

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Torbay takes community action to end street homelessness

VOLUNTEERS are mobilising across Torbay England this week (April 24-28) to speak to rough sleepers, identify their needs and help them in to stable accommodation.

More than 30 volunteers, working with Torbay Council and local charities, will be going out at dawn and late evening, to try and engage with rough sleepers.

Torbay is taking local action as part of the European End Street Homelessness Campaign - a movement of cities working together to permanently house Europe's most vulnerable people and end chronic street homelessness by 2020.

The European campaign was set up in 2015 by the Building and Social Housing Foundation (BSHF) at a time when, despite numerous efforts by governments and charities/NGOs, homelessness – and in particular street homelessness – was increasing across Europe. Since then BSHF has worked with different cities to take action to end street homelessness, including Brussels, Glasgow, London and Valencia.

Torbay, England, joined the campaign in November 2016, after they had seen a dramatic increase in rough sleeping. While this reflects a national trend, Torbay showed a higher percentage increase compared to England as a whole. As well as the daily involvement of many local volunteers, representatives from other European campaign cities such as Brussels and Brighton will be visiting Torbay this week in advance of running their own campaigns.

Torbay Councillor Mark King said: "This is a compassionate response from Torbay and a community effort to address the concerns around rough sleeping. The information obtained via volunteers will help us to inform what services we need to deliver. We are excited to host our colleagues from Brussels and Brighton who have also signed up to this campaign."

Isobel Ashford, Deputy Director of BSHF said: "We are inspired by the dedication and hard work of everyone involved in the Torbay week of action, and their determination to do something as a community to bring about an end to street homelessness."

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Notes for Editors

For further information on the European campaign and the cities involved contact: Linda Butcher (Linda.Butcher@bshf.org) or Isobel Ashford (Isobel.Ashford@bshf.org) at BSHF or on +44 (0)1530 510444.

For further information on Torbay and the local campaign email teshcampaign@outlook.com or call 07900 681 983. You can find the campaign on Facebook: www.facebook.com/TESHCampaign, Twitter: [@TQcampaign](https://twitter.com/TQcampaign), or on their website: www.teshcampaign.wordpress.com

About BSHF: Founded in 1976 Building and Social Housing Foundation is a catalyst for change. It identifies great ideas and the best housing practice from around the world and seeks to transfer those ideas and practices to places where they are needed most. It runs the World Habitat Awards and programmes to promote Community-led Housing and End Street Homelessness. Visit: www.bshf.org

About the Torbay Campaign team: In addition to Torbay Council, eight organisations have come together. Shekinah and Westward Housing have been joined by representatives of volunteer groups Torbay Street Pastors, Friends of Factory Row, PATH, The Haven, Smile at a Stranger and TOWNS.

About the European campaign: During 2016, the European Campaign achieved some early and inspirational successes:

- over 900 individuals who are homeless and sleeping on the streets participated in a survey that helped to identify their needs and aims to improve their access to housing
- over 1,000 local volunteers took part in night-time survey teams, demonstrating the commitment and concerns of local residents about those who are the most vulnerable in their communities
- the survey findings are being used to improve commissioner and charity strategies and services, and speed up access to housing for those individuals sleeping on our streets

Find out more about the European End Street Homelessness Campaign on the BSHF website at: www.bshf.org/the-campaign-so-far

A summary of our 2016 external evaluation report about the campaign is available here: www.bshf.org/european-end-street-homelessness-campaign-pilot-external-evaluation-report