

## *Homelessness In Britain From Brighton To Brent*

In Britain, homelessness used to be a problem almost exclusively for older people and for those with what are euphemistically termed mental health issues. True, there was the [1966 dramatisation](#) *Cathy Come Home* which highlighted a wider issue, but generally speaking, after the Second World War, homelessness was not that big a deal for ordinary people.



The rise of Margaret Thatcher changed that. While this pragmatic Grantham housewife brought much needed structural reforms to the economy, it was as always the people at the bottom who paid the price of those reforms. Margaret Thatcher was forced to resign by her own Cabinet on November 28, 1990, but new Prime Minister John Major did not repair the damage she had done in that respect. In August 1992, rock musician Luke Morley explained a song his band Thunder had released the previous year. *Low Life In Low Places* was [inspired by](#) seeing people sleeping rough. He'd once seen that in New York but not in Catford, South London, a bus ride from his birth place; "unfortunately now you do" he added.

The election of Tony Blair in 1997 did not appreciably change the prospects for those who are now known as rough sleepers, and in spite of promises by the succeeding Conservative Administrations, rough sleeping is up all round. The seaside resort of Brighton has become a magnet for the

homeless, including a surprising and frankly sadly large number of young women.

One such young woman was Paige Greenaway (pictured above) who had featured in a documentary series about the problem. *Love And Drugs On The Street: Girls Sleeping Rough* [was screened](#) in 2017/8. Paige had issues that were not of her own making, a congenital condition known as [Triple X Syndrome](#). When she was interviewed for the documentary, she was heavily pregnant; she was told her new baby would be taken into foster care.

There was talk of things looking up for her, but last month, Paige hanged herself. The girl who had been homeless for seven years, and had spent much of that time sleeping in a tent pitched in a cemetery, had been moved into an apartment. Sadly, what help she received came too late for her. She was just 23 years old.

In the London Borough of Brent, a much older individual, a man, has been made effectively homeless not by his mental condition but due to an unbelievably sick move by jobsworths at his local council. He cannot be named for legal reasons, but it will suffice to say that for the past five weeks and more he has been languishing in a Berkshire hospital with severe problems relating to his heart. Not quite sixty, he was once quite wealthy, running his own firm, but in the past few years things have not been so good, which led to him working longer and longer hours, and now he is paying the price.

He is likely to be in hospital for at least another few weeks, and when he is discharged he will have nowhere to go because bailiffs have been brought in to strip his home.

There is a long story here due to red tape, but he was informed he did not have planning permission for his premises, even though he obtained this in 1999. Being incapacitated he was unaware of what might be euphemistically termed new developments, and not bothering even to inquire about his whereabouts, the council simply forged ahead. Normally a process such as this takes considerable time and is subject to appeal, but not when the victim is out of the picture. The local press have been made aware of this but declined even to look into it.

**Brighton and Brent are only around eighty miles apart, but the problem of homelessness stretches the length and breadth of the country. While it is noble to tackle the problem, it would be far more noble in the first instance not to contribute to it.**

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