



**Bromley
Brighter Beginnings**

Annual Report 2020 – 2021



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Our Mission

Bromley Brighter Beginnings envisions a world 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 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 practises, 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.



Chair's Report

It has been nearly ten years since we started passing on packs of toiletries and preloved items like cots. In the time that we have been operating we have grown into a much bigger, more well-established charity and we now provide things like children's beds, Christmas hampers, school uniforms and much more.

This year has been a challenging but exciting one for BBB. We have continued to support families in the local community throughout the pandemic and have also worked on two new campaigns, Child Food Poverty and a Healthy Home for Every Child, which further extend the support we are now able to offer.

As a result of the amount of work that BBB is now doing in the community, the Board of Trustees has made the decision to reorganise the way that we structure the charity at a management level. We have a newly formed management team which is going to be dealing with day-to-day issues, who will be answering to a more traditional Board of Trustees, meeting quarterly and dealing with strategy and higher-level financial management. As a result of that reorganisation, we have a vacancy for a Treasurer who would also be a Trustee.

I would like to pass my thanks on to our team of volunteers. We are entirely volunteer led with no paid staff. All our volunteers give their time generously, despite having so many other responsibilities. We often receive feedback from referrals and clients about how professional and hardworking our volunteers are and how they always go above and beyond to help the families they are supporting.

I also want to thank my fellow trustees. It is honestly a privilege to work with a group of such dedicated and passionate people, who give an incredible amount of time, usually behind the scenes to help people that they very rarely meet. We work very well together as a board, sharing opinions and making compromises with the

charity's shared goal in mind.

We could do none of what we do if we didn't also have the support of many other people in the wider community. We now have over 7200 members in our Facebook group who are our first port of call when we need items donated. We are also supported by many local businesses and organisations - the list of which is now very extensive!

Finally, I'd like to say a big thank you to all the professionals who refer families to us. We rely on you to identify and refer to us the families who genuinely need help and to provide us with the information that we require to give the support that is needed. Our referrers really are an integral part of how BBB operates.

BBB was founded on this concept of the community coming together to support its most vulnerable members and it is now hard to quantify the number of people who contribute in one way or another in this community effort. From the bottom of our hearts, we really do thank each and every one of you.

Whatever the future holds, the BBB volunteers will continue to do what we've always done - supporting families living in poverty to the best of our ability by providing them with practical support to help them to look after their children.

Emma Martin - Chair



Operating Throughout the Covid pandemic

It has, of course, been a very challenging year for BBB, as it has for everyone. It's been particularly tough for the families we support, and as you can imagine, we've sadly seen a big increase in the number of people needing our help.

We have managed to operate throughout the pandemic, partly because volunteering has been an authorised activity even during the strictest lockdowns, and partly because of the sheer determination of our volunteers, despite dealing with their own challenges as well.

We have of course had to make various adjustments to how we do things in order to keep our volunteers, and the families we're supporting, as safe as possible. For example, we made the difficult decision not to open last November's Christmas Hamper packing day to the general public. We prepared a risk assessment analysis, and our volunteers were able to pack the hampers wearing masks, maintaining social distance and keeping the church hall well ventilated.

We have conducted all our Trustees' meetings, and our monthly volunteers' meetings, by Zoom. We had a very enjoyable meeting with Mayor Hannah Gray in April, also via Zoom. We were able to get involved with the annual Toy Run organised by Bromley Children and Families' Forum and the West Kent Freemasons, because they had a well thought out plan involving time slots, social distancing and masks.

We received a National Lottery grant specifically to help people suffering as a result of the pandemic, so we provided 12 families with a 3-month package of support including supermarket vouchers, and 33 families with essential items, which were delivered directly to their homes.

The Covid crisis has impacted the families we've supported in various ways. For example, a single

mum who we had helped before contacted us because she had to self-isolate, was unable to work and was unpaid for two weeks as a result. The Trustees decided to provide her with an emergency package of supermarket vouchers, to get the family through this difficult period. She sent us this email, demonstrating the difference this made to her:

"I am reading this crying my eyes out! Thank you so much for your help and kindness! I'm literally ecstatic!... If you only knew how much worry and frustration I've been going through."

