Launch of the Homeless Bill of Rights

Tuesday 23 October, 2018

Brighton and Hove Housing Coalition, in partnership with Housing Rights Watch, FEANTSA* and Just Fair are launching a Bill of Rights for the Homeless in the Hanover Room at the Brighthelm Centre at 2:30pm on Sunday 28thOctober 2018. (https://www.eventbrite.co.uk)

Human Rights are for the protection and the dignity of everyone, whatever their housing situation. However, we all know that in practice people who have the misfortune to become homeless are far to often treated with contempt and disregard, including by public officials and services. This Bill of Rights is intended as a reminder and challenge to everyone to treat our fellow citizens with respect and courtesy, and to do what we can to help those who are in this desperate situation.

We call on Brighton and Hove City Council to adopt this Bill of Rights, which has been developed by many homeless organisations across Europe, and to develop strategies and policies to make these rights effective and real for homeless people in our city. A number of cities across Europe, including Barcelona, have adopted it; we hope that our city will become the first British one to do so.

The Bill of Rights

The full text is attached. The words are not written in stone, and it may be amended and approved before it is finally (we hope) adopted by the city. In summary, the rights are these:

The Right to Housing

This is the first and most fundamental right, contained in human rights treaties to which the UK is a signatory, and the first commitment the Council must make is to work with the national government to end homelessness; but for the present that is only something we can work towards.

The Right to Shelter

While we work towards making the right to housing real, we must provide emergency accommodation and shelter enough that no one has to sleep rough.

The Right to Use Public Space

The Right to Equal Treatment

The Right to a Postal address

The Right to Sanitary Facilities

The Right to Emergency Services

The Right to a Vote

The Right to Data Protection

The Right to Privacy

The Right to Survival Practices

While people remain actually homeless, they must survive as best as they can, and they should not be criminalized for doing so. People should not be arrested for asking for help.

The Right to Respect for Personal Property

The belongings of a homeless person are entitled to the same respect and protection as everyone else's.

The Right to Life

It is so dangerous to life and health to be homeless that the average age of death is 43. Yet we live in a

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country where no record is kept of the deaths of homeless people and their deaths are rarely investigated. This right commits the Council to keeping a record of the deaths of homeless people (including those in temporary and emergency accommodation) and to ensuring those deaths are adequately investigated.

The future

We are inviting as many organizations and people as possible to attend the launch. Following the launch, we shall be calling on all the political parties to commit to adopting the Bill of Rights in their manifestos for next May's elections, and we shall be inviting everyone to sign up in support of the campaign.

After the launch on the 28th, we shall be trying to get all party support for the initiative. If the Council accepts the Bill of Rights, they will need to incorporate its principles into many of their policies and practices, and to work with other partner organizations to achieve its goals. Our organization, the Brighton & Hove Housing Coalition, will be campaigning to hold the Council to its promises, and in particular we envisage an annual audit in which we hope as many local organizations and campaigners as possible will participate, keeping the issues before the public eye and holding the public bodies involved to account.

Partners:

FEANTSA* - Housing Rights Watch - Just Fair

*The European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless.

Release Immediate.

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