



Annual Report

2019 - 2020



**Bromley
Brighter Beginnings**

Registered Charity #1162113

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Our Mission

Bromley Brighter Beginnings (BBB) envisions a world without poverty, in which parents do not have to struggle to provide their children with the most basic items.

Using a referral system, BBB provides essential baby, child and household items to local families in financial hardship, including those living in domestic violence refuges.

Our mission is to relieve the pressure of poverty on these families in a practical way. We signpost families to other sources of support where appropriate.

It has been shown that if people feel supported in a crisis, they are more likely to feel engaged with, and to contribute positively to, their society in the future. Relieving stress, anxiety and depression in parents has a positive impact on the early experiences of their children and gives those children a better start in life.

Our focus is on the London Borough of Bromley, but we are keen to provide guidance and support to volunteers setting up similar projects in other areas, whenever needed.

In the longer-term, BBB's mission includes raising awareness about the level of poverty in the London Borough of Bromley. We do this by sharing relevant information with our supporters, and by liaising with the press on topics associated with childhood poverty in the UK.

We rely on a **team of volunteers**, as well as an ever-increasing number of supporters, the members of our **Facebook group**. We are also supported by many **local businesses, churches, schools and other groups**.

BBB is committed to **environmentally-friendly practices**, in particular facilitating the recycling of baby- and child-related items that the original owners no longer use.

BBB relies on the **power of the community**, made up of individuals who recognise that change starts with the actions we choose to take ourselves.

"I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR EXISTING. YOU ARE SPECIAL AND HAVE BROUGHT BACK MY SMILE AND MY CONFIDENCE. YOU ARE RIGHT, IT IS NOT A SHAME TO ASK FOR HELP. I'M GRATEFUL THAT DESTINY PUT YOU IN MY LIFE..."

BBB Recipient

Chair's Report

I would like to start by saying a massive thank you to everyone involved with Bromley Brighter Beginnings (BBB), whether as a volunteer or as a supporter. The last six months has been an incredibly stressful time for everyone, but especially so for families already living in poverty, facing increased job losses, and in many cases, increased domestic abuse. Thanks to your dedication and generosity, BBB has continued to operate throughout this unprecedented crisis. We have seen some very sad cases recently, and it can often be very upsetting for our volunteers to witness the conditions in which some children live, and the distress of their parents. But even while Covid-19 has turned our world upside down, our volunteers have continued to go out there and get essential items to families who need them. I would also like to thank my co-trustees, who have worked really hard behind the scenes during this crisis, adapting our procedures as necessary to keep BBB running whilst also keeping our volunteers, supporters, and the families we support, as safe as possible.

Sadly, many charities are struggling now because of loss of funding. We are fortunate that we have few overheads, because we are all volunteers and we have no premises, and that we have continued to receive very generous

donations from our many individual and corporate supporters, as well as funding grants. It is clear that we are going into this new reality with a really strong team of fantastic volunteers and supporters. As we anticipated when Covid-19 started, our referrals have increased dramatically. This is only likely to continue with the economy as it is. I am grateful that BBB will be there to help those who need us more than ever in these difficult times.

EMMA MARTIN
Chair

"A MASSIVE THANK YOU TO YOU AND YOUR TEAM FOR MAKING IT HAPPEN. OH DEFINITELY, YOU MADE ME FEEL LIKE A MOTHER, BEING ABLE TO CLOTHE AND FEED MY KIDS. I CAN'T STOP THANKING YOU AND YOUR AMAZING TEAM!!!

BBB Recipient

Treasurer's Report

This year we have received a record income of just over £64,000, which is almost £30,000 more than last year, and this considerable increase could not have been timelier in light of the current world situation. We anticipate a surge in referrals as we believe many more families will need our help due to the effects of Covid-19. Trying to estimate and predict the upcoming increased need has been discussed by the trustees and has been virtually impossible. Despite this, we will continue to try to help as many families as we can that need our help, and this will not change.

Our spend for this year doubled from last year, which comes as no great surprise considering the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. As always, our running costs are minimal, and that is something we work hard to ensure is the case. Our only costs are insurance, email and web hosting, and Big Yellow storage fees.

Grants

This year we received £22,676 in grants, and I would like to thank Jenny Manning, our Fundraising Volunteer, for her tireless effort in working to secure these much-needed funds. She is responsible for a nearly £10,000 increase on the grant amounts we received last year.