We also helped a family in which the dad had died suddenly of Covid, leaving mum and three children, including a newborn baby, destitute. Some families have fallen into poverty because the only wage-earner has lost their job.

The Covid pandemic has caused so many problems for people, and sadly it isn't over yet. We are particularly concerned about the temporary uplift of £20 a week being taken away from families from 5 October, but the furlough scheme is also coming to an end in the next few days, plus utility costs and food costs are rising.

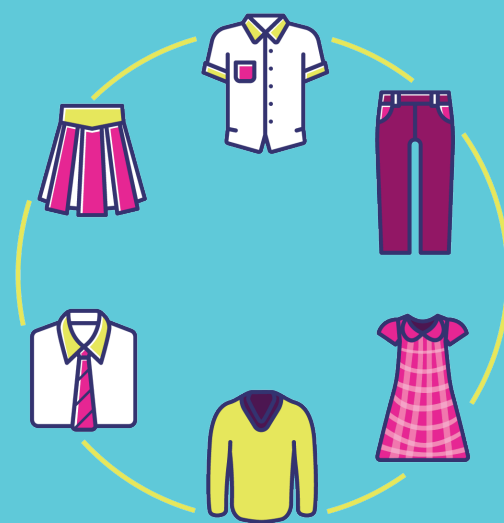
Mary Bragg, Trustee

Treasurer's Report

During the last accounting period, which ran from the beginning of August 2020 to the end July 2021, our spend grew by **249%**. Thankfully our income also grew, by **235%**, so we were able to support the increased costs. Some of that increased expenditure was in response to growing demand – indicative of the times we are in – but there has also been increased expenditure due to decisions we have made as a board about what BBB funds and how. It is worth noting, for comparison purposes, that during the previous year, our spend grew by **218%** and our income by **180%**. For this financial year, we have spent **£128,172.17** and received **£151,556.51**.

Last year we made the decision to purchase all senior school and college students' uniform as new. We have spent **£12,000** on uniforms, and that is due to an increase in demand along with our new stance on how we handle those requests.

In addition to school uniform, our referrals spend was just over **£11,500** so around the same on last year. We have had to sometimes purchase items new due to Covid restrictions, but our spend didn't really rise much more as we now have such a huge database of supporters willing to pass on their items to us, which is just amazing, as we pass on buggies worth hundreds of pounds in immaculate condition, Moses baskets, and beautiful clothes.



During 2020/21, we received nearly 40,000 in grants, which included:

£10,000 from the National Lottery Covid Grant fund, which was ring-fenced for Covid-19 and our 3-month support package, which we extended into this financial year.

£10,000 from Shaftesbury which was ring-fenced for our new campaign of Healthy Homes in collaboration with Bromley Relief In Need.



The Bed for Every Child Campaign received a fantastic £16,000 in grants, including from The Co-op, Hedley and **£10,000** from Weston Garfield.

In total, almost **27,400** was received in donations. This included:

- Nearly **£7,000** overall from different Masons groups;
- **£560** from Hawes Down School;
- **£5,000** from MFS; and
- **£1,320** from Farnborough Primary.

There are many people, schools, Rotary clubs, groups and companies that form part of these figures, and for every donation – we say a huge thank you.

We received a total of **62,334** from Just Giving donations this year; in our accounts, we have shown the split across the campaigns for better transparency. Around **15,000** of that total came from our End Child Food Poverty appeal over just one weekend.

We do also have supporters who give regularly each month through Just Giving, as well as directly into our account, and this year we have also seen more independent fundraisers via Just Giving.

