

# The awful truth

TV editor **Alison Graham** applauds – and sheds tears over – a heart-breakingly good piece of documentary making



There was a moment in Wednesday's BBC1 documentary *Evicted*, part of the channel's *No Home* season, when I was fairly sure my heart cracked open. It was when gentle, smiling teenager Sarah Marriott, a schoolgirl

who lives with her family in a dismal hostel for the homeless, talked about her evening meal. Because the hostel has no cooking facilities, Sarah leaves a can of beans and sausages on a radiator in the morning in the hope that it will be sufficiently warm to eat in the evening.

Shedding tears at Sarah's plight is a pointless and self-indulgent response – my crying isn't going to do anything to improve the lot of children like Sarah who live in poverty. But I challenge anyone to watch Sarah's cheerful fortitude and her resolution to look upon this as nothing out of the ordinary and not weep.

*Evicted* is one of those rare pieces of television that stirs the soul to anger and, ultimately, outrage. Made by the gifted Brian Woods, *Evicted* allows three children of homeless families to tell their own stories. All three are wise and old beyond their years because they have to be. Young Charlotte does her homework in the bathroom of a friend's house because that's the only place she can find any peace. And this is when things are going well for Charlotte and her family. They

spend most of the programme trudging around Somerset, shunted from one social services area to the next in the face of official indifference, as their father desperately tries to find them shelter so they can all stay together as a family. His remorseless displays of optimism in front of his wife and children are heartbreaking, as are his herculean efforts to reassure Charlotte's mother, who's on medication for mental health problems and literally tears out her hair with stress and desperation.

*"Evicted stirs the soul to anger and outrage"*



**CRYING SHAME**

**Sarah and her little brother – just two of over 130,000 homeless kids in Britain**

But he too eventually breaks. Knowing he has to tell his children that they are going to have to move once again, he turns his face to the wall and sobs.

In Nottingham, little Chloe stands outside the only home she has ever known as she watches strangers remove her and her family's belongings. They've been evicted – as it turns out, through no fault of their own. At the last count, there were 130,472 homeless children in Britain, a shocking statistic that puts us all to shame, and *Evicted* quite rightly pulls no punches. It's a

brilliant and passionate documentary of the type that I was beginning to think wasn't made any more. It sheds a powerful spotlight on dreadful social injustice and never allows its central message to be diluted by silly reconstructions or superfluous contributors. Every single word counts.