Welcome to Our World – Teaching and learning resource

Overview

Many would argue that fairness, equality of opportunity, and the idea of 'fair go' lie at the very core of Australian identity. These values are embedded in our classrooms and the curriculum. And yet, within our communities we have families which are increasingly trapped in a cycle of poverty and hardship – often, by the same systems that is designed to support them in crisis.

The 100 Families WA project is an attempt to find a path forward to making real, positive impact on people's lives.

The project was an Australian-first collaborative study, led by seven community service organisations, WA Council of Social Services (WACOSS), the University of Western Australia (UWA)and a Community Advisory Group comprising people with lived experience. It followed 400 families over three years, holding regular fortnightly interviews with 100 of them, to gain a deep understanding of the experiences of people who are living in entrenched disadvantage in Perth. A specific goal of the project was to better understand, from a systems point of view, what is working, what isn't and what could be done to help change people's lives forever.

The Welcome to Our World website emerged at the completion of the project. It is an interactive platform that allows community members to directly engage with the journey of disadvantage through the eyes of four personas: Jo, a single mum, Carol, a grandparent carer, Sam, a homeless man and Brianna, an Aboriginal person. Why take the journey with these characters? Because in order to end the cycle of disadvantage, we need to first empathise with it and understand it.

The teaching and learning activities included in this resource pack are intended to stimulate discussion, promote reflection and drive commitment to action.

Our young people are the upcoming policy makers, service providers and organisational leaders. We invite both you and them to join us and be a force of change into the future.

Curriculum links

The Welcome to Our World platform supports learning in several curriculum areas.

- In **English**, it offers students an opportunity to examine a WA produced multi-media text which features the often under-represented voices of those living with significant disadvantage. The website is particularly relevant to developing the 'Texts and Contexts' outcomes within the Literacy content area ("How texts relate to their contexts and reflect the society and culture in which they were created").

- In **HASS**, students explore human behaviour and interaction in social, cultural, environmental, economic and political contexts. The Welcome to Our World website is a highly relevant, local text which provides opportunities to discuss themes such as role of government, organisational and personal responsibility, social justice and social advocacy, living standards, liveability, and human wellbeing.

- The **Health and Physical Education** learning area promotes the development of values consistent with the prevention of ill health and respect for social justice principles. Engaging with the Welcome to Our World stories supports the Personal, Social and Community Health content stream by developing understandings about barriers which contribute to wellbeing.

Outside of these specific learning areas, exploration and discussion of the 100 Families Project and the Welcome to Our World platform promotes the development of General Capabilities, most notably **Personal and Social Capability** ("Social awareness"), **Ethical Understanding** ("Exploring values, rights and responsibilities" and "Understanding ethical concepts and issues"), and **Intercultural Understanding** ("Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility").

Support for students and families

Welcome to our World website reflects stories of people experiencing poverty, homelessness, family and domestic violence, and mental health issues. Some students, in particular those whose families may be living with similar challenges, may find this content confronting.

As you work through the activities included in this resource, consider building in additional discussion about the different supports available for people going through a difficult time, and share information about supports that are available to students if they wanted to have a chat with someone about the content covered (or about the situation they are going through).

Consider explicitly exploring the roles of people such as psychologists, counsellors, youth workers or chaplains, and share contact information for supports students and families can access within your school or local community. Talk about the importance of reaching out to friends and trusted adults, and share information about broader supports such as the ones listed below.

Support organisation	Phone number	Website	Online chat?
Kids Helpline	1800 55 1800	www.kidshelpline.com.au	Yes
Headspace	Search for your closest centre online	www.headspace.org.au	Yes
Lifeline	13 11 14	www.lifeline.org.au	Yes
1800 RESPECT	1800 737 732	www.1800respect.org.au	Yes

Preliminary activities

Discuss:

1. What is 'disadvantage'? Why might we want to overcome it?

2. What factors might contribute to:
    - a sports team having a disadvantage when playing against another team?
    - a student being at a disadvantage when doing an exam?
    - a person being at a disadvantage when applying for a job?

3. What groups of people tend to be more disadvantaged than others in our community? For each group you identify, give one example of how they are disadvantaged.

4. When talking about inequality in our community, people sometimes talk about the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. List at least 5 things that the 'haves' have and the 'have nots' lack.

5. How would you define 'poverty'? Compare your definition with others. Does everyone agree on the definition?

6. What is the difference between 'absolute poverty' and 'relative poverty'?

7. Anglicare WA is one community organisation dedicated to overcoming poverty and helping people to thrive. Have a go at completing some or all of the short e-learning units below.

