

Homeless Outreach Channel 4 news clip video transcript – December 2014

Voiceover from Jackie Long, Channel 4 Social Affairs editor:

How to find a roof over your head, when your family life has crumbled, and the State is supposed to step in?

Elizabeth was just 13 when she says she was forced to leave home. She lived for a while with a variety of friends and extended family, but at 15 sought help from the Local Authority, ending up living in hostels for the next couple of years.

Quote from Elizabeth:

"I didn't feel safe at all. Simply because, the hostel would get raided because some of the young men that was living there would take drugs or they would sell drugs. And it's difficult when you're doing an apprenticeship and you have to get up in the morning, when 4 o'clock in the morning you've just had the police at your door, and I need to be up for 7."

Elizabeth says the authorities approach was that once she had somewhere to sleep, her case was closed.

Quote from Elizabeth:

"Because there was a roof over my head, I didn't need to be seen to move anywhere, because realistically it was "safe". Although I didn't feel safe being inside, because I had a roof over my head, to them it was safe – it was good enough."

Research by the children's charity Coram Voice suggests hers is not an isolated case. It claims, though the law makes clear such vulnerable children must be placed in safe accommodation and their other needs properly assessed, in too many cases this is simply not being done.

The picture painted is a stark one. Some of the most vulnerable children left homeless or in dangerous unsuitable accommodation expected to fend for themselves. The Local Authorities legally bound to protect them, clearly failing to do so.

Quote from Andrew Radford from Coram Voice:

"Last year we worked with over 200 children who had been homeless and who had not been properly helped by Local Authorities."

Question from Jackie Long:

"And what is the reality of that situation with those young people?"

Andrew Radford response:

"The reality is they'll either be sleeping on the streets, or they'll be doing what they call sofa-surfing which in so many cases is sleeping in a car, riding the night buses, seeing if they can persuade the police to let them sleep in a cell, spending it in a hospital in A&E overnight or even some times in drug dens or sleeping with strangers just to find somewhere to sleep."