

Housing Solutions for Young People Experiencing Homelessness in London



Housing Solutions for Young People Experiencing Homelessness in London

Commissioned by

H.A.Y.N

**LONDON
YOUTH
GATEWAY**

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and report written by

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Foreword from the Together Alliance

This action research project began in October 2019 and concluded in March 2020 prior to Covid-19. It was a collaborative project developed and shaped by the participating housing associations from the Housing Association's Youth Network (HAYN) and the youth charities of the London Youth Gateway (LYG) working alongside young people who have experienced homelessness and supported by The Berkeley Foundation and Fusion 21. Whilst the research was conducted before the pandemic began, **we know that our conclusions and the recommended projects we want to pursue as an alliance are even more critical now, in light of the negative impacts facing young people.**

Our research aimed to understand how to make better use of the Alliance's collective assets (homes, support, funding and expertise) to create better pathways for supporting young people into stable accommodation, as well as preventing them from becoming homeless in the first place. Amidst growing numbers of young people sleeping rough and relationships strained under lockdown, this task is even more urgent. For young tenants of housing associations and young members of housing association households, the pandemic has made life even more difficult and we as an alliance are more than ever determined to take forward our three projects. We believe that these initiatives, decided together with young people, can make a significant contribution to supporting young people who are being so adversely affected by Covid-19.

We know from a number of research studies and our own experience as organisations working with young people who experience homelessness that the pandemic has and will continue to disproportionately affect young people's mental health, employment prospects, and housing options. A recent Health Foundation report found that the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic meant that young people aged 12–24 are one of the worst-affected groups.¹ One third of 18-24 year olds have been furloughed or lost their job² and it is estimated that there could be an additional 640,000 members of this age group unemployed later in the year.³ **Young people from poorer households have been more likely to lose work and young people from a minority ethnic background are more than twice as likely to no longer be working since lockdown than their peers.** This is particularly relevant for the Alliance whose members often support these young people in particular.

Young people are also the most likely to have seen loneliness affect their mental health since the pandemic began.⁴ The lockdown between March and August 2020 led to a considerable increase in referrals to Safer London for individuals/families at risk of domestic abuse, at a time when offers of accommodation through the Pan-London Reciprocal Referrals Scheme had significantly slowed down.⁵

1. The Health Foundation, 2020. *Generation Covid-19: Building the case to protect young people's future health*. Available at: <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/generation-covid-19>
2. Resolution Foundation, 2020. *Young workers in the coronavirus crisis*. Available at: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/young-workers-in-the-coronavirus-crisis/>
3. Institute of Fiscal Studies, 2020. *Covid-19 and the career prospects of young people*. Available at: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14914>
4. Mind, 2020. *The mental health emergency*. Available at: https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5929/the-mentalhealth-emergency_a4_final.pdf
5. Safer London, 2020. *The Pan-London Housing Reciprocal: Tenants Guide*. Available at: <https://saferlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Pan-London-Housing-Reciprocal-Tenants-Guide.pdf>

The reports are backed up by our own evidence. New Horizon Youth Centre found that between July and September 2020 there was a

26% increase in young people claiming benefits

when they came to the organisation for help when compared to the same period last year.

Calls to Centrepoin't's helpline have almost doubled since the beginning of lockdown and calls from young people sleeping rough and without anywhere to stay at all have more than doubled. Figures from CHAIN (Combined Homeless and Information Network) also show a more than

80% increase in young people rough sleeping

in London between April and June 2020, compared to the same time last year.⁶

The work of the Together Alliance and the experiences of young people has led us to some clear conclusions; youth homelessness arises because there is a lack of affordable housing options; it is compounded by a punitive welfare benefits system, a low wage and precarious economy for young people, that contributes to making housing that is available unaffordable. **Youth homelessness is as much a structural issue as it is about adverse childhood experiences. The pandemic will without doubt increase the negative impact of these structural issues on young people.** We as an alliance are determined to do all we can to create solutions and a way forward for the young people we work with or that we house now or will house in the future.

This research has been a truly collaborative endeavour and the Alliance would like to thank the young people who participated in the peer research training and worked with the Campbell Tickell team to carry out the interviews of young people whose voice is represented in this report. We would also like to thank our colleagues who participated in the workshops and who completed the asset mapping questionnaire. Finally we would like to thank Helen Evans, Chief Executive of Network Homes and Chair of the G15 Group of Housing Associations for her comments on an early draft of the report.