Module Name	Link
Poverty and Inequality (lower school)	https://forms.office.com/r/waCZQfYS0R
Homelessness (lower school)	https://forms.office.com/r/Wsy7xsJ23C
Advocacy (lower school)	https://forms.office.com/r/0Fn9sG0182
Homelessness (upper school)	https://forms.office.com/r/0bTPyRSX8D
JobSeeker Payment (upper school)	https://forms.office.com/r/4PDmuNnfTw
Privilege, Rights & Action (upper school)	https://forms.office.com/r/fah6Mx1Y9d

8. Before moving onto exploring the Welcome to Our World website, encourage students to start a KWL chart to identify what they already know and what they want to find out about 'helping people who live in disadvantage'.

Preliminary activities (sample answers)

1. What is 'disadvantage'? Why might we want to overcome it?

   Disadvantage is an unfavourable circumstance or condition that reduces the chances of a person's success or effectiveness.

   We may want to help and remove those unfavourable circumstances or barriers so that all individuals can thrive and lead a good life at their full potential.

2. What factors might contribute to:

   - a sports team having a disadvantage when playing against another team?

     eg. the team might have several players with injuries, they may be playing away from their familiar home ground, or they might not have a great coach

   - a student being at a disadvantage when doing an exam?

     eg. they might have a learning disability, they might not have the necessary equipment with them, they might be sick on the day of the exam

   - a person being at a disadvantage when applying for a job?

     eg. they might not have the right qualifications or experience, they may have a lot of other commitments so they are not flexible with their work hours, they may not have the right clothes to attend an interview in

3. What groups of people tend to be more disadvantaged than others in our community? For each group you identify, give one example of how they are disadvantaged.

   eg. people living with a disability – may find it difficult to do some activities independently; people from minority backgrounds – may be subject to racism or discrimination; people living in poverty – might not have a car or enough food

4. When talking about inequality in our community, people sometimes talk about the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. List at least 5 things that the 'haves' have and the 'have nots' lack.

   eg. 'haves' might have/ 'have nots' might lack: money, quality food, good health, lots of choice about where to live, technology access

5. How would you define 'poverty'? Compare your definition with others. Does everyone agree on the definition?

   Students will form own definition

6. What is the difference between 'absolute poverty' and 'relative poverty'?

   Absolute poverty refers to people who lack most basic of life requirements like food, clothing and housing. Relative poverty is when households receive 50% less than average household incomes.

KWL

TOPIC: Helping people who live in disadvantage

What I think I already know about this topic	What I would like to learn about this topic	What I learned about this topic

Exploring the Welcome to Our World platform

Allow students time to explore the Welcome to our World website content. You may want to split the class into groups and allocate a character for each group to follow, or allow students to freely choose a persona that resonates with them the most.
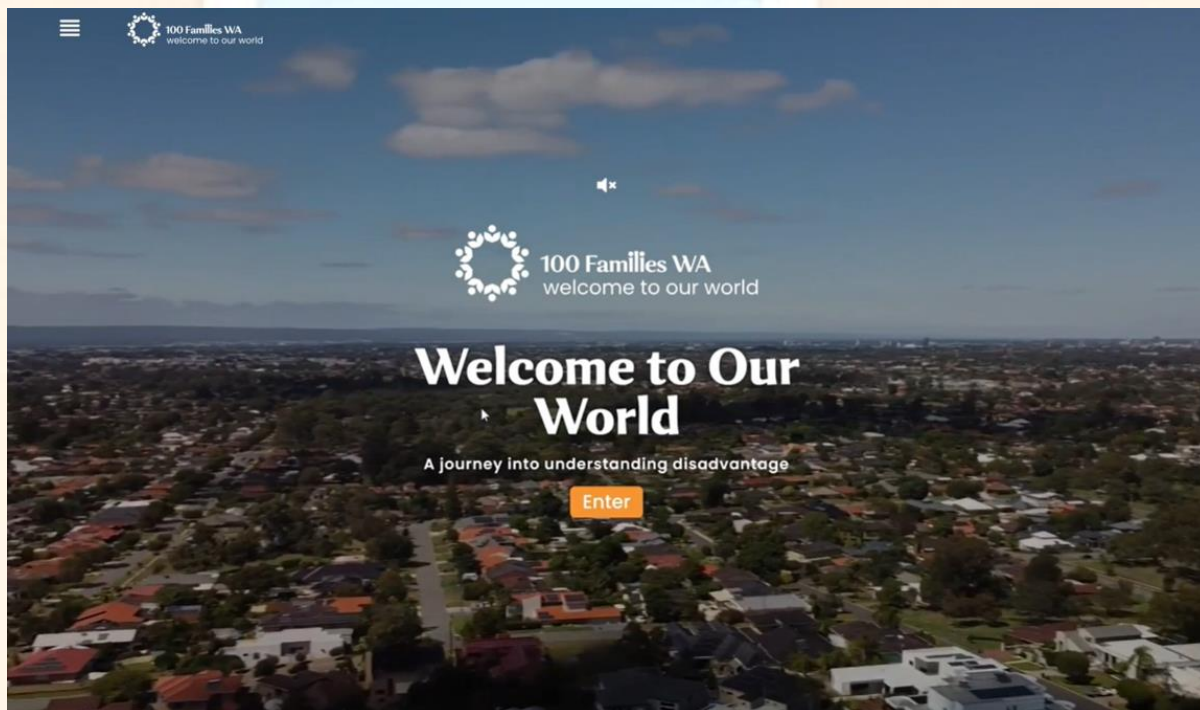
www.100familieswa.org.au/welcome-to-our-world/