Grants of note included:

- The London Community Fund giving us £10,000 which was ring-fenced for COVID-19, and
- a £5,000 grant from the Trafigura Foundation, which came about through a supporter coming to our hamper packing day last year.

Donations and Fundraising

We received nearly £25,000 in donations, which is again almost double last year's amount. Our donations came in many shapes and sizes:

- Waitrose's green tokens scheme raised £240;
- Southborough Primary school nominated us as their charity of the year raising over £1,500 - thanks to volunteer Helen Scothern,
- St Nicholas Church in Chislehurst raised £1,200 by their retiring reverend requesting donations to us instead of a leaving gift, and
- the Mercers who donated £100 through their matched funding scheme, courtesy of our Chair Emma's, sister.

We also have to thank MFS International and Mark Griffin, yet again, as this year they donated £6,500 continuing their longstanding

Treasurer's Report

and much appreciated support of the charity.

We have started to see the benefits of having a dedicated Communications and Fundraising team. The combination of growing our Facebook followers and being more active on Facebook outside of referral posts has meant when we have asked for donations towards particular items or referrals our supporters have responded with such generosity.

Being active in the community by visiting schools, Rotary clubs, running clubs, etc, and talking about our work has enabled us to engage with and gain new supporters. Telling our supporters more about what we do, and our current issues, has meant we see a more emotive response in general, so a huge thank you to all the team for their work in this area.

JustGiving has worked so well for us, bringing in almost £14,000. This year we have seen more independent fundraisers via JustGiving such as quiz nights, 0-5k run challenges and even a little boy who did a sponsored silence. We do also have supporters who regularly give each month through JustGiving, as well as directly into our account.



School Uniform

This year, where possible, we have split out the costs of school uniform to highlight that they are one-third of our referral spend. We expect this figure to be much higher for the coming year as we anticipate many more families will need our help due to the effects of Covid-19. School uniforms are not easy referrals to take on; they can be quite complicated and time consuming, as well as requiring tight turnaround times to ensure the children can get into school.

As an aside, we thought it would be appropriate to discuss school uniforms and how we are currently approaching them moving into 2021. Traditionally, we have always sought generic items from our supporters through requests on our Facebook group or used our stock of nearly new items. For branded items, we purchased them to ensure the confidentiality of the family is maintained, as requesting items via our Facebook group may compromise that. However, we are very aware of the stigma that can be attached for some children and families with regards to having to wear ill-fitting clothes, receiving free school meals and wearing shoes that may not fit correctly. We are also aware that if a family requires our help, they are vulnerable and very possibly will be experiencing a challenging time in many areas of their life.

It's important to reflect on this, and the trustees have discussed it at length. One mum told one of our trustees that due to the pandemic, her children would receive their free school meals in a brown paper bag, highlighting them and making them stand out. The mum feared that her daughters would be forever be labelled as the 'brown bag girls'.

Mental health is something we take very seriously. We feel that ensuring children start school with shoes that fit "their" feet and have been tried on is not just physically important, but mentally as well. Something as small as a shoe fitting can mean more to the parents or carers than the children. We want to look holistically at the issues we are facing and see whether we can address other problems as well as the actual tangible needs. For instance, would allowing a mum to dress her child in new uniforms help lift her mood, her self-esteem or improve her mental health? We feel it would.

We have seen a rise in uniform referrals, especially from women fleeing domestic violence, and these women often arrive in a refuge with virtually nothing; what they have taken is usually only items for the children, not themselves. Often these women are broken physically and mentally. If we can help them feel they are rebuilding their lives and give them some of



their self-esteem back, we want to do that. The children have witnessed things no children should see, and find themselves in a strange place, away from friends, family and their belongings, so again you can see how this potentially could affect their mental health.

We have decided to ensure we buy new school shoes and, if possible, give families a voucher to allow them the independence to do this themselves. We also realise that things like water bottles, lunch bags, and stationery feed into a child's identity, so we have now included these within our referral form as items that can be requested. Whilst we realise this decision brings a more significant financial impact to our balance sheet, we feel it's outweighed by the mental health benefits we can achieve from changing our approach. We hope people support and understand why we implemented this change and how it can impact entire families more positively, giving them a sense of dignity and self-esteem which may be lacking due to their circumstances.

