

Educational support project, London

Project dates: 2007–2010

There are thousands of children with no permanent home in Newham. This project will help give homeless children a better education, prospects and a future.

A severe housing shortage in Newham means some children spend their childhood in temporary housing. When families move, children are hauled out of school, and the pillars of stability in their lives – such as friends and a familiar neighbourhood – are knocked away.

This has a devastating effect on their schooling. They miss vital education as they wait for places in a new school. If they try to keep their place in the old school, they may face long and exhausting journeys to get there.

Underachieving in school can set children up for a lifetime of failure. This project will give families and children the practical support they need to help them achieve at school.



Photo: Jan Erik Posth

Homeless children miss on average a quarter of the school year.

We aim to get 450 homeless children in Newham back into school and achieving.

Project summary

- There were 6,947 children in temporary housing in the London borough of Newham in September 2006 – one of the highest figures in the country.
- Families can wait years for a permanent place, and children may have to move several times between temporary housing, damaging their chances of successful schooling.
- They are often out of school, face long waits for new places, or have to trek for miles to reach their old school.
- The Newham project aims to get children back into school quickly.
- It will give families practical help to get school places, and it will give children one-to-one support to build their confidence and ability to achieve.
- It will provide a blueprint for others to support the education of homeless children and to give them prospects and a future.

Shelter Keys to the Future



Support and stability

We will:

- work with education and housing departments to make sure homeless children can get school places more easily
- help parents navigate the education system to get their children back into school quickly
- support parents practically
 - with benefits advice and small emergency grants to cover the cost of transport and new uniforms
- help link children to support and services, such as extra help with schooling, and homework clubs
- co-ordinate any support from specialists that children need to remain in school and do well
- put together tailored, or more intensive support, for children who need it
- provide social, educational and fun activities to support children's learning and make sure they grow in confidence.

'It's not just about school; it's about their whole future. If you are doing well at school, your long-term prospects are much better, you are much more likely to achieve and get a job.'

Nurse adviser, Jane Cook

The powerful voices of children

Hearing what children themselves have to say about being homeless must be one of the most powerful and unforgettable ways of driving change. We will work with children to communicate their experiences to people who can make a difference: to head teachers and to local authority officers in housing, education and children's services. In this way, the project will help children have a direct influence on policy and practice.

Reading buddies

We will make sure children get extra help and one-to-one attention. Volunteers from the community and local businesses will act as reading buddies and mentors to encourage children to overcome obstacles, to develop and enjoy learning.

A blueprint for the future

The support we will provide children in Newham is just the start. The way we work with children and their families, with schools, local authorities, community groups and volunteers will create an effective model for improving the education of homeless children across the country.



'For four months we didn't go to school, we went to six houses – no, seven houses and six new schools.'

Emma, aged 10

What we hope to achieve...

- better school attendance and better school results
- children develop the confidence to learn and achieve
- fewer homeless children excluded from school
- greater awareness of the needs of homeless children within schools and housing departments
- a new model set up, tested and independently evaluated, to support the education of homeless children.

...and how

- 450 children will be helped to get back into school quickly and with minimum disruption
- 120 of these will have tailored, one-to-one support
- 50 education staff and 20 local authority officers will hear about homelessness directly from children
- homeless children will help develop ways for schools to meet their needs, and these will be promoted to schools
- support will be given not only to children, but to parents and families through information and practical help.

Making sure children are in school and achieving will give them a better chance of a positive future.