

Chloe's Story

It is impossible to imagine what homeless must be like for a child or young person. But there are over 4,000 children in homelessness in Ireland right now and it so important that their voices are heard too. We asked Chloe* (aged 14) if she would be willing to share a little bit about what homelessness was like for her.

Shine
A
Light

FOCUS
Ireland

Bord Gáis
Energy

Did you ever wonder what homelessness must feel like for a child?

Chloe is just 14 years old. Every day after school, while her classmates made their way home, she went to a local shopping centre.

Then she waited there. Sometimes for hours.

She waited until she was sure that all her friends had gone and nobody would see her cross the road and enter the emergency accommodation, where she and her family had been living for months.



“Her greatest fear was that her friends would find out she was homeless. That terrified her” Chloe's mum

The truth is that children can't understand homelessness. All they know is how terrifying it can be. Chloe is just one example. Sadly her story is all too common.

She and her family were forced into homelessness two years ago when their landlord put their home up for sale. That's all it took. One phone call to say, “We're selling”.

They were placed in emergency accommodation where they had one room between the four of them. That's where they lived for little over a year.

Chloe's way of coping with the stress was to focus all her attention on keeping her homelessness a secret. She separated herself from her friends. Made excuses why they couldn't hang out. Social media, and even her phone, became things to fear. This is what she wrote:

Not having a home is horrible. I hated it. I still hate it. And I will always hate it. Even on good days when we were playing a match or when things were good. I just kept thinking, I have no home. And that's it. I felt like crying. But I didn't. I didn't want people to know.

Il my friends have a home. Everyone I know has a home. Why can't I?

After school, when we were in the hotel, I would stand across the road and look at it. I didn't want anyone to see me go in. So I would walk past and keep walking. Sometimes I would stop out for ages. I was like, no way is anyone seeing me go in there. NOT A CHANCE!

I was so scared my mates in school would find out. Like seriously, imagine they all knew I was homeless, imagine what they would be saying about me. That would be the worst.

I learned how to make excuses at school. When we got lifts going to matches I always got them to pick me up at the shops. I never had my Snap map on. One time I left it on and people could see my location. I was so scared my mates might have seen it.

I hated the room we had in the hotel. We were all stuffed in there all the time. You weren't even allowed to be in there on your own. Mum or dad always had to be there. I had to go into the bathroom to change. I had no privacy. That's not right.

I remember the day mam took us in the care and said, "I want to show you something". She drove up into this little estate and pulled up next to some houses. Then she says, "What do you think of your new home?". I didn't believe it. I swear to God I thought she was messing. But it was true.

We had to wait to move in but sometimes I would go there after school on my own. I just wanted to look at it. Once I met the people next door and told them I was moving there. They were very nice. But mostly I just wanted to check it was still there and that no one else had moved in.

I live there now. We still have to find our own house. And that will happen. I know it. But for now, this is home. And I love it. It's great here now. Even though sometimes I still wake up at night feeling anxious and everything.

When I leave school, I'm going to go to college and get a degree and a good job that pays really well. Because I'm never letting that happen again.

Homelessness is horrible. It really is the worst thing ever. I don't want to ever go back.

It has been nearly two months since Chloe and her family moved into one of our Focus Ireland Supported Emergency Homes. Life is so much better now. She's back playing basketball. And she tells everyone where she lives now.