One area that did rise more than we would have liked is our running costs. We have always prided ourselves on the fact that we were able to operate on around £500 a year. However this year you will see that our costs have risen to just over £1,600. This was a much-debated decision by the trustees, but it is an expense we are absolutely confident we had to make. We use a system called Airtable to run our referrals, our stock and all other data that we need in order to operate effectively, and due to our growth we have outgrown the free charity package. So we have had to pay £1,100 to expand the package we are on, so that we can continue to use the system in a way that is most efficient for BBB and allows us to capture all information and statistics. We are now producing more statistics which show the work we do and enable us to demonstrate our impact to potential funders. The other running costs consist of our insurance, Big Yellow Storage insurance, our website and email hosting.

Our newborn pack spend fell and is back to usual levels – that is due partly to now having a much more efficient way of running the stock we hold for the packs, and also our generous supporters who are able to donate items. We also receive new items from places like the **Hygiene Bank**, which saves us a lot of money. As an indication, our newborn packs cost approximately £120 each.

Our Christmas hamper appeal was bigger and better than ever before, with a record number of hampers being provided. The total spend was just over £11,000 but we received over £15,000 in donations towards it, plus we had a colossal wish list that as always our supporters bought up so generously. This left us with surplus funds to put towards this year's hampers, which we will be using for gifts suitable for teenagers, which are always fairly expensive.

As you will see, our biggest expense by far is the **Bed for Every Child Campaign**. The spend of £41,000 just highlights the extent of the problem, and how much work there is to be done.



Finally, our newest campaign - **A Healthy Home for Every Child** - was launched this year in collaboration with BRIN (Bromley Relief in Need). BBB donated £10,000 to the campaign as a starter pot, which combined with the Shaftesbury grant mentioned above, has enabled us to support many families with essential white goods for their kitchens.

The training costs of £177 is safeguarding training, which the entire team does every 3 years.

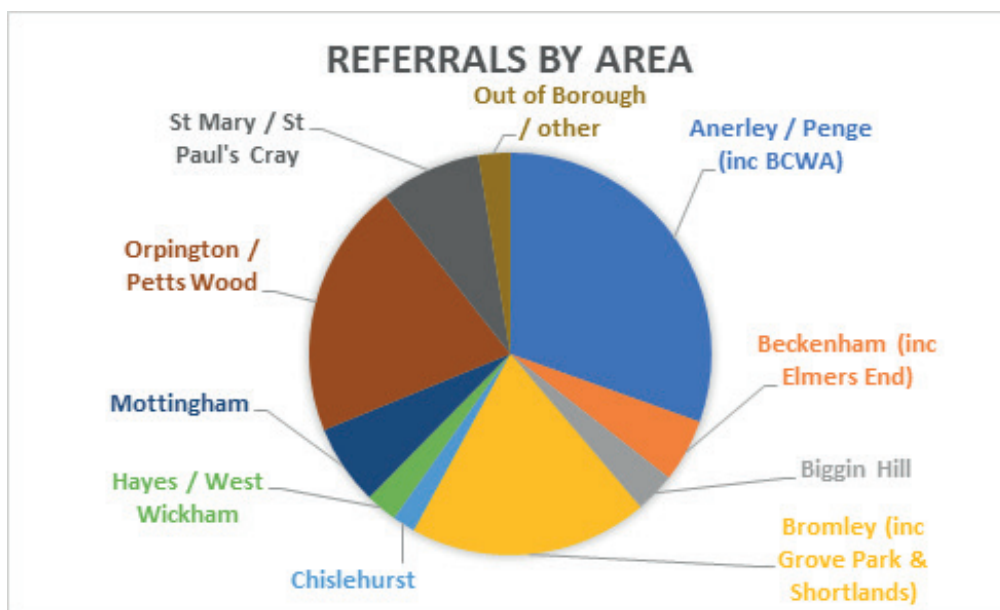
We headed into the new financial year, at the start of August, with approximately £65,860 in the bank, which sounds a lot, but with the rate of growth we are seeing as a charity, if we were to suddenly receive no income this would last less than 6 months, so we constantly need to balance raising funds when making decisions on how we spend. **Tracy Griffin - Treasurer**

