

Urgent appeal to help children living in temporary accommodation this Christmas

13 December 2023

Press release: for immediate release



The number of children heading towards Christmas in temporary accommodation has prompted an urgent appeal from the Homelessness Partnership BCP.

It is estimated that 158 children in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole could spend this festive season in bed and breakfast hotels, because they have no place to call home.

The recent successful delivery of new local housing has meant more families have a place to call home, and has helped to decrease the number of children who were formerly housed in B&Bs by over 20%. But other families are still asking for help.

And indeed, a further 389 children are in families who will spend Christmas with the threat of homelessness hanging over their heads.

With large numbers of families reaching out for help, the Homelessness Partnership BCP is urging people to support its Christmas campaign in one of three ways: donating, letting property and volunteering.

There is further hope on the horizon, because BCP is one of six trailblazer regions for Homewards, the new initiative from Prince William and The Royal Foundation. It is already working to form a locally led coalition from across all sectors and businesses, to work with the organisations 'at the front line' to identify specific actions that will bring closer an end to homelessness in the area.

Chair of the Partnership Forum, Alistair Doxat-Purser, said: "Behind the numbers are individual families seeking to eat, sleep, do homework, relax, seek hope for the next day – all in a B&B room. As a partnership we are seeking all ways to change this situation for another family... and another family... and another. The reduction because of the new housing is really welcome, but we are committed to both helping more families make the step on into secure homes, and preventing yet more falling into the same situation.

"The thriving new relationship with Homewards, working hand-in-hand with local partners, is a driving force to help families across our three towns. However, we would love the support of organisations, businesses, faith groups, community teams and individual members of the public – please support the campaign and open the door to a future home for more families this Christmas."

Councillor Kieron Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulatory Services, BCP Council, said: “Whilst we work hard all year-round, approaching Christmas really brings this crisis into focus for those of us lucky enough to be decorating our houses or inviting those we love to dinner.

“The council is continuing to work tirelessly in the run up to the holiday to ensure that anyone at risk of falling into temporary accommodation gets the support they need to stay in their homes. Early prevention remains our best way of helping people locally affected, through no fault of their own, by two debilitating national issues: the cost of living crisis and the chronic lack of affordable housing.

“This year and next, our priority remains trying to stop homelessness from occurring in the first place, and we will need our residents to help us with this. If you can donate money, your time or have a property or spare room that could be let to someone threatened with homelessness, please get in touch.

“The picture seems bleak both locally and nationally, but I am grateful that our positive local partnership will only become stronger in 2024, and we must continue to build on the incredible work done by partners across the area throughout 2023.”

Four ways to make a difference – visit www.hpbcp-Christmas.org

1 Donate to Change for Good

Donations to the ‘Change for Good’ crowd-funding appeal supports families in temporary accommodation to settle into a new home as soon as a property becomes available and helps to end the cycle of temporary accommodation.

From move-in packs to toiletries, clothing, furniture, white goods and presents for children, all funds go directly to local charities and support services that help people to thrive independently in their new home.

2 Let your property

Landlords can be part of the solution by renting their properties through Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.

BCP Council urgently needs more properties for private rent, helping to solve the housing crisis and preventing families from becoming homeless next Christmas. They offer a guaranteed rent option, upfront rent payments and funds towards renovations.

3 Volunteer your time

Time is the most precious gift of all – and by volunteering with local support services, you can play a part helping families experiencing homelessness to build a brighter future. Community Action Network can find you a perfect volunteering role.

4 Reach out for support

The Homelessness Partnership BCP works with families across the area to prevent them from losing their homes.

People renting privately who are experiencing rent arrears or have received a Section 21 notice can receive free, expert advice from the Partnership's Let's Talk Renting service, run by Citizens Advice BCP.

Please visit our Christmas campaign page at www.hpbcp-Christmas.org to donate, and for more for information about all the above ways to get involved.

Ends.

Picture caption: 30 representatives of the Homelessness Partnership BCP lined up by Bournemouth beach – each representing five of the children who will spend this Christmas in B&B accommodation.

Note to editors: For more information or interview requests, please email communications officer Marc Rosenberg at marcroseberg@bcha.org.uk or call 07435 088793.

About the Partnership

The Homelessness Partnership BCP is made up of more than 40 local organisations that have signed a charter committing "to end homelessness in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole by ensuring everyone has a safe place to live that they can call home".

It is driven by people with lived experience of homelessness, along with representatives of statutory bodies (council, police, health and probation), businesses, charities, faith groups, universities and educational institutions.

Visit <https://homelessnesspartnershipbcp.org> to find out more.