It is recommended that you allocate at least 30 minutes for students to explore the website. Comprehension activities and sample answers are included on the following pages.

Encourage students to share their findings with others and compare and contrast the experiences of the four characters featured: Jo, Carol, Sam and Brianna.

You may wish to have a look at this [Welcome to Our World tutorial video](#).

Walk in my footsteps – Welcome to our World website questions

Choose one of the four characters featured on the Welcome to Our Word website (www.100familieswa.org.au/welcome-to-our-world/) and complete the questions below with reference to that person.

☐　Jo　　　　　　☐　Sam　　　　　　☐　Carol　　　　　　☐　Brianna

1. What challenges or difficulties does this person face?

Practical problems	Relationship problems

2. What sort of crisis did this person experience?

3. What actions did this person take to try to make their situation better?

Steps taken to solve a problem	Was the problem resolved?	If not, what stood in the way?

4. How did the problems experienced by this person affect them and/or their immediate family?

5. Who did this person turn to for support?

Individual or organisation contacted for support	What help was needed?	Was the support offered helpful or not helpful?	Why/Why not?

Walk in my footsteps (sample answers: Jo, single mum)

The answers below are suggestions only. Individual student responses may vary.

1. What challenges or difficulties does this person face?

Practical problems	Relationship problems
Small accommodation, appliances don't work, income doesn't cover basic needs, no internet, debt	*Fighting, especially over finances. Partner is controlling and aggressive.* *Jo's extended family relationships are strained because Jo has to keep turning to them for help.*

2. What sort of crisis did this person experience?

   Partner becomes violent and neighbour calls the police. Jo decides to leave the partner and flees to Auntie's house.

3. What actions did this person take to try to make their situation better?

Steps taken to solve a problem	Was the problem resolved?	If not, what stood in the way?
Tries to find a service to help partner's violent behaviours (while still in the relationship)	*No*	*No wifi, slow internet at shopping centre, overwhelmed by trying to find the right service.*
Seeks Crisis Payment after fleeing from violent partner with nothing	*No*	*Phone damaged by partner so difficult to fill out form. Form too complicated. On hold for a long time with Centrelink, gets cut off. Goes in person when bruises have worn off. Long wait, child becomes distressed. Goes home. Misses the 7 day crisis payment window.*
Tries to find own accommodation	*No*	*Not enough money for a deposit for a rental. Has to limit food to try and save. No houses available within her budget.*
Tries to access mental health support	*No*	*Trusted social worker is leaving, traumatic to re-build new relationship. New psych support showed lack of empathy.*

4. How did the problems experienced by this person affect them and/or their immediate family?

She feels low and cries often. Lots of anxiety over money, safety and accommodation. Not sleeping well. Increased tension with extended family. Her daughter is more upset.

