

The hostile environment: youth resource



This session is designed to explain what we mean when we talk about the 'hostile environment' in the UK and explore how, as Christians, we can create a more welcoming environment for everyone.

For the full report visit www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/endhostility

Ice Breaker

There are two options here, one messy game involving water that might be best played outside and one which is more suitable for indoors. You may wish to play both if you have time.

Messy game:

Split the group into two. Fill two buckets with water. Place two empty buckets at the other side of the space away.

Give each group a plastic cup and explain that, in their groups, they have to take it in turns to use the cup to move the water from the full bucket to the empty bucket. Secretly ensure that one team has a small hole in their plastic cup so that they lose.

You may wish to repeat the game so that the winning team in the first round are given the holey cup in the second round.

The aim of this game is to demonstrate how difficult it is to function without the things that you need. The hostile environment takes away the things people need to survive like healthcare, the ability to receive or earn money and the ability to find a home.

Indoor game:

Set up a mini pathway along the group. This can be very simple; a pathway marked by post-it notes or arrows on the ground etc.

Tell the group to pair up, and for one of the pair to put on a blindfold. The blindfolded person must navigate the path following verbal instructions from their partner.

After everyone has taken their turn, swap the blindfolds in the pair, and tell the new blindfolded person that they must complete the pathway *without* assistance from their partner. Once they're blindfolded, tell everyone else in the group to shout incorrect instructions at them.



The aim of this game is to demonstrate how difficult it is to function without the support of the people around you. The hostile environment means the government leaves people to struggle without the help they need.

Discussion questions after the game:

How did it feel to have the disadvantage?

Did you think it was fair?

Should we treat everyone equally?

Do you think everyone in our society today is treated equally?

Introducing the hostile environment

Explain:

The UK government has created a hostile environment for people who don't have the right to be in the UK. This isn't about who is allowed into the country, it's about how we treat people who are already here. The government denies people who can't prove that they have the right to be here the things that they need in the hope that this means they'll leave.

Ask:

What do you need in order to survive day to day?

Explain:

The hostile environment denies people healthcare, housing and the right to work. The idea is that this will mean that they leave the UK, but in reality it means that people are poorly, homeless and living in poverty.

Watch:

A 60 second explanation of the hostile environment: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lz1L4pBzyow

Read Zaza's story:

Zaza fled Turkey after having his house burned down by the military in 1994. He sought asylum in the UK but had his first claim denied. His status is now unclear, but he is living without any money from the Government or the right to work: **"they destitute you... nobody should live homeless... should I live on the street? Destitution kills you, you are constantly sick. I'm underground so I'm too scared to go to the doctors".**

Zaza, aged 37



Bible study

Read Matthew 22:36-40:

The Most Important Command

When the Pharisees heard how he had bested the Sadducees, they gathered their forces for an assault. One of their religion scholars spoke for them, posing a question they hoped would show him up: “Teacher, which command in God’s Law is the most important?”

Jesus said, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.’ This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ These two commands are pegs; everything in God’s Law and the Prophets hangs from them.”

Matthew 22:36-40 (MSG)

Ask:

What does loving others as we love ourselves look like in practice?

What would a society where everyone followed these two commands look like?

Churches have called for an end to the hostile environment because forcing people to live without the things they need means treating them without compassion. This isn’t about who is allowed into the country, but about making sure that everyone in the UK is treated decently, regardless of their immigration status. Do you agree?

How do you think Jesus would treat someone like Zaza, whose story we read?

How could Christians create a society that looks more like what Jesus calls for?

How could you make a more welcoming environment in your own community?

Who are the people who may not feel welcome in your school, church or youth group?

How could you make people feel more welcome in your school, your church and your youth group?

Could you commit to do one of the things you’ve come up with?

Take action

You may wish to write to your MP explaining why you think the policies of the hostile environment must be reviewed and dismantled. Visit www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/endhostility for advice on



meeting with your MP and for a template letter. Make sure you put an address on it for your MP to write back to the group.

Pray



**God of the nomad, asylum seeker and refugee
Journey with those who have left all
To find safety on our shores
Accused of lying, hungry and homeless
Vulnerable, away from families and the familiar.
God of the stranger be with them we pray
And help us to open our arms and our hearts
To those who seek sanctuary from afar
Following the one who left all for us
Amen.**

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