Referrals

Referrals spend was over £10,000, with at least £8,000 being spent since March and throughout the lockdown period of the pandemic. We decided very early in the lockdown to not accept donations, meaning we had to purchase all the items for every referral, and often had them delivered direct to the referred families. As lockdown restrictions eased, we were able to use two approaches, meaning FLV's could take donations if they wanted to and were comfortable doing so, and if not they could purchase the needed items. Thankfully we had secured a £10,000 'emergency support' grant reasonably early into the lockdown which gave us some reassurance, as we had no idea how much we would need to be spending during this time. Some of what we purchased may have been required, but the spend would have been far lower if we had not had to change our policies due to the lockdown.

Newborn Packs and Stock

We spent double the amount on newborn packs this year over last, and again over £2,000 was spent during the lockdown. Ordinarily, we may have run an appeal or a wish list to increase stock levels, but we felt it was not appropriate in the circumstances. Our newborn packs were reviewed, and the costs have risen, as we now include a changing

travel changing mat, more vests, nappies and knickers.

A big thank you to Amanda Ashford, our Stock Coordinator, who has taken on the newborn packs, as well as our other stock, and keeps a constant inventory of their components in storage. She has reorganised our storage room to make referrals more manageable and given FLV's options on how to source items. By working with supporters asking them to store offered items, as well as keeping a constant stock of the much-requested items, we have reduced our spend; meaning we can stretch the money to help more families.

Christmas Hamper Appeal

Our Christmas hamper appeal was bigger and better than ever before, and that is all due to the hard work of Trustee Nancy Lengthorn. Our spend this year was £2,584, which included food and administrative costs. Our supporters purchased £5,500 worth of toys, PJs, and books from our Amazon wish list, which allowed us to create over 90 hampers for local families throughout the borough. Our hampers are a powerful way of engaging supporters and raising awareness that many families can't afford to have a Christmas. Giving a Christmas to families that may otherwise not have had one always justified our spend.

Volunteer Training

The training costs for this year went to professional safeguarding training for all our volunteers. Thank you to everyone for attending, it's never a pleasant topic but it's one that is so important.

The Future

We head into this new financial year with approximately £42,000 in the bank, which sounds a lot, but we are going into this year virtually blind. We have no way of measuring the impact Covid-19 will have on families in our area – how many and to what extent.

As always, if anyone has any ideas on how we can raise funds, sponsorship or recycling schemes, partnerships, or the like, then please do let me or one of the members of our Communications & Fundraising team know. As an example, we registered with PayPal for their charity scheme and last year it raised nearly £200; this year it was £800. Any amount, big or small, always helps.

We would like to thank Rob Mc Partlin, our accountant, who audits our accounts for free. This year he audited two years in one, as we need this year's audited very quickly to satisfy a grant requirement, so thanks again.

I would like to thank every single member of the BBB team for all their tireless work, especially this year in the weirdest and most challenging of times. I'd also like to give a special

thanks to my fellow Trustees. A charity of this size and reach takes a great deal of behind the scenes work, and our trustees' WhatsApp chat is continually pinging. Their passion and dedication are incredible.

As Team BBB, we are such a powerful force! We don't have an office, we all work as a team but very individually to keep things moving along, we are all volunteers juggling life, work, family and so much more. Being part of BBB is a big undertaking. A huge thank you to each volunteer for their efforts, as the work we have done, and the amount of families we have helped, is remarkable.

Thanks again to you all and here's to another great year for BBB and the families we help.

TRACY GRIFFIN

Trustee & Treasurer

**"JUST WANTED TO SAY A HUGE
THANK YOU, ESPECIALLY TO
NANCY, WHO DELIVERED
SCHOOL ITEMS & A CLARKS'
VOUCHERS FOR US TODAY. WE
CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH. IF
WE CAN HELP IN ANY WAY IN
THE FUTURE TO FUNDRAISE
PLEASE ASK, AS WE WOULD
LOVE TO GIVE BACK."**