5. Who did this person turn to for support?

Individual or organisation contacted for support	What help was needed?	Was the support offered helpful or not helpful?	Why/Why not?
Centrelink	*Financial support*	*No*	*Complicated, difficult to contact, long waiting times to speak to someone when she needed help.*
Dept of Communities	*Support after incident of family violence*	*No*	*Talked down to, threatened to take children away.*
Charity organisation (1)	*Practical and emotional support*	*Yes*	*Made her feel like she could make her own decisions. Helped her find a refuge.*
Charity organisation (2)	*Finding a bed*	*Yes*	*Listened, didn't interrupt, made her feel welcome, sourced beds and let Jo have a say in which was best for her.*
GP/Psychiatrist	*Mental health support*	*GP -yes. Psychiatrist - no*	*GP created a mental health plan. Psychiatrist's office referred her to a psychologist, who was rude and blamed her for her circumstances.*

Walk in my footsteps (sample answers: Sam, living homeless)

The answers below are suggestions only. Individual student responses may vary.

1. What challenges or difficulties does this person face?

Practical problems	Relationship problems
Not able to work after hurting his back, insecure housing.	*Dysfunctional family, grew up in foster care.*

2. What sort of crisis did this person experience?

   Not able to pay rent so became homeless.

3. What actions did this person take to try to make their situation better?

Steps taken to solve a problem	Was the problem resolved?	If not, what stood in the way?
Tries to find a safe place to sleep on vacant property	*Briefly*	*Police fine him for trespassing.*
Tries to stay at crisis accommodation	*Briefly*	*Lack of availability – only 2 nights accommodation.*
Tries to get a job	*No*	*Anxiety and depression holds him back. Doesn't have clean clothes. Can't do physical work due to injury. Phone stolen, so job network provider can't get hold of him.*

4. How did the problems experienced by this person affect them and/or their immediate family?

   Anxiety, depression. Homelessness and disability make it difficult to find work. No immediate family to turn to due to generational drug and alcohol use.

5. Who did this person turn to for support?

Individual or organisation contacted for support	What help was needed?	Was the support offered helpful or not helpful?	Why/Why not?
Outreach worker, homelessness service	Accommodation, personal care needs	Yes	Worker tells him about accommodation options and crisis supports.
Centrelink	Income support	No	Can't leave his belongings anywhere, long wait, can't access payment because of debt that was incorrectly attributed to him.
Job Network Provider	Finding a job	No	Faces lots of barriers to finding work. Worker talks down to him.
Informal network of other homeless people	Social connection, safety	Yes and No	Social connection and advice, but drugs and alcohol in the group are an issue.

Walk in my footsteps (sample answers: Carol, grandparent carer)

The answers below are suggestions only. Individual student responses may vary.

1. What challenges or difficulties does this person face?

Practical problems	Relationship problems
Financial difficulties - only part time job, and not enough income to meet her needs	*Widowed. Daughter struggles with mental health and drug addiction.*

2. What sort of crisis did this person experience?

    Daughter overdoses on drugs and Carol takes her grandchildren into her care.

3. What actions did this person take to try to make their situation better?

Steps taken to solve a problem	Was the problem resolved?	If not, what stood in the way?
Tried to get income support to help raise children	*No*	*If she accepts the Family Tax benefit, her daughter would lose this income and would not be able to pay her rent.*
Legal service	*Limited*	*Receives advice, but complicated situation and doesn't resolve her issues*
Sees GP about physical and mental health	*Yes – partially*	

4. How did the problems experienced by this person affect them and/or their immediate family?

    Because care of her grandchildren was considered an informal arrangement, Carol isn't eligible for financial support. Feels overwhelmed by the situation. Her grandchildren are very clingy due to the stress they experienced. Stress means she's neglecting her own health.

5. Who did this person turn to for support?

Individual or organisation contacted for support	What help was needed?	Was the support offered helpful or not helpful?	Why/Why not?
Centrelink	Income support	No	Long wait to see someone, no toilet, nothing for children to do while they wait. Can't get income support for her grandchildren in a way that isn't detrimental to her daughter's wellbeing.
GP	Advice re physical and mental health issues	Yes	Received mental health plan, prescribed medication, given note to employer.
Grandparent support group	Emotional support	Yes	Didn't feel alone after connecting with others in similar situation.

Walk in my footsteps (sample answers: Brianna, Aboriginal family)

The answers below are suggestions only. Individual student responses may vary.

1. What challenges or difficulties does this person face?

Practical problems	Relationship problems
Financial problems – both she and partner are out of work. Health problems in extended family.	*Close connection to extended cultural community, but relationships are affected by trauma and sadness. Experiences racism within broader community.*

2. What sort of crisis did this person experience?

   Death of community Elder. People come to her house after the funeral and an argument breaks out around funeral costs. Lots of shouting and shoving, police are called in.

