

## *HOMELESS BILL OF RIGHTS*

In line with international human rights treaties and in line with national law and the democratic and humanist values that underpin it, we, the city Council of ..... declare:

It is the constant concern of the city Council of ..... to respect and uphold the rights of people who are experiencing homelessness, in particular their right to housing. While working towards that goal we are determined not to contribute in any way to the harsh and inhuman conditions too often experienced by people who do not have a place to live.

In common with cities throughout Europe, we are facing challenges in providing sufficient social and affordable housing and even the necessary number of beds in emergency accommodation. The burdens of joblessness and poverty are increasingly falling on a proportion of our population and pressure on public resources and services is growing.

Given this situation, we believe it is the responsibility of all individuals, businesses and organisations, and of all local authorities, including our city authority, to maximize their contribution to improving the living conditions of people who are homeless, and to lessen the negative effects of homelessness.

To help achieve this, the Council believes that it is important to re-state that every person who is experiencing homelessness is entitled to the same treatment as any other resident in the city area. No one should be denied further rights because they are homeless.

In particular we commit ourselves to working towards realizing the following rights:

- I. The most important right a homeless person has is **to exit homelessness**. Services supporting access to appropriate housing solutions must be accessible to all homeless people. In partnership with other competent public authorities, the Council shall work to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of housing solutions to meet need.
- II. Where housing cannot be immediately provided, **access to decent emergency accommodation** must be accessible to all people who are homeless. The Council is committed to working with the competent public authorities to ensure that there is sufficient emergency accommodation available to all, so that no one is forced to sleep rough for want of a bed.
- III. People who are homeless should have the same **right to use public space** and to move freely within it, with no greater restrictions than apply to others. This includes, but is not limited to, access to pavements, public parks, public transport and public buildings on the same terms as any other resident of the Council area. The same rules that apply to resting in public space should apply to everyone, with no additional restriction upon people who are homeless.

- IV. The Council is committed to ensuring that their staff and services uphold the **right to equal treatment for all**, without discriminating against those who do not have a home.
- V. People who are homeless often experience additional denial of rights in the labour market and provision of public services because they cannot provide a postal address. The Council is committed to **providing an effective postal address** of last resort to people who are homeless and require this assistance.
- VI. Where the Council is unable to provide appropriate services linked to the emergency accommodation, we commit to providing for the **right to access basic sanitary facilities** – running water (drinking fountains), showers and toilets sufficient to allow for the level of hygiene appropriate to maintaining human dignity.
- VII. The **right to emergency services** – social services, health services, the police and the fire service – on equal terms with any other resident of the Council area, without being discriminated against because of their housing situation or their physical appearance.
- VIII. The **right to vote**, to be included on the electoral register and to be given the necessary documents to prove their identity when voting in elections, without being discriminated against because of their housing situation.
- IX. The **right to data protection**, with their data only shared by public and other services with their consent and only for the purposes of providing services and solutions to them. Homeless people have the same right as other citizens to exercise control over their personal details, particularly their health information, their criminal record if they have one, their housing trajectory and their private life and family history.
- X. The **right to privacy** must be respected and protected to the fullest extent possible in all types of accommodation, including communal accommodation structures and informal accommodation lived in by homeless people. The Council is committed to working to ensure that all emergency accommodation provided can deliver on this right.
- XI. **The right to carry out practices necessary to survival** within the law. While the Council strives for a city in which such practices are not necessary, we recognize that where people have no other option they will seek support from other people through begging or forage for discarded food to survive. Such survival practices should not be criminalized in their own right, banned or arbitrarily confined to specific areas.

**Date:**

**Signature:**