

HELPING THE HOMELESS

CHILD HOMELESSNESS IS RISING AND WE NEED TO CHANGE IT

WHAT does home mean to you? For many children it means a warm house where they feel safe, somewhere with enough room to play and spend time with family. But for thousands of children who are homeless, it isn't like that at all.

Children and homelessness

In 2015, there were 38,040 homeless families with children in England. When a family with children becomes homeless they are placed into temporary accommodation – this should be somewhere they will only stay for a short time, usually in a hostel or a bed and breakfast (B&B).

Conditions in temporary accommodation can be cold, damp, unclean and unsafe. Families often share one room, with no space for children to play or do their homework. The Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) spoke to children who were living in houses with rats and were forced to share filthy bathrooms with adults they didn't know. Renee was 14 when she and her two younger sisters, brother and mum were made homeless. She told us: "I had this impression that being in a B&B is going to be like a hotel, but when I got there it was just a shock. We had one room. It had a bunk bed, a double and a single for all of us. It was really difficult to find my own space to do my homework."

This is not a good enough place for a child to grow up. Children living in this kind of housing are more likely to have health problems, do worse at school and experience bullying.

Why is this happening?

Child homelessness is increasing. One reason is that the financial help provided by the Government to families who don't have much money is not always enough to cover their rent. This means that more families are becoming homeless and the authorities are finding it harder to make sure there is enough housing for everyone. This must change.

Children fight to change it

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) sets out the basic things children need, including a safe, clean place to live, where they can develop properly. It applies to all children aged 17 and under. The UK Government promised in 1991 to uphold these rights.

In 2015, a group of inspirational children and young people from across England came together and, with support from CRAE, wrote a report about children's rights. They formed the See It, Say It,



The See It, Say It, Change It steering group is leading the campaign to help tackle homelessness for children

Change It steering group, led research with over 1,000 children and sent their final report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In 2016, the UN Committee recommended that the UK Government needed to take action to stop children having to live in temporary accommodation for long periods of time. The law says families must only be housed in B&Bs for six weeks but, in 2016, 1,140 families with children had been living in B&Bs for longer.

The See It, Say It, Change It group wants to make sure the Government takes action on the UN's recommendations.

They have set up Change It!, which is a campaign to stop children being forced to live in B&Bs for longer than the six-week legal limit. The campaign is being led by children and young people.

GET INVOLVED

Steering group member Tufa, ten, says:

"We need you to become a young activist and get your voice heard by people in power – we'll support you to write to your MP, and come and meet with them in Parliament!"

The campaign launches on 22 February 2017. You can join on the website any time after that. Just go to www.crae.org.uk.

You can also find out more by following us on Twitter: [@CRAE_Official](https://twitter.com/CRAE_Official), [#Changelit](https://twitter.com/Changelit).