6. Homeless Link, 2020. New research calls for urgent action to prevent and end rising youth homelessness. Available at: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2020/oct/22/new-research-calls-for-urgent-action-to-prevent-and-end-rising-youth>

01

Executive Summary

- 1.1 Together is an alliance of youth homelessness charities and housing associations working with young people who are experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness in London. The Alliance wants to understand how to make better use of their collective assets (homes, support, funding and expertise) to create better pathways for young people into stable accommodation.
- 1.2 The Alliance is motivated by a recognition that many structural and personal factors contribute to increased risk of homelessness amongst young people in London and there are some factors that can be better addressed through a collaborative approach.
- 1.3 Some of the young people that the youth homelessness charities are working with are former housing association tenants whose tenancies have failed. Housing association members of the Alliance house up to 300 young people aged 18-24 a year, many in their general needs tenancies. Alliance members recognise that a number of the young people housed by housing associations are at risk of tenancy failure, due to a number of reasons that are explored further in this report. They also house many young people who are part of the associations tenants' family households and who, as they become adults, have an unmet housing need.
- 1.4 The Alliance members want to work together to reduce the risk of youth homelessness, to promote tenancy sustainment and to improve access to affordable housing for their younger tenants and prospective tenants.
- 1.5 The Alliance commissioned Campbell Tickell (CT) to carry out an action research project aimed at informing how the Alliance could best tackle collaboratively the needs of young people experiencing homelessness, or who at risk of homelessness and are housing association tenants.
- 1.6 The research has consisted of a desk top review of previous research on youth homelessness, interviews with young people, carried out by trained peer researchers working alongside the CT research team, workshops with front-line staff and with the Alliance, and an on-line asset mapping exercise. This report summarises the research findings and the collaborative projects agreed by the Alliance. There are separate materials setting out the detailed research findings.
- 1.7 Research carried out by Homeless Link in 2018, found that while youth homelessness was difficult to quantify, around 40% of local authorities reported that the scale of youth homelessness had increased, and respondents identified a lack of affordable housing, a lack of supported accommodation, and welfare benefit reform as causing increases in youth homelessness.⁷

7. Homeless Link, 2018. *Young & Homeless*. Available at: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Young%20and%20Homeless%202018.pdf>

1.8 Centrepoin't's research in 2016/17⁸ found that around 86,000 young people approached their local authority for help as they were homeless or at risk of homelessness in the UK. The majority (58 per cent) of young people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness in England were not recorded as having received positive actions leading to their homelessness being successfully prevented or dealt with. Over half (54 per cent) of homeless young people left their last settled base because their parents, other relative or friends were no longer willing to accommodate them.

1.9 The research shows that there are a mixture of personal and structural factors that affect young people and can lead to homelessness. Personal factors include, family breakdown, mental health issues, experience of violence, substance misuse issues, leaving school without qualifications. Structural factors include lack of affordable housing, poverty caused by the fact that young people are paid less than older adults, so that even if they are working their wages will be lower while rent, council tax, utilities etc, remain the same irrespective of age. The shared accommodation rate within housing benefit for under 35's also impacts on affordability.

1.10 The complexity of issues means that no youth homelessness charity or housing provider can fully address these factors alone. Working together the Alliance has agreed to take forward three projects:

Project 1: *Someone to talk to:* **To Prevent** young people who are housing association tenants from becoming homeless by having processes and/or people in their organisations that can support young people's tenancy sustainment. This project will be led by the housing association members of the Alliance.

Project 2: *Some support to pay:* **To Support** young people while they are experiencing homelessness the Alliance wants to create a flexible funding pot of money that can be distributed directly and swiftly to assist with immediate needs. This project will be led by the youth homelessness charity members of the Alliance.

Project 3: *Somewhere to stay:* **To Provide** young people with a good next step once they leave emergency accommodation by making underused housing stock available to support young people who are experiencing homelessness. This will be a joint project.

1.11 The next steps will be to collaboratively work on implementing the three projects while strengthening the Alliance through shared learning and joint working. The Alliance hopes that these three pilots will influence how housing associations working across London could reduce instances of youth homelessness and contribute to tenancy sustainment for their young tenants.

