

National Hygiene Week - 14th – 20th September 2020

This is the UK's first National Hygiene Week, 14th – 20th September

National Hygiene Week is about drawing attention to an often undiscussed and ignored issue: **hygiene poverty**.

Some people think this is a made up problem, but it hugely impacts many across the country.

There are over 14m people in the UK living in poverty.

That is one in five people who find themselves locked in poverty.

Two thirds are working families and one in four are children

Low wages and high living costs restrict people's options on what they can buy, leaving them in impossible situations like choosing either to heat their home, pay their rent, eat or be clean.. Once they have paid the rent, bought food etc buying hygiene products may no longer be an option.

It leads to a crippling lack of confidence and negatively affects good health and mental well-being which can impact early childhood development, learning, employ-ability and social interaction.

Those affected can often feel ashamed, but it really isn't their fault if they are unable to afford everyday cleaning and personal grooming products. These are items that most of us take for granted, like soap, toilet roll, toothpaste, sanitary towels.

Some people become so desperate they start stealing things like deodorant and basic food and hygiene necessities.

National Hygiene Week has been set up by national charity called The Hygiene Bank to provide a platform for raising awareness of the issues and empower people to make a difference within their communities.

Activity will encourage schools to get involved with provision of educational resources and fundraising. Brand partners will run panel events around the importance of giving people in our society the chance of living in dignity.

The Hygiene Bank has also teamed up with @Boots and is well underway with The Hygiene Bank drop off points now in 245 stores across the UK. Boots also helped support NHS staff working on the front line, in hospitals across the UK, along with several community partners with a donation of over 200,000 toiletries. Most recently, at a time of heightened poverty, Boots UK donated 142,500 PPE products to The Hygiene Bank including face masks, hand wash and hand sanitiser.

At The Hygiene Bank, they believe each and every one of us should have a dignified life. It's not right that feeling clean should be a luxury or a privilege for anyone in our society, yet many of us are living in poverty and can't afford to be clean. That's why this network of banks exists – to give people access to the basics they need.

The Hygiene Bank's passion stems from a sense of injustice that anyone should be locked out of living a decent, dignified life, so they work to inspire social change.

Take a minute to imagine what that must be like, how desperate a situation it must be. Imagine not being able to afford shampoo, deodorant, a new toothbrush, or sanitary products.

Put yourself in the shoes of someone not able to change their baby's nappy when necessary because they don't have access to any new ones.

There are girls who have been forced to miss school because they didn't have the money to buy sanitary products.

Some people who face hygiene poverty have admitted that being in this position can strip you of your dignity and self-confidence.

It's no surprise that some would rather steal than ask for help.

We live in the fifth richest country in the world, so there is no reason why someone should have to go through such financial hardship.

So let's try to help eradicate hygiene poverty from society and give people back the dignity they deserve!