	Breakdown		20/21	19/20	18/19
	Income	Outgoings			
Donations	27,435.06	0.00	27,435.06	24,915.79	12,428.37
Just Giving	29,423.29	-532.80	28,890.49	13,926.22	8,531.11
Grants	4,000.00	0.00	4,000.00	22,676.00	12,850.00
Covid 3 month Support grant	10,000.00	-10,738.73	-738.73	0.00	0.00
Referrals	0.00	-11,551.34	-11,551.34	-10,271.42	-5,762.05
School Uniform	744.56	-12,791.61	-12,047.05	-2,218.19	-40.08
Food Poverty	19,731.56	-23,300.00	-3,568.44	0.00	0.00
Basics Bundle	0.00	-105.25		-105.25	0.00
Just Giving Healthy Homes	1,489.84				
Healthy Homes	20,000.00	-5,602.99			
Total Healthy Homes	21,489.84	-5,602.99	15,886.85	0.00	0.00
Just Giving BFEC	2,076.37				
BFEC Grants	15,968.10	0.00			
Total BFEC	18,044.47	-47,570.04	-29,525.57	-31,600.06	-6,344.97
Just Giving Hampers	9,617.03				
Hampers	6,238.22				
Total Hampers	15,855.25	-11,161.46	4,693.79	-2,583.87	-893.60
Collection boxes	0.00	0.00	0.00	206.11	54.59
Amazon	364.11	0.00	364.11	55.72	8.68
Facebook	843.20	0.00	843.20	0.00	0.00
paypal	1,187.61	0.00	1,187.61	856.36	196.00
For Good causes	2,097.56	0.00	2,097.56	686.49	977.60
Monthly Donations	340.00	0.00	340.00	800.00	207.00
Sponsorship	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-53.94
Events	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
AGM	0.00	0.00	0.00	-29.45	-53.50
Enhanced support	0.00	0.00	0.00	-350.00	-7,302.28
Newborn Packs	0.00	-1,732.13	-1,732.13	-3,513.00	-1,779.03
Advertising	0.00	-536.00	-536.00	-190.94	-45.00
BCWA	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Training	0.00	-352.50	-352.50	-177.37	-249.00
Team Development	0.00	-572.91	-572.91	0.00	-401.39
Running Costs	0.00	-1,624.41	-1,624.41	-536.38	-618.92
Overall Income		151,556.51	151,556.51	64,122.69	35,253.35
Overall Spend		-128,172.17	-128,172.17	-51,470.68	-23,543.76
Net balance		23,384.34	23,384.34	12,652.01	11,709.59

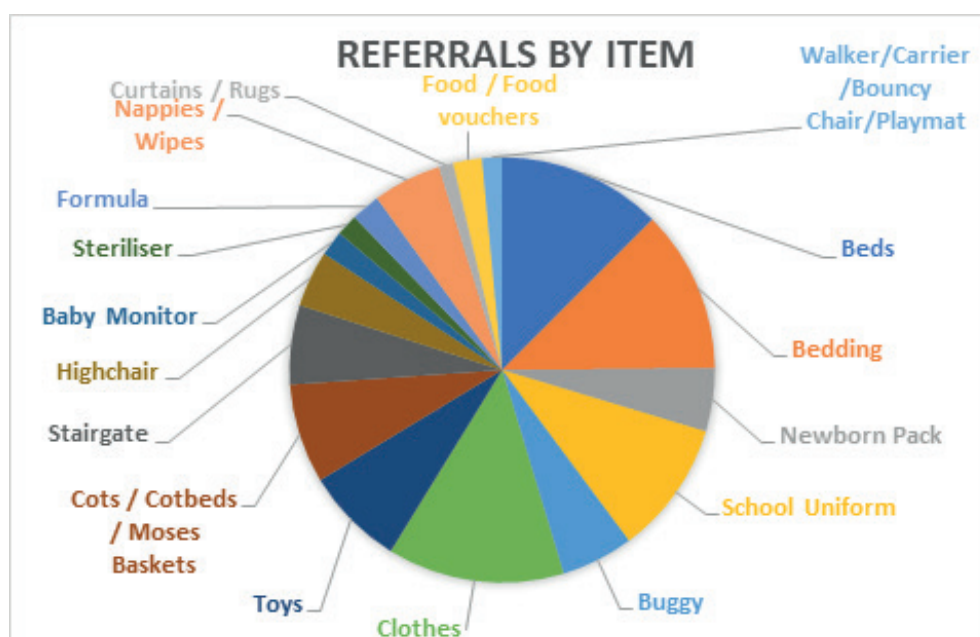
Referrals

In the reporting period, we have received **467** referrals, which is an increase of 47% on the same period last year. **This amounts to over 400 families that we have supported this year.**