BBB Recipient

Financial Report

Bromley Brighter Beginnings

RECEIPT & PAYMENT ACCOUNTS 01 AUGUST 2019– 31 JULY 2020

SECTION A – RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

	Receipts	Payments	Net
Donations	£24,915.79	£0.00	£24,915.79
Monthly Donations	£800.00	£0.00	£800.00
JustGiving	£13,932.96	£0.00	£13,932.96
For Good Causes	£686.49	£0.00	£686.49
Collection boxes	£206.11	£0.00	£206.11
AmazonSmile	£55.72	£0.00	£55.72
PayPal	£856.36	£0.00	£856.36
Grants	£22,676.00	£0.00	£22,676.00
Sponsorship	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Events	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
AGM	£0.00	-£29.45	-£29.45
Referrals	£0.00	-£10,349.77	-£10,349.77
School Uniform	£0.00	-£2,218.19	-£2,218.19
Enhanced Support	£0.00	-£350.00	-£350.00
Newborn Packs	£0.00	-£3,513.00	-£3,513.00
Advertising	£0.00	-£190.94	-£190.94
Bed for Every Child	£0.00	-£31,600.06	-£31,600.06
Christmas Hampers	£0.00	-£2,583.87	-£2,583.87
BCWA	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Training	£0.00	-£177.37	-£177.37
Team Development	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Running Costs	£0.00	-£536.38	-£536.38
Total	£64,129.43	-£51,549.03	£12,580.40
Opening Bank Balance	1 August 2019	£31,110.50	
Closing Bank Balance	31 July 2020	£42,475.74	

Volunteer Report

At Bromley Brighter Beginnings our volunteers are our lifeblood – as a completely volunteer-run organisation, we simply couldn't do any of the work we do without them, and we are so grateful for the time, energy, passion, dedication and determination our volunteers devote to their roles.

We sadly had to say goodbye to 6 of our Family Liaison Volunteers (FLVs) during the year, but we have just run a very successful recruitment campaign, and five new FLVs will be joining our team very shortly, boosting our numbers from 6 current FLVs to 11.

These new volunteers will specifically focus on the Orpington area as we receive a lot of referrals for families living there, but we will benefit from a boost to our FLV pool in general, especially

to cope with the increasing volume of referrals we are receiving these days.

Two members of our Fundraising & Communications team also had to stand down, but we have been fortunate to have a new volunteer join us to help with social media, community engagement and fundraising; and we are also in the process of recruiting for a new role – an administration volunteer – which would help our 'behind the scenes' work run more smoothly and efficiently.

During the year we also introduced a new position which has proved extremely valuable – Amanda, our Stock Coordinator, has brought order out of chaos in our storage unit at Big Yellow, and has enabled us to develop a database of items held by supporters that our FLVs can draw on. She has also taken on responsibility for organising the bedding to go with our Bed for Every Child programme which has been very helpful.

Thank you also to Maureen who has recently ended her volunteering time with us – we were very grateful to her for making her garage available to store some of the lovely buggies, including the rare and sought-after category of double buggy, that our supporters donated to us.

I'd like to finish by placing on record a huge thank you, on behalf of all the BBB Trustees, to our volunteers – Team BBB goes from strength to strength and it is a pleasure and an honour to work with this group of fantastic women to help us achieve our aims and harness the power of the local community to help local families in need.

LORELEI FREEMAN

Trustee & Volunteer Coordinator

Referrals Report

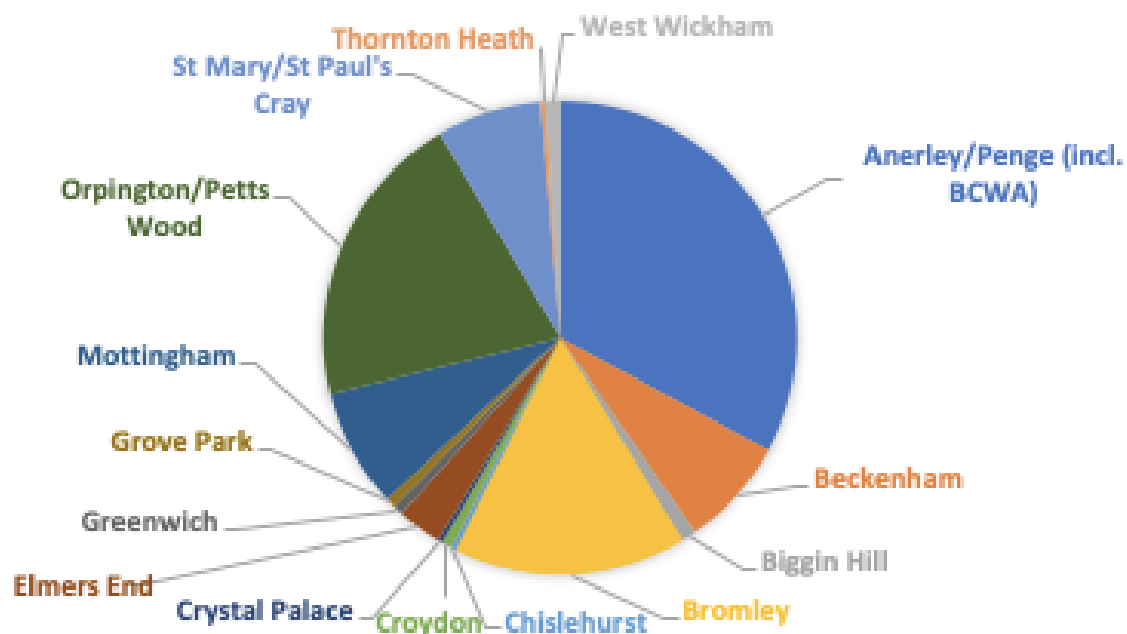
This reporting period, 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020, we have had 286 referrals, which is an increase of 32% on last year.