8. Centrepoin't, 2018. *More than a number: The scale of youth homelessness in the UK*. Available at: <https://centrepoin't.org.uk/media/2396/more-than-a-number-the-scale-of-youth-homelessness.pdf>

02

Introduction

- 2.1** Together is an alliance of youth homelessness charities and housing associations working with young people who are experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness in London. The Alliance wants to understand how to make better use of their collective assets (homes, support, funding and expertise) to create better pathways for young people into stable accommodation.
- 2.2** The research is intended to support this ambition. Its focus is young people that are not living in specialist young people's supported housing services. It is about the young people that are outside those services and the Alliance is looking at how to best tackle their needs collaboratively.

The Together Alliance is made up of ten organisations:

akt (Albert Kennedy Trust), Clarion Housing, DePaul, HACT (the Housing Association's Charitable Trust), Hyde Housing, Metropolitan Thames Valley, Network Homes, New Horizon Youth Centre, Peabody, Safer London.

The research has been supported by the Berkeley Foundation and Fusion21.

Action research approach

- 2.3** The Alliance chose an 'action-oriented research' approach that would support them to turn 'research into action through the development of a project plan that the Alliance can collectively deliver', initially as pilots.⁹ The research process has been iterative; at key stages, the researchers have shared emerging findings with the Alliance and discussed what they mean for their aims and the next stages of the action research process. The methodology consisted of a desktop literature review, peer research interviews and a focus group with young people experiencing homelessness, and workshops with staff and managers of Alliance members.

Solutions developed with young people

- 2.4** The Alliance recognise that solutions reside in young people who have experienced homelessness in London. Young people have, therefore, been a part of the action research process coming together to be trained as community researchers and supported to carry out research interviews with their peers, share and discuss emerging findings as well as contributing to the research interviews themselves. As such, the research and project plan development have been informed by their lived experiences and views about what they think will work.

9. Taken from Together: *Housing solutions for young people experiencing homelessness in London*, Research tender, August 2019

Building on what we know

2.5 Members of the Alliance were aware that much has already been written and researched about young people experiencing homelessness and the models of housing and types of support that might work. Similarly, the Alliance members themselves all possess a wealth of knowledge and practical experience of housing models and support practices. These too were captured, analysed, shared back and discussed with Alliance members as part of the action research process working towards a project plan.

The research questions

2.6 The research was guided by the following questions:

- ▶ Based on the reasons that young people find themselves homeless in London, what are the best packages of support that young people need when being rehoused?
- ▶ How are existing accommodation projects working for young people experiencing homelessness and what evidence is there – from both an evaluative and young person’s perspective – that these are successful?
- ▶ What can the youth homelessness sector learn from the broader sector and other housing models and how are these viewed by young people with lived experience of homelessness?
- ▶ How are current housing processes, e.g. income collection, housing management, acting as enablers or blockers in terms of supporting young people to manage tenancies?
- ▶ How can the complementary and collective assets of the organisations in our alliance or the opportunities that they could create for direct work, collaboration or advocacy be best used to create better pathways for young people into stable accommodation?
- ▶ What are the economic benefits to this approach and how, ultimately, might the Alliance seek sustainable funding and partnerships to deliver it?

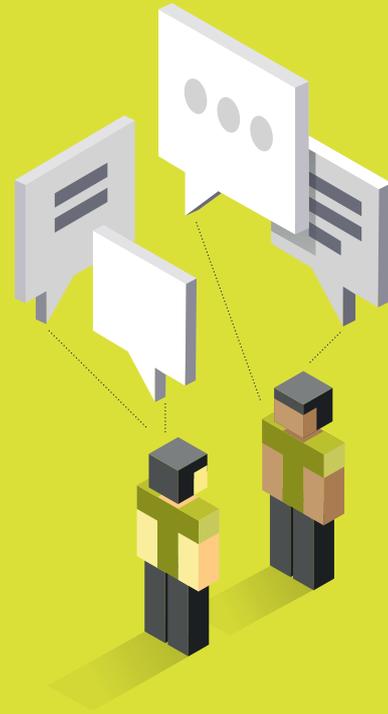
The outcome: three proposals

2.7 Through working collaboratively, iteratively and closely with young people, Alliance members have identified three interconnected project proposals that they plan to develop and test through pilots.

