15 years of habits to deal with.

**3) In your experience as a Project Worker what effect does homelessness have on young people both now and later on in life?**

Low self-esteem is a major problem with homeless young people. It is a downward spiral that can lead to using substances; it is a way of putting up barriers so as not to have to face the world. Certain attitudes develop and it is a self-perpetuating problem where the young person pushes people away and eventually people end up not wanting to go

near them. It is difficult to generalise as the young people are already suffering. Something causes homelessness and it is not just people from this country. At the moment there are a lot of people from Poland who have been told that they will be able to get jobs here and they can't.

**4) Again in your experience what are the most frequent causes of homelessness and what are the best preventatives?**

It is usually something that has happened in the early years. Perhaps they didn't fit in or had difficulty at school. People soon become outcasts at any early age. Sometimes they can't cope and don't get any support. It is very easy to get isolated quickly.

**END**