The referrals are broken down by area in the chart below. It's worth noting that the Anerley/Penge area includes the confidential addresses from Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid which are all recorded as their office in Penge. When that is taken into account our biggest area is Orpington/Petts Wood and the Crays closely followed by Bromley. It's a broadly similar spread to last year.

The few referrals that lie outside Bromley Borough borders all remained under Bromley Social Services and were items delivered directly from a supplier rather than by our volunteers.

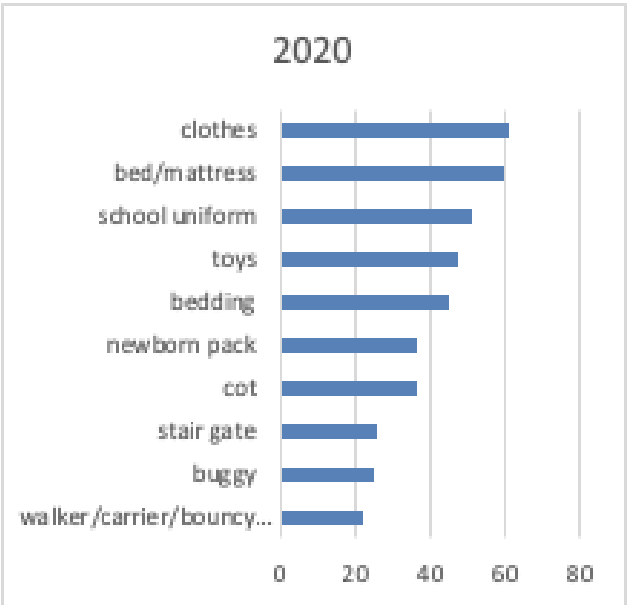
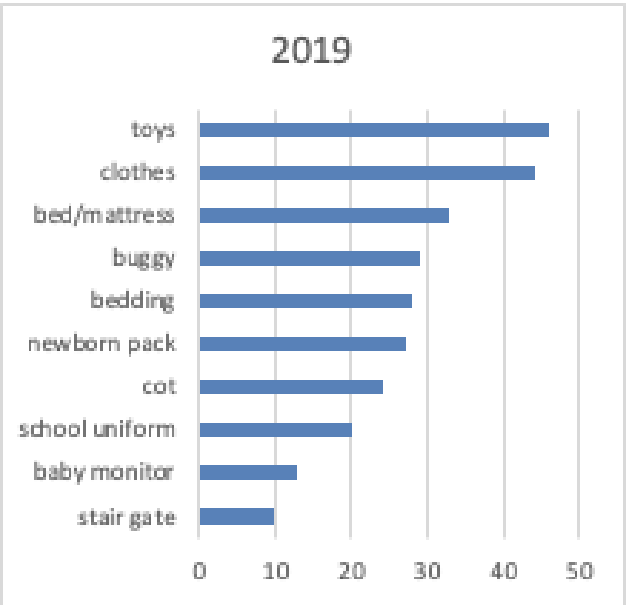
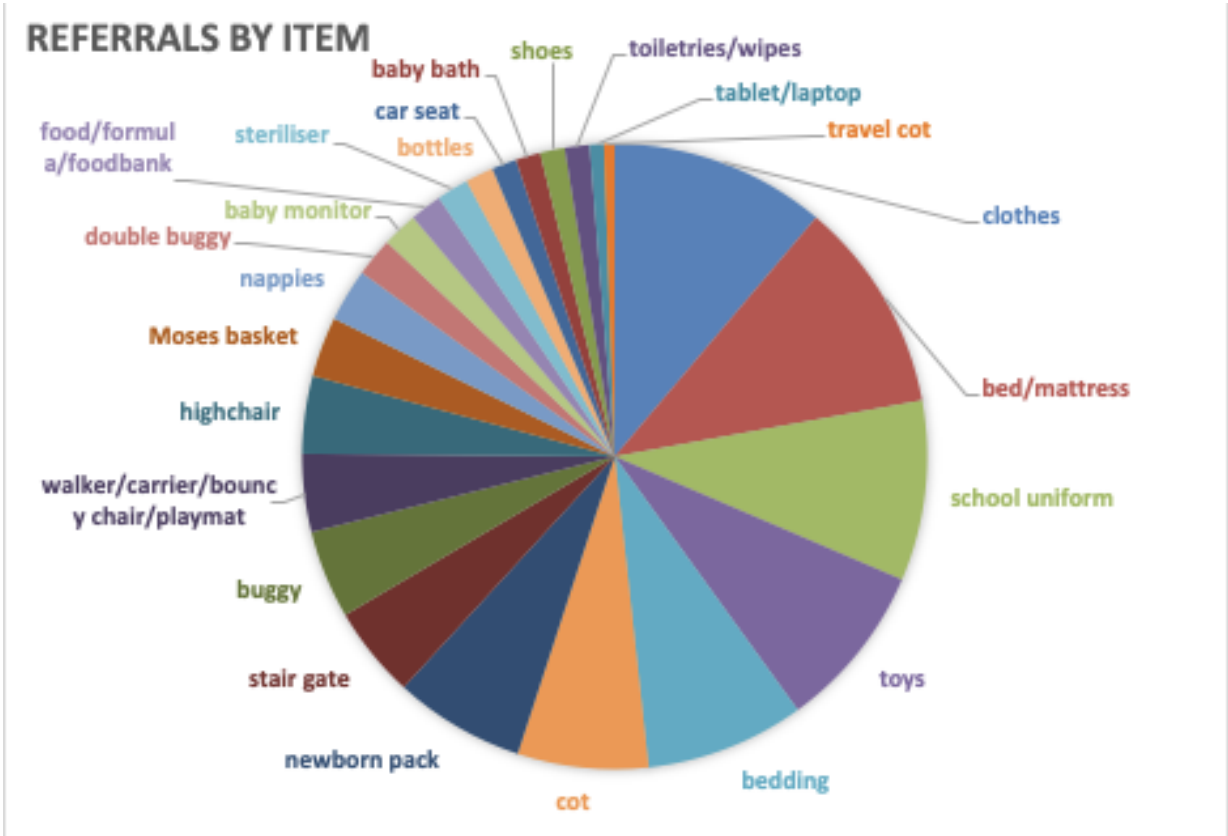
REFERRALS BY AREA