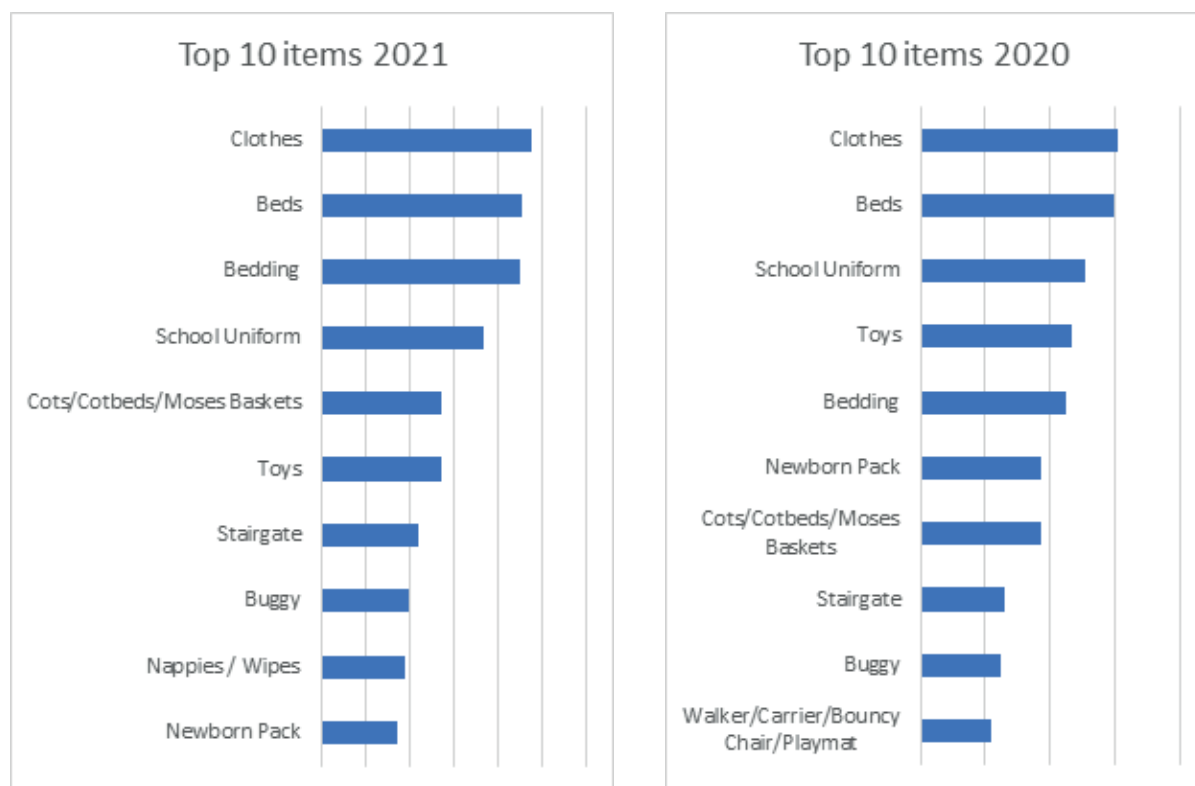
The referrals broken down by area appear in the chart below. Our areas most referred from remain Orpington/Petts Wood and the Crays, Bromley and Anerley/Penge, which includes our referrals from confidential Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid addresses. We have had a small increase in the number of referrals that are considered 'out of borough'. These were all for families who remain under Bromley Social Services and items were either directly provided by suppliers or delivery arranged by volunteers liaising with a child's school.



