

# Headline English

2011, week 1 *Learn English through reading on current world affairs*

## 1 **Homelessness is an issue again**

2 original at:

3 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/dec/26/observer-editorial-homelessness>

4 It was the original "big issue". In 1991, the magazine of that name was  
5 created to highlight the growing crisis of homelessness in London and, by  
6 recruiting the homeless as vendors, provide exit routes from destitution.

7 That was the last recession. It was nearly 20 years before the economy  
8 turned down again. While Britain is no longer technically in recession, the  
9 economics of austerity risk another epidemic of evictions, dislocations and  
10 rough sleeping.

11 In the last quarter, 11,840 families were newly recognised as homeless,  
12 an increase of 17% from the previous three months and the third  
13 consecutive quarterly increase. That is the most sustained rise since 2003.

14 The number of people in rent or mortgage arrears has doubled in the past  
15 year. There are an estimated 3.7m households struggling to meet the  
16 basic costs of housing. With inflation consistently above Bank of England  
17 targets, there is every likelihood interest rates will rise next year, pushing  
18 mortgage payments higher and triggering a wave of evictions. Meanwhile,  
19 cuts to local authority budgets mean many of the support services that  
20 help people in distress face closure.

21 The government is relying heavily on its "big society" agenda to help  
22 mitigate the effect of cuts to public services. The idea is that private and  
23 voluntary sectors will mobilise to provide a network of support that will be  
24 more effective and sustainable than state handouts. It seems a very  
25 optimistic scenario, but only the future will tell.

## Questions

- 1) 'Big Issue' is the name of a British magazine that has a unique distribution chain. In what way is the distribution of the magazine unique? And what is the name of the well known Czech magazine modeled on Big Issue?
- 2) Paraphrase 'exit routes from destitution' (line 6, the explanation of destitution in the vocabulary section might help you).
- 3) What is the 'economics of austerity' (line 9)?
- 4) Why could it cause another surge in the number of homeless people in the UK?
- 5) Why should an increase in the interest rates offered by the Bank of England cause a rise in the number of people forced to leave their homes?
- 6) What are the consequences of the cuts in local budgets for social assistance?
- 7) Explain the concept of 'big society'.
- 8) Paraphrase 'state handouts' (line 24)

## Vocabulary

**destitution** (line 6) – lack of the means of subsistence, utter poverty

**arrears** (line 14) – the state of being behind or late, esp. in the fulfilment of a duty, payment, obligation, or the like

**rely + on** (line 21) – to depend or put trust in

**sustainable** (line 24) – capable of being continued at a certain level (cf. sustainable growth)

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

