

# Heartbreak of Britain's homeless teens

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November 13, 2018

Stacey Dooley has uncovered the heartbreaking reality of the lives of homeless teenager, including girls who walk the streets at night because they're too scared to sleep rough and an 18-year-old whose 'home' is a tent under a filthy railway bridge.

The presenter took to the streets for a BBC Children in Need special, which airs tonight, to meet with young people who are trying to survive as best they can with no home or family support.

She met with 18-year-old Josh who was forced out of home when his mother got a new boyfriend, and Shelby who ended up on the streets after being given 28 days notice to find somewhere to live when she turned 18 after going into care at 14.

The presenter was shocked by the difficulties they face, but was moved by their resilience and determination, especially by Josh who often gives up his bed in a hostel so a girl can take his place, as he fears for their safety on the streets.



Stacey Dooley with homeless teenagers in Caitlin and Shelby in Manchester, who admit they often walk the streets all night as they're too proud, not to mention scared, to sleep rough

JOSH, 18: WORKING BUT HOMELESS

18-year-old Josh moved to Blackpool with his mother and siblings but when she met a new boyfriend, she told her son to leave home.

'She said there wasn't enough room, blocked my number, blocked every contact so I couldn't get hold of her,' he explained.

He receives help from the Streetlife centre, funded by Children in Need, but often turns down a bed at so that a young homeless woman can take his place.



Stacey with Josh, 18, who found himself homeless in Blackpool after his mother threw him out of the house when she met a new boyfriend

Speaking of his experience of sleeping on the street, he explained: 'You have to guard everything, hide your shoes in your sleeping bag. I hide my phone down my pants. Druggies come up to you and nick your stuff.'

'You get people coming up to me in the night and I'm a lad. If it's a girl they're vulnerable. I don't let it happen.'

The qualified mechanic lost his job when he no longer had a fixed address and now works in a takeaway on a zero hours contract.

But working goes hand-in-hand with sleeping on the street as by the time he finishes at 11pm, he's missed the deadline to get a place at the Streetlife centre and has to bed down outside with a sleeping bag.

His manager has offered him a B&B but he's turned it down, pretending he has somewhere to stay as he doesn't like relying on anyone.

Josh started working at the age of 16 and was incredibly proud to be a mechanic.

'Three years ago I didn't expect to be in this situation. But in another three years, I might have a good job and a good house and someone who gives a s\*\*\* about me.'



## SHELBY, 18: KICKED OUT OF CARE

Shelby has been homeless in Manchester for several months after being forced to fend for herself when she turned 18, after being in care from the age of 14.

'They gave me 28 days notice and on the last day said you've got to present yourself homeless,' she explained.

'My situation's s\*\*\*. I've just got to get on with it.'

The teenager says she hardly ever sleeps on the streets because she's too scared, and if she can't stay with a friend she and her friends walk to the streets rather than sleeping rough.

'We just walk around. We don't want to look homeless. We'll get robbed if we go to sleep. It's everyone man for themselves around here,' she explained.



Shelby, who went into care at 14, has been homeless in Manchester for several months after being forced to fend for herself when she turned 18

CAITLIN, 19: LIVING IN A TENT UNDER A BRIDGE

'My day to day concerns are completely different to any other 19-year-old girl's concerns,' she told Stacey.

'Mine's where are my going to wash my clothes, where am I going to have a wash, I need to get something to eat, I have no money, I've got no home. I've got no mirror to do my make-up in.

'Living in a tent, I think it makes you depressed.'





Caitlin admits that she battles with depression while living in a tent under a bridge in Manchester, but says she does her best to keep smiling

Caitlin did have a job in a fast food outlet, but couldn't balance working with living on the streets.

'I don't want to go and work from here. I don't want to show up, I think I'd be upset. I get down sometimes where I don't want to get out of bed.

'I do get down a lot. It's probably why I'm always smiling and laughing. If you've got something wrong you have to get up and fix it

'There's no point in sitting there crying. Otherwise you get literally trapped in this loop.'



Caitlin told Stacey that she used to have a job at a fast food outlet, but couldn't manage to hold down steady work with living rough

#### MILLIE, 17: HOMELESS AT 14

The teenager knew she wanted to move out of her parents' home when she was 14 when her relationship with her mother broke down.

'Just home life wasn't very good and there was a lot of issues. It was the right thing for me at the time,' she said.

The ambitious youngster wanted to be able to focus on her GCSEs and worked with her housing officer Charlie to find a solution.

She now lives with temporary foster parents and hopes to go to university to study medicine.



Millie, 17, became homeless at 14 when she had to leave her family home because of problems with her mother

'Not having a home makes you just feel worried, it's very exhausting. I was constantly stressed - I didn't really know what to do,' she explained.

'I didn't know how to deal with myself and my own emotions, so I think it does really affect your mental health.

'As a teenager, your emotions feel so heightened all the time so to have to put all that stress on top of what you're going through already, it really does affect you.

'I think everybody needs a home or a safe place to be, otherwise you can't really move on with your life.'

Stacey Dooley: the Young and Homeless for BBC Children in Need is on 13 November, 10.45pm, BBC One



Millie has not turned her life around and says that she hopes to study medicine, but admitted that not having a steady home was 'exhausting'