2.8 The projects are a mixture of housing association led, youth homelessness charity led and collaborative projects; each one builds on Alliance members’ experience and assets; and they can all be achieved, at least in the next pilot stage of development, using the existing collective assets in the Alliance. Furthermore, they each feature some kind of small systems change that can be built on, something both the young people and frontline staff involved in the research saw as essential. The three proposals are:

1. PEOPLE

Prevent young people who are housing association tenants from becoming homeless by having processes and/or people in place to support their tenancy sustainment – providing someone to talk to.

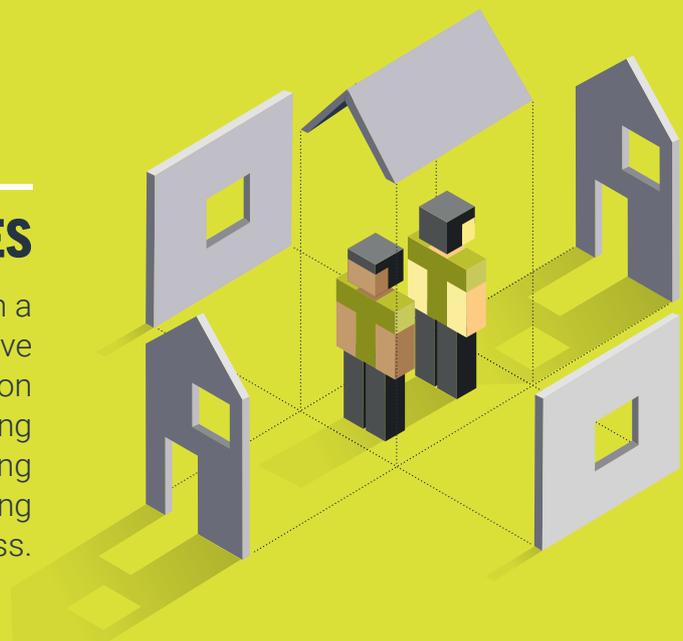


2. FUNDS

Support young people while they are experiencing homelessness by creating a flexible pot of money that can be distributed directly and swiftly by youth homelessness charities.

3. HOMES

Provide young people with a good next step once they leave emergency accommodation by making underused housing stock available to support young people who are experiencing homelessness.



03

Methodology

- 3.1** The action research process was organised in three phases – Scoping, Research, Action – with pause points to share and discuss emerging findings and what they mean for the next stage of the research as well as the research aims and questions. The main research was carried out between October 2019 and January 2020.

Research governance

- 3.2** A steering group of personnel from three alliance members (two of them were the Alliance founders) convened at key stages to hear and discuss emerging findings. A young people's advisory group also convened at the same key stages to do the same. Efforts were made to bring the two groups together, however several of the young people were working and/or needing to attend a lot of meetings about their situation and so this did not prove possible.

Key features of the research

- 3.3**
- Data was analysed as we went along so that it could be shared and discussed with the steering and advisory groups with their reflections feeding into the next stage.
 - Outputs of the data analysis were written into short summaries, presentations and presented in writing and in person to facilitate audience engagement across both groups.
 - Peer research training and facilitation of the young people's advisory group were provided by an experienced trainer and facilitator who worked closely with young members of the Campbell Tickell research team. Training took place over two evenings and two refresher sessions; a total of eight hours training.
 - Communication with young people was mainly via WhatsApp, young people were reimbursed for their travel (cash) and time (vouchers).

Phases and methods

- 3.4** Phase One: Scoping (October 2019)
- **Desk review of research** on young people's experiences of homelessness, blockers and enablers and innovative models for addressing youth homelessness. From our searches, 14 items were selected, analysed and shared back with the Alliance.
 - **Young people's advisory group** and **Together Alliance steering group convened** separately to reflect on desk review findings and shape fieldwork including interview questions.

Phase Two: Research (November/December 2019)

- ▶ **Interviews with young people:** Working together with Campbell Tickell's researchers, six trained peer researchers conducted 21 interviews with young people in two services.
- ▶ **Frontline staff workshop:** attended by 9 people from 5 different organisations (See Appendix 1).
- ▶ **Online asset mapping survey:** completed by 9 people from 8 different organisations; the survey was open for 23 days and researchers sent two reminders.
- ▶ **Analysis and writing up:** Interim research findings were brought together and shared with the Together Alliance steering group and then turned into a PowerPoint presentation to share with the wider alliance and young people's advisory group.

