

HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK NI

6 – 12 December 2021

#StartTheConvo

CAMPAIGN TOOLKIT



WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK NI?

Homelessness Awareness Week NI is a week of social, educational and awareness raising events organised annually across Northern Ireland to highlight the issue of homelessness and to mark the continued efforts of organisations, staff, and service users working in the sector.

With no singular organisation responsible for the week of activity, Homeless Connect (previously Council for the Homeless NI) take an active role in encouraging participation, promoting initiatives, and organising events, usually in conjunction with member organisations.

After a whirlwind year for the homelessness sector in Northern Ireland, Homeless Connect in partnership with the Homelessness Sector Operational Group, which is made up of senior representatives operating in the sector, have agreed on a unified approach to raise awareness on homelessness, combat stigma and stereotypes and celebrate the work and resilience of our staff and client base.

The aim of Homelessness Awareness Week is to...

- Increase public awareness about the nature of homelessness
- Challenge stereotypes surrounding homelessness
- Highlight the work of the homelessness sector
- Build links between service users, services, and the public.

The following dates and theme have been agreed for this year's Homelessness Awareness Week:

Homelessness Awareness Week date:

6 – 12 December 2021

This year's theme:

Start the Conversation

The following information in this handy toolkit will help you and your organisation learn more about the week's activities and plan your own content to help #StartTheConvo by showcasing the amazing work, projects, people and stories behind your organisation.

HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK NI

STIGMA THEMES DURING HAW

We're keen to use Homelessness Awareness Week NI as a catalyst to change how people view and speak about those experiencing homelessness. We want to put the individual not the situation front and centre in all that we do during Homelessness Awareness Week NI.

Below is a handy set of themes agreed upon by the Homelessness Providers Group to help you plan your activity to help drive the message home:

Homelessness Is Never A Choice

Unfortunately it remains a common societal belief that people experiencing homelessness choose to be homeless. However, as those working in the sector know, this is not the case. Each person's journey in to homelessness is unique and can be caused by a wide range of factors including poverty; traumatic experiences; family breakdown; relationship breakdown; and substance use to name a few.

Homelessness & Mental Health

Mental health conditions can be the cause of or consequence of homelessness. Unfortunately challenges with mental health are widespread amongst those experiencing homelessness in this society. People experiencing homelessness facing difficulties with their mental health need access to services and support, not judgement and stigma.

Hidden Homelessness

Often society views a person experiencing homelessness as someone sleeping on the streets. Homelessness is not always visible and can take different forms, meaning that these people do not get the support they need. Living with family or friends, staying in a squat or sofa surfing can all be forms of hidden homelessness. Even those rough sleeping can be hidden. Many sleep out of sight in bushes, tents and other out of sight locations.

Hostels are not homes

Hostels provide temporary accommodation and aim to support people into independence and a place that they can call home. However, due to the complexity of homelessness and lack of suitable housing often a person will end up staying long term. This results in the hostel being viewed as their home.

Campaign Support

For maximum impact, we encourage you to use the following logo and social media suggestions on your marketing channels during the week to help raise awareness on homelessness and the #StartTheConvo theme.



2021 LOGO & COLOUR

This logo has been designed for you to include in your organisation's self-produced Homelessness Awareness Week NI activity.

The official colour of Homelessness Awareness Week is **Pantone 7549 / Hex - #ffb600** please try and use it where possible in your designs.

Download the logo [here](#)



#StartTheConvo

To lend your voice to Homelessness Awareness Week NI, you can engage with the campaign online using #StartTheConvo on social media channels like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Why not promote #StartTheConvo by updating your social media skins and profile pictures for the week.

You can follow Homeless Connect on:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)

Download social visuals and campaign tool kit [here](#)



EXAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

You may utilise these example posts to raise awareness during Homelessness Awareness Week or create your own #StartTheConvo social media content.

Example Post – *Homelessness Never a Choice*

Homelessness can affect anyone. Your parent, sibling, child, friend or even the person sitting next to you at work. This Homelessness Awareness Week NI, let's start to #StartTheConvo by retweeting to show that you support those experiencing homelessness.

Example Post – *Homelessness is Never a Choice*

"I've experienced homelessness.."

Be it missed mortgage payments or landlord issues, many of us have been at risk of homelessness before but just didn't know it. This Homelessness Awareness Week, we're asking you to #StartTheConvo by telling someone you trust about your experience.

Example Post – *Hostels Are Not Homes*

Over the past 19 months, the importance of a safe place to call home has never been more in the limelight. This Homelessness Awareness Week, find out what the sector is doing to #StartTheConvo around homelessness: <link to press release>

Example Post – *Homelessness & Mental Health*

Many people experiencing homelessness face significant challenges with their mental health. They need support and access to services, not judgment and stigma. Let's #StarttheConvo this week by calling for better support and services for people experiencing homelessness facing difficulties with their mental health.

Example Post - *Hidden Homelessness*

Homelessness is not always visible and can take many forms such as sofa surfing, staying with family or friends or sleeping in a location out of sight. This Homelessness Awareness Week NI let's #StartTheConvo to highlight that homelessness is more widespread than you realise.

YOUR OWN ACTIVITY

With the sector agreement that Homelessness Awareness Week would be focused on awareness over fundraising, we encourage you to get creative when developing #StartTheConvo activities for clients, staff and supporters.



MAKING THE WEEK YOUR OWN

Begin a conversation and help raise awareness about homelessness and combat stigma. Think of the best ways to profile homelessness and your organisation, the people you support and the work you should be proud of.

Here are some examples to help you make the most of Homelessness Awareness Week NI.

Let us know: If you're organising any events or activity, please contact Cheryl Gamble cheryl.gamble@homelessconnect.org in advance so that we can include it on our online events calendar and media section.

Don't forget to take pictures on the day and pop them on to social using the tag #StartTheConvo so that we can share your amazing work.

Host a Client Coffee Morning



Why not get clients involved during the week by organising a themed coffee morning to give clients and staff the opportunity to talk about what Homelessness means to them and their experiences of stigma.

Organise a Workshop



As a picture can paint a thousand words, why not organise an art workshop or create a graffiti wall at your project to give clients the chance to speak about their aspirations for the future.

Social Media



Host a Twitter day, night or Facebook room to bring people together and have the opportunity to talk about Homelessness in NI, profile the people within your organisation and the great work they are doing.

Surprise Us



Only you know what works for your staff, clients and supporters so do something unique to your organisation and surprise us during the **week**.



**THANK YOU &
ENJOY YOUR HOMELESSNESS
AWARENESS WEEK**