3. What actions did this person take to try to make their situation better?

Steps taken to solve a problem	Was the problem resolved?	If not, what stood in the way?
Helps her partner to write job applications	*No*	*People are reluctant to hire partner. No internet access makes applying for jobs difficult.*
Spent time on Country	*No, but helps to lift her spirit*	

4. How did the problems experienced by this person affect them and/or their immediate family?

   Ongoing issues such as family feuding, mental illness, drugs, prison and interaction with child protection; child protection called in after a fight broke out at her house; threat of homelessness after several allegations of disruptive behaviour.

5. Who did this person turn to for support?

Individual or organisation contacted for support	What help was needed?	Was the support offered helpful or not helpful?	Why/Why not?
Doesn't reach out for help from services often			Doesn't feel safe to seek help due to the way Aboriginal people have been treated in the past (and continued racism today).
School principal	Support for daughter who got in trouble	No	The principal didn't want to listen when told that her daughter was being bullied.
Own community	Food, money, place to stay	Yes and no	Help can be counted on, but can lead to difficulties, eg. can't have extra people stay at a Homeswest house.

Reflection, extension and action activities

1. 'Empathy' means an ability to understand the feelings of another person. Complete the following sentences, by naming the emotions that the different characters you met on Welcome to Our World website might have felt in different circumstances.

I imagine that Jo felt _____ when _____

_____ .

I imagine that Sam felt _____ when _____

_____ .

I imagine that Carol felt _____ when _____

_____ .

I imagine that Brianna felt _____ when _____

_____ .

2. Create a Y-chart which shows what you think, feel and wonder about after exploring the Welcome to Our World website.

3. Complete the KWL chart you started before exploring the website, about the topic of 'helping people who live with disadvantage'. Write a headline that captures the most important aspect of this topic. How does your headline differ from what you would have said before exploring the website?

4. Choose an example of a problem experienced by one of the characters featured in the Welcome to Our World website, then visit the WA Connect website (waconnect.org.au).

   ○ What services are available in your local area to assist someone dealing with this sort of a problem?
   ○ What personal attributes should these organisations look for in candidates who apply to work or volunteer with these organisations?

5. Suggest ways that someone could:

   ○ educate others about disadvantage and poverty.
   ○ encourage elected officials to take action against disadvantage and poverty.
   ○ help those who are experiencing disadvantage or poverty.

6. Consider the 'Calls to Action' identified on the website:

Support people to identify and achieve their life goals – their way	Elevate the role and amplify the voice of people experiencing disadvantage	Ensure every Australian has access to adequate income to meet their basic needs
Build and strengthen local community networks and supports	Challenge stigma and create a safe, supportive environment for people	Make it easy as possible for people to access support when they need it
Prioritise and develop trusted and enduring relationships	Invest in prevention and early supports	Recognise the value of caring roles and other contributions to society

- Working in groups, choose one of the actions and brainstorm ideas for what individuals could do, what organisations (such as schools, workplaces or charities) could do, and what the government could do to support this action.
- What might make it difficult for individuals, organisations or governments to put in place these actions? Can you think of any way these barriers could be overcome?
- Which action would be relatively easy to implement? Which one might be the hardest to implement?

7. Complete one of the following:

- Make a short (30sec) video to encourage people to take one of the 'calls to action' identified on the website.
- Create a political cartoon which comments on disadvantage.
- Write a letter to the editor, to raise awareness and support for increasing minimum rate of income (see raisetherate.org.au for tips).
- Create an infographic which includes at least one statistic included on the website, and incorporate the infographic as part of a poster that encourages action to shift that statistic.
- Run two role plays, one which demonstrates some of the barriers faced by a person seeking support to overcome disadvantage, and the other showing what effective support might look like to move a person from a point of disadvantage to a point of equity.

- Create an artwork which is inspired by what you learned through exploring one of the character journeys.
- Write an essay on the following topic: Is disadvantage and poverty a community problem or a personal problem?

Additional resources

- 100 Families WA Summary Report, https://100familieswa.org.au/resources/cat/reports/
- Anglicare WA advocacy resources, https://www.anglicarewa.org.au/who-we-are/advocacy
- Change Series advocacy videos - https://100familieswa.org.au/resources/cat/video-series/
- Speaking from Experience videos - https://100familieswa.org.au/resources/cat/video-series/
- E-learning educational interactive program – https://100familieswa.org.au/e-learning