The referrals broken down by item requested also shows no great change, most areas have simply seen a percentage rise that is consistent with the increase in the general numbers of referrals.



There has been a noticeable increase in the number of families who need help with purchasing basic baby items such as nappies and wipes, while the position of Newborn Packs in our Top 10 has now dropped to 10th from 6th most requested last year, with the actual numbers of packs being supplied remaining the same. This does imply that families have recently been requiring support with baby essentials for a longer period than in previous years.



As our number of referrals have increased, we have also increased the use of Airtable, our online database, as a resource for sharing information among the team. As well as acting as our system for managing referrals and our inventory, it is now helping us disseminate information to volunteers regarding our policies, practices and processes. This has been invaluable in increasing the efficiency with which we all operate as we have continued to grow this year.

The flexibility of our Referral form has also been an asset. We have been able to add questions as needed and remove those that were not producing in the information we required. It has recently been updated to assist referrers who have previously referred to us, or for repeat referrals, by reducing the amount of information that needs to be entered. We hope to continue to develop this, in consultation with our most frequent referrers, to reduce the workload of referring to BBB, whilst continuing to collect all the information we need to fulfil the requests and to inform our statistics which in turn we use for funding applications.

Luce Kennedy - Referrals Coordinator



A Healthy Home for Every Child

This project came about as we were receiving an increasing number of requests for kitchen appliances such as fridges, freezers, ovens etc. Families were clearly not able to afford to purchase these items themselves – either when their existing appliance broke down, or when they were moved into accommodation that did not have white goods and needed to provide their own items.

The **Turn2Us 'Living Without' campaign** last year provided some shocking statistics - across the UK, a staggering 1.9 million people are living without a cooker; 2.8 million without a freezer, and almost 1 million without a fridge. Their report highlighted London as one of the country's worst-off areas in terms of 'appliance poverty'.

Linked to that, our work on **Child Food Poverty** had highlighted to us the importance of being able to store and prepare fresh food when you are able to get hold of it. It became apparent to us that many families do not have a fridge to store perishable food in, or a cooker with which to prepare hot meals. Can you imagine not having a working fridge for 5 months? Not being able to prepare hot meals for your children? Or having to cook all your meals in the microwave as you don't have a cooker? Sadly, this is the reality for many families across the borough of Bromley.

The white goods we wanted to provide would enable parents to feed themselves and the children in their care with healthy, nourishing, warm meals.

In partnership with **Bromley Relief in Need**, we planned and launched our newest campaign, '**A Healthy Home for Every Child**'.

BRIN already receive regular requests from people across the borough of Bromley for white goods, and this had been increasing during the pandemic, so we were delighted to be able to partner together to reach more

people and help to support struggling families with these essential items.

We set up an arrangement with a local business, Budget Appliances, who have been great at sourcing, delivering and installing the appliances we have requested.

As you can see, already since our launch in March this year, through to the end of July (as our accounts run), we have helped **24 households** by supplying them with one or more appliances (36 in total) – that covers a total of **58 children** who will have been positively impacted by this project so far.

Alisa, our new Healthy Homes coordinator, has done a fantastic job of setting up and running the project, liaising with referrers, clients and our supplier and doing her best to ensure that we are able to help the maximum number of families possible.

We are delighted to announce that BRIN and BBB have recently decided to include washing machines in the scope of the project, as we get so many requests for these items – and they of course are intrinsically linked to families being able to have a 'healthy home', so we will be offering that addition to our services going forward.

Thanks to everyone who has supported the project by attending our launch, donating via Just Giving, fundraising for us, or spreading the word to family, friends, colleagues and contacts.