Phase Three: Action (December/January 2020)

- ▶ **Together members workshop** – attended by 12 people from 8 different organisations (see Appendix 1 for full list of participating roles and organisations). They heard and discussed presentations on the interim research findings and then worked together to identify priority actions and how to take these forward. This led to them agreeing to work up three project proposals (prevent, support, provide).
- ▶ **Together young people's focus group** – attended by four young people. They heard and discussed the three project proposals and added their views and experiences about how they needed to be developed.
- ▶ **Project planning meetings** – Alliance sub groups met and developed the project proposals and fed back to the researchers so that these meetings could be fed into the final report.

04

Framing the three proposals from the Together Alliance

- 4.1** This section frames the three proposals that the Alliance arrived at through the action research process. In sections 5, 6 and 7, each proposal is described and explained in detail. Here, the report provides an at-a-glance overview of the proposals and how they fit together to support young people's pathways into stable accommodation.

What do we know about the young people?

- 4.2** This research has focussed on young people aged 18-24 who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness and are, or have been housed as housing association tenants, either in their own right or as members of a tenant's family household.
- 4.3** Desk research identified that the biggest single reason why young people find themselves homeless or in housing difficulty is some kind of breakdown in family relationships. What this looks like will vary from one family to another although there are some common issues, such as conflict following the introduction of a parent's new partner or being told to leave after revealing their sexuality, or as a result of anti-social behaviour putting the family's tenancy at risk. We also know from research that there is a greater risk of becoming homeless where other factors are present. For example, experiencing violence, mental health or substance abuse issues in the home or leaving school without qualifications.
- 4.4** But there are also reasons for homelessness that lie outside the home. 'Affordability' is the term we use to talk about the cost of housing as a proportion of income. Our research found lack of housing affordability is affecting both young people and their families. This means that a young person may have been made homeless from a family that is also struggling financially; meaning that even if moving home becomes an option, the family would still be facing housing difficulties. And where a young person does need to live independently, this is unaffordable for many young people: they have lower wages and more job insecurity while the cost of bills, rent and council tax remains the same irrespective of age; and housing benefit levels. The Shared Accommodation Rate for under 35's and the long term lack of uplift to the Local Housing Allowance rate make most options available to them unaffordable.
- 4.5** Finally, while many young people do seek help when they find themselves homeless, some do not and instead remain 'hidden' staying temporarily in people's homes. This can be positive – a chance of a break from the family home, for example, but it can also lead to young people staying in risky or unsuitable places.
- 4.6** The Alliance has sought to address these issues through the three projects selected. The first project aims to prevent homelessness by working towards putting in place the processes and/or people that will support young people's tenancy sustainment in each housing association. The second aims to support young people when they are homeless by providing a flexible pot of funding held by the participating youth homelessness charities to address emergency needs and the third aims to make available any suitable and underused housing association accommodation specifically for young people.

Young people told us it was difficult to access the correct and relevant information when they needed help.

Our solution is to prevent young people who are housing association tenants from becoming homeless by having processes and/or people in place to support their tenancy sustainment. Providing someone to talk to in organisations who can signpost or work with their colleagues in a joined-up way to prevent issues escalating.



PEOPLE
Someone to talk to...

I didn't know how to get everything, I had to do it myself. I came from being in care and when I left the system I was thrown straight into having my own place and didn't know how to access support for this.

(Young person)

Young people told us that they had significant financial concerns related to a lack of access to financial means in critical times.

Our solution is to support young people while they are experiencing homelessness by creating a flexible funding pot of money that can be distributed directly and swiftly by homelessness provider organisations.



FUNDS
Some support to pay...

I was only told the day before that I had to move out from supported living into my own tenancy and I had nothing; no furniture, I could only take my mattress. I was lucky to be given a grant of £1000.

(Young person)

Young people told us that without a settled home it's hard to focus on sorting out other things like work or education or looking after your health. The shortage of affordable housing in London is made worse for young people because even those options available are mainly unaffordable due to lower wages and restricted benefit entitlement.

By working together, housing associations think they can find new ways to make homes available to young people.