in Referrals*



For referrals broken down by item, most of our requests are still for clothes, toys, bedding and newborn packs. We have had a sharp increase this year in the amount of school uniform requests that we have received, moving from the 8th to the 3rd most requested item. Although our requests for buggies have dropped down this chart, the actual number of buggies requested has not dropped, but remained almost static on last year.

LUCY KENNEDY
Referrals Coordinator



Reports cover the period 1st September 2019 to 31st August 2020.

Bed for Every Child Update

Bromley Brighter Beginnings has successfully continued the Bed for Every Child programme to provide children across the Borough with a clean, comfortable bed. Despite the pandemic resulting in our supplier being closed for nearly 3 months this year, we have managed to provide:

- 42 single beds
- 27 bunk beds
- 13 mattresses for existing beds
- 3 double beds

These beds were provided at a cost of £28,447, an increase of £13,060 from last year. The main increase has come from demand for bunk beds (we only supplied 3 bunk beds in 2018/19). Our bunk beds are assembled in the family's home by the owners of Surrey Beds, which once again highlights why we need a trustworthy and discreet supplier.

Coupled with the fact that the beds are very good quality, and delivery times are quick and convenient for our clients, I propose that we continue to use Surrey Beds for the forthcoming year.

Feedback from referrers and clients has once again been a combination of joy, relief and gratitude. We continue to hear of children sleeping in old, broken, dirty beds or on the floor.

The families we help simply do not have the money to buy beds for their children and there appears to be no Local Authority funding to provide these. It highlights that the Bed for Every Child programme is becoming an essential service that our Local Authority relies on. Whilst this makes for difficult reading, it highlights that Bromley Brighter Beginnings must continue to source grants and sponsors to continue to provide beds for the poorest families in the Borough.

MADELEINE HAY

Trustee & Bed for Every Child
Coordinator



2019/20 Impact Report



23

VOLUNTEERS

35

NEWBORN PACKS
PROVIDED

72

BEDS PROVIDED

286

FAMILIES HELPED

5,300

FACEBOOK
SUPPORTERS