Lorelei Freeman - Trustee



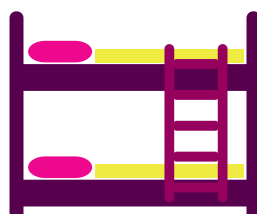
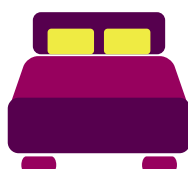


A Bed **for Every Child**

The Bed for Every child programme continues to be BBB's greatest expenditure; however it is an area of focus that the board of Trustees considers to be of great importance. Recent figures, according to End Child Poverty, revealed a shocking 20 per cent of children in Bromley live in poverty. Sadly, we regularly hear from our referrers about families where children do not have a bed of their own – instead, they are sleeping on the floor, the sofa, or sharing a bed with another family member.

We believe every child is entitled to a bed of their own – a comfortable, functional bed with clean, warm bedding. Giving a child their own bed increases the chance of a better night's sleep, which can, in turn, lead to improved concentration, behaviour and performance at school. There are also benefits to a child's physical and mental health and wellbeing, and it is known that sleeping alone reduces the risk of sexual abuse. Not only this but it raises a child's sense of self-esteem to have their very own belongings.

The Bed for Every child programme has had another very successful year, providing 153 children in the London Borough of Bromley with a brand new, comfortable, clean bed. Despite a COVID lockdown interrupting the delivery and assembly



of bunk beds, Bromley Brighter Beginnings spent a total of **£37,742** on beds in this financial year compared to **£28,024** in the previous year.

We continue to work closely with referrers to ensure that the most appropriate beds are selected for each family. During these communications referrers regularly express how valuable the BBB bed provision is for the families they work with; the straightforward application process and speedy turn-around means that children can quickly receive the bed that they urgently need. Parents and carers regularly contact BBB to express their gratitude for the new beds provided for their children as the cost of new beds is often too great for families on a low income.

We work with an amazing supplier, **Surrey Beds**, who understand how vulnerable many of our clients are. They always call and arrange a suitable time for delivery, being sensitive and discreet where necessary. They are also able to achieve a very quick turn-around for us. We really do appreciate this valuable partnership.

Madeleine Hay - Trustee & BFEC Coordinator

Christmas Hampers

Our Christmas Hamper campaign has been running for a few years now and this year saw our biggest campaign to date. We provided hampers for **221 families**, reaching a total of **501 children**. The reality is that many of the families who we have worked with throughout the year often don't have enough money to support their families day-to-day, never mind having enough money to indulge at Christmas. The aim of our hampers is not just to provide some fun and normality for a child but it's about dignity and comfort at a time that's extremely difficult financially to so many parents. Each bag is designed to make each family feel loved and supported by the community at a time when so many people feel very isolated and lonely.

The contents of our hampers come under two categories: Christmas Joy and Christmas Need.

Christmas Joy is about making a child's Christmas comparable to that of their friends and their classmates because the stigma of poverty is often felt most keenly in classroom. Quite simply we don't want children to wonder why Father Christmas didn't bring them a gift when everyone else in their class will receive one, or why they don't have a themed jumper to wear when all their classmates do. We therefore provide each child with a toy, a book, a Christmas jumper, stationery, chocolate, stocking fillers and an advent calendar.

Christmas isn't just about things to make children happy; the Need element of our hamper is about relieving the financial and mental stress that comes with living below the poverty line. Every child also receives new pair of pyjamas and a toothbrush & toothpaste, and we provide toiletries, winter items such as hats & gloves, and crucially supermarket vouchers to buy food. Christmas

happens during the school holidays and often that means the absence of free school meals and the household often just has less food available. Where possible we also try and provide things for the parents too, who rarely ask for anything for themselves. This small gesture of kindness can do a lot for people's mental health.

We make every effort to ensure our hampers are diverse and inclusive. We use the information available to us to ensure each family's hamper is culturally sensitive and tailored as much to that family as possible.

Providing Christmas in a bag for 500 children is quite expensive and we could not have achieved this without the generous support of our Facebook group of supporters and countless local organisations, ranging from schools to Brownie groups. This year, as in previous years, we were inundated with more and more people asking how they can help, which demonstrates how this campaign really resonates with people. This generosity has a direct impact on the families we support - when we deliver the hampers, families often express their relief to know that they are now able to provide Christmas for their children.