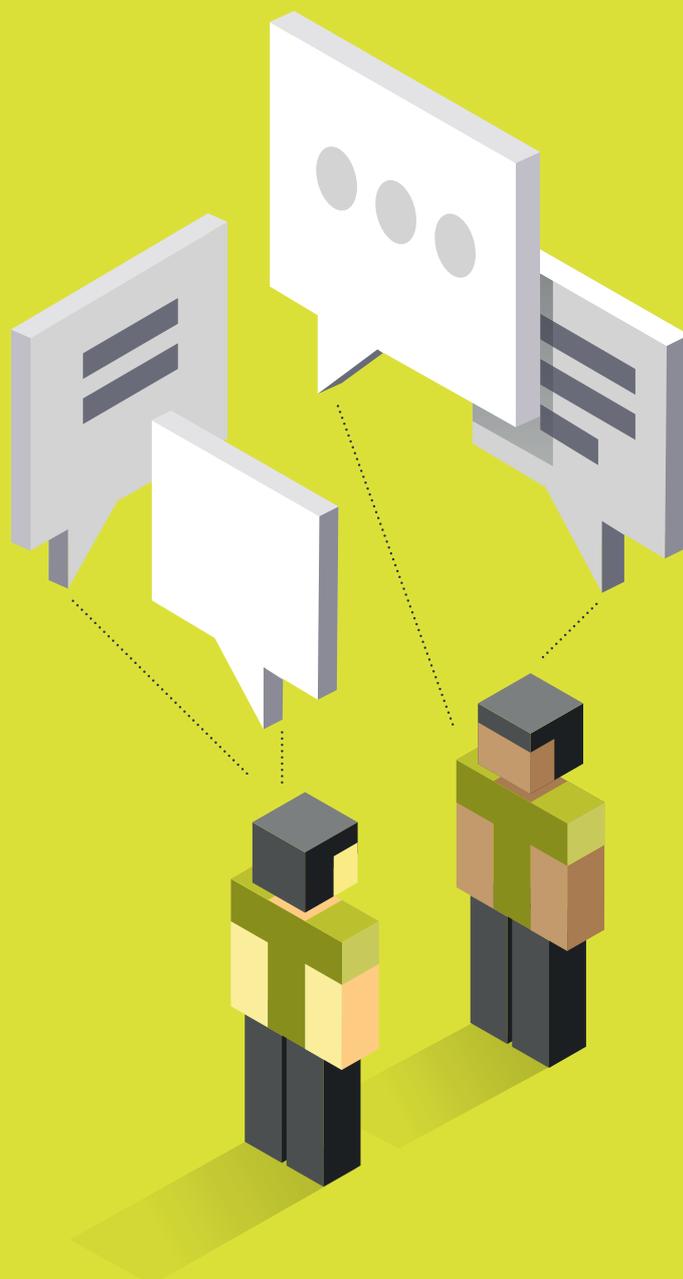
HOMES
Somewhere to stay...



Organisations should have the power to give this person somewhere to live.

(Young person)

Prevent homelessness – *Someone to talk to*



Overview

- 5.1** The Together Alliance believes that its members can help prevent young people who are housing association tenants from becoming homeless by having processes and people in place to support young people's tenancy sustainment – providing someone to talk to who can signpost them or who can work with their colleagues in a joined up way to prevent issues escalating.

The ask – that within each housing association there are processes and/or people in place to assist young tenants with tenancy sustainment and prevent homelessness.

Why has the Together Alliance chosen to make this a priority?

- 5.2** Below we have set out the research findings that led to this decision: from the literature, from the young people and from the Alliance members.

What the research says

- 5.3** When support works well, so the research suggests, it will have some or all of the following 'features':

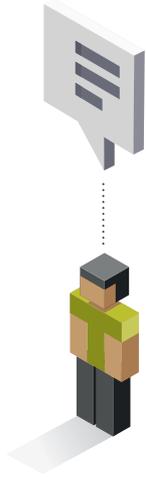
- ✦ Flexible and adaptable to the young person ('personalisation', 'young person led').
- ✦ Good relationship and trust between the young person and staff.
- ✦ Involves multiple agencies and addresses multiple issues e.g. emotional needs, offending, education/training/employment alongside housing need.
- ✦ Provides the young person with a pathway to stable accommodation and options to choose from to achieve this.
- ✦ Builds in 'peer to peer' support alongside support provided by staff.

- 5.4** In order to make a difference, the support needs to respond to the wider issues young people face i.e. education/training, mental health as well as independent living skills.

