

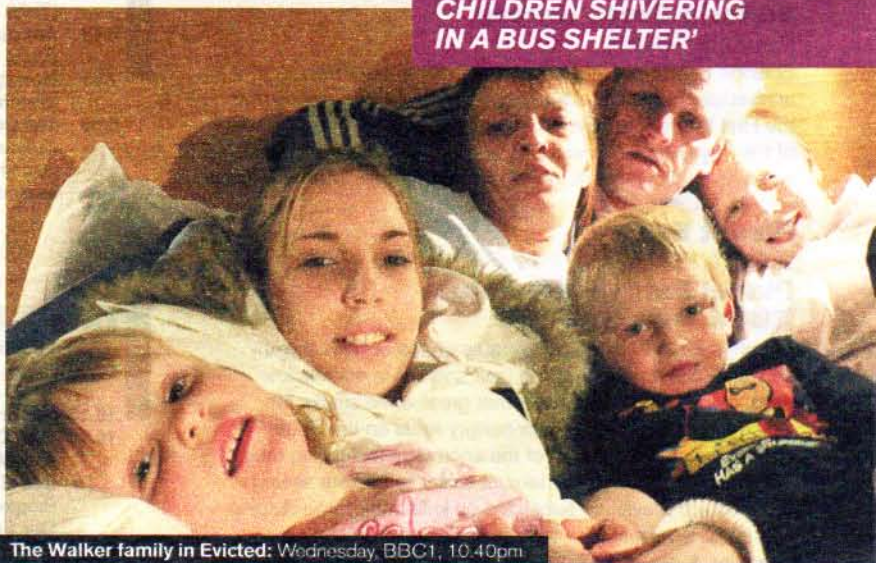


At about five o'clock on a Friday afternoon, in Minehead, Lee and Leanne Walker and their four children – ages ranging from three to 13 – are sitting in a bus shelter on the promenade, shivering. Lee has given his coat and pullover to his children and he's just in a T-shirt. But still you can see daughter Charlotte shivering. They are homeless and Lee's explaining to his family that he has spoken to the lawyer at the charity Shelter, who's threatening to take the local authority to court, to force it to get them a place for the night. It's an extraordinary scene – these children sitting there, thinking

film which helped to prompt the charity's founding, was a remarkable, powerful and genuinely innovative piece of television, and I wanted to re-examine those same issues.

I would have loved to really get inside the agencies who make the decisions that so profoundly alter people's whole lives, because the children we see are in such extraordinary situations. But from housing associations to local authorities, all the shutters came down. There's a moment in *Evicted* that so perfectly

'IT'S AN EXTRAORDINARY SCENE - HOMELESS CHILDREN SHIVERING IN A BUS SHELTER'



The Walker family in *Evicted*: Wednesday, BBC1, 10.40pm.

about spending the whole weekend in this bus shelter. As far as the system's concerned, homelessness doesn't exist at weekends.

The Walkers are in my film **Evicted** (Wednesday, BBC1, 10.40pm) – part of the BBC's *No Home* strand that runs all week. When we showed it to Shelter's lawyer, he was shocked. 'Every single day, I deal with homeless people,' he said, 'and I had never realised just how much impact homelessness has on the children.'

Campaigning films about important issues are what a lot of people get into television to make; largely as a result of *The Dying Rooms* [an award-winning 1995 documentary about Chinese orphanages] I'm one of those lucky enough to be given the freedom by the broadcasters, occasionally, to speak out.

Coming up to the 40th anniversary of Shelter, I knew that it was the right time to do something around children and homelessness. *Cathy Come Home*, the

illustrates the divide: a family is talking to their housing officer about their application to be placed on the waiting list for a house, and she comes out with this amazing piece of gobbledegook. She says: 'We're looking at a decision of intentionality.' The woman who has just been made homeless sits there looking utterly blank.

Two days after the transmission of a film I made in 1999 about child poverty, *Eyes of a Child*, Gordon Brown and Tony Blair made announcements about measures to help children. It was an interesting bit of timing. I'd like *Evicted* to appeal to those people who work with the homeless, and focus their minds on the problems of homeless children. In each case you can't blame any individual, but there is always a whole bunch of officials who could have done something. Such errors of omission have a massive impact on the whole lives of a huge number of young people.