We are in no doubt that the next Christmas Hamper Campaign will see us supporting even more families. We're already taking nominations from our referrers and volunteers and expect to be dealing with large numbers come November.

Nancy Lengthorn - Trustee & Hamper Coordinator



School Uniform



Uniform continues to be a growing part of what BBB is asked to provide within our community. It is an area of the charity that we are always looking to improve on – how we run our processes and what we offer. Year on year it continues to grow, with this year seeing the highest number of families referred to us for uniform to date - **a 45% increase on the previous year.**

BBB recognises that **having the correct, smart and well-fitting uniform** plays a big role in the mental health of the children we support. We want the children to have a sense of pride and dignity, particularly if they are starting a new school. We feel this is even more important for the secondary school pupils we support as their sense of self-awareness increases at this age. This is reflected in the slight difference in our policy of what we offer depending on school age. For primary school children, we still rely on our supporters to donate us **excellent quality pre-loved uniform** to pass on; however for secondary pupils we purchase new items, and where possible arrange for the pupil to visit the appropriate uniform shop to be fitted correctly. We have established some excellent relationships with local uniform shops to make this process work seamlessly for the families. They allow us now to send our families to them in a really discreet, professional way, allowing those families to go to the uniform shop just like any other customer and buy their uniforms, which are then charged to us.

Our offer of support does not stop there. Having a **correctly fitted pair of school shoes** that the child has chosen themselves is not only important for growing feet but also helps a child form a sense of identity. For this reason we offer **families**

vouchers to purchase new shoes that are chosen by the child.

This year we also introduced an offer of additional school items to ensure kids were truly back to school ready. We supplied **water bottles, lunch boxes, school bags and stationery packs** (some of which were donated by **Nicky and the Crafting Crew**).

The cost of school uniform remains a large expense for most families and although BBB has spent some of its funds this year on uniform **we could not have fulfilled the amount of uniform referrals that we have done without the help of our supporters.** Not only do they donate excellent pre-loved items but in many cases they also **offer to buy new items** for the families, from new white shirts if no-one has preloved ones available in the size needed, through to stationery and bags.

We anticipate that the number of families needing our help with uniform will continue to grow in the future, in part due to more referrers becoming aware that this is something we offer, but also sadly as a reflection of the increased financial pressure families are likely to be under in the coming years. To improve our service to families further we are going to spend time between now and next summer **gathering as much information on schools, PTA's and uniform suppliers as possible.** This will allow our volunteers to work efficiently in delivering everything a family needs to be ready for school.

Tracy Griffin, on behalf of Amanda Ashford -
Operations Manager

Child Food Poverty

Marcus Rashford started the End Child Food Poverty campaign because he was worried about children eligible for free school meals going hungry during the school holidays. Now the impact of food poverty on children is so well known. It not just the case that children can go hungry, but they can also suffer from nutritional deficiencies, and the lack of good food can affect growth and development, create difficulties with concentration at school, and cause social isolation; there is also evidence that it makes children more prone to chronic disease in later adolescence.



BBB's key objective is to try to relieve poverty for children so there was no question that we wanted to get involved in some way. We decided to provide a supermarket voucher of £15 per child, per week for the October half term to cover the cost of free school meals. However, the response that we received from our supporters was so incredible that we were able to do a lot more than we had initially planned. **We raised around £20,000 for the Child Food Poverty campaign** and we were able to provide vouchers for the Christmas holidays and then for the February half term. In addition, we were able to provide a voucher for every week of the school holidays for the entire academic year for every child living in a domestic violence refuge in the Borough of Bromley.

Emma Martin - Chair

#ENDCHILDFOODPOVERTY

Website: www.bromleybrighterbeginnings.org.uk

Email: info@bromleybrighterbeginnings.org.uk

Address: PO Box 1302, Bromley, BR1 9PF

 /groups/BromleyBrighterBeginnings  @BrighterB  @bromleybrighterbeginnings

Bromley Brighter Beginnings is a registered charity in England and Wales (no. 1162113)