What the young people said

- 5.5** Most of the young people involved with this research were in communication with several different voluntary and statutory services at the same time in order to try to address their housing and associated support needs. They described as difficult and daunting the experience of having to do everything on their own, of attending meetings alone and taking complex decisions with no one to support them. Each organisation expected them to retell their story and explain their circumstances; some organisations, they said, had shown a lack of awareness of how this can re-trigger previous traumatic experiences, especially where domestic abuse or fleeing a conflict zone, for example, was involved.

- 5.6** The young people wanted to see services working in more joined-up ways including sharing information; this includes statutory health and social work services that have a duty to support them. Some had found it difficult even to find one organisation to support them – 'If you don't know what's there you can't access it' – and having found that one organisation said it would have been better to be able to access everything else through them.



Having an insight into what is to come is really important. In my supported accommodation, it was bigged up to get your own flat – it's the 'golden ticket'. But we didn't talk about what to do when things go wrong, or who to talk to. I had so many problems with my flat, I had no support and I didn't know where to go.

(Young person)

Having just one person to talk to should be made easier...clear and relevant information when applying and one organisation rather than a bunch of different places because you can never just go to one place.

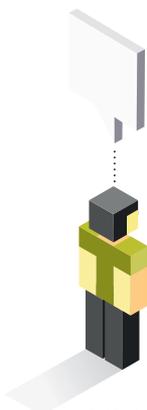
(Young person)

5.7 Building on the idea of a single point of access, young people also talked about building a relationship of trust with one organisation.

5.8 The issues raised by young people above have no doubt been amplified in the time since Covid-19 began. We know from New Horizon Youth Centre that many young people are now engaging with multiple agencies and services remotely which can make things even more confusing and taxing. We also know from recent evidence that young people's mental health has worsened substantially during the pandemic. One in ten lack private space in their home to work or study and Mind's research found that 18-24 year olds are the most likely to see loneliness affect their mental health.¹⁰

What the Alliance members said

5.9 Frontline staff talked about their organisations having the potential to offer young people someone to talk to, ongoing contact and even somewhere to return to 'if they have any issues in the future'. Alliance members described the support in a range of ways which suggest that they would adapt how they work with a young person over time. For example: 'drip-feeding' information; just being there for the young person to ask for help when they require it; supporting the young person to visualise a future when the often complex and overwhelming issues they face may have passed; and 'just being on the phone allowing them to vent'.



In order for young people to get the correct help from the council, they need to be very confident, well versed with a broad understanding of what rights they have...a lot of young people walk away feeling very defeated, stressed and demotivated, it's usually a long time before they get more help.

(Alliance member)

10. Mind, 2020. *The mental health emergency.*

5.10 Building on the idea of giving young people someone to talk to within an organisation, Alliance members highlighted that young people leaving care were particularly vulnerable to discontinuity of support, but any young person moving into accommodation needed not only continuous but intensive support through the transition and for some months afterwards. One response to this issue is the idea of Critical Time Interventions.¹¹

5.11 Achieving good tenancy sustainment requires a commitment to putting in place the processes and/or people needed and a greater degree of joined-up working.



Once nominated a young person may be dropped by the support or a social worker after a few months. There should be provision for a least a year. Three months in, a Housing Benefit claim may not have been accepted or they may have racked up debts due to not prioritising this expenditure.

(Alliance member)

What will it take to make this happen?

5.12 Work could be developed across the housing association Alliance members to pilot the tenancy sustainment processes needed for successful work with young people. For example; introducing a person-centred approach to arrears/evictions practice with income management staff and to develop minimum standards for tenancy sustainment support for young people aged 18-24.

5.13 Housing associations could identify relevant internal teams that could benefit from an upskilled staff member to act as a young person point of contact for those young people previously homeless or who are at risk of homelessness within the association’s stock.

What are the likely costs and benefits?

Costs	Benefits i.e. it has the potential to benefit these numbers of YP
<p>The cost of upskilling relevant staff would be approximately £1,000 per every 10 staff trained. This is based on providing a one-day youth homelessness awareness course. The course could be tailored to Alliance member’s needs and provided on an ‘in-house’ basis across Alliance members.</p>	<p>The asset mapping carried out as part of this research project identified that Alliance members house over 300 young people aged 18-24 each year.</p>

11. The critical time intervention model is based on moving through clear, time-limited phases of support with an individual at a point of transition. There are three distinct phases which are followed, (1) transition consisting of intensive case management support, (2) try-out: where the worker takes a step back to observe how the person is settling into their new arrangements but the worker is available to step back in where there is a crisis point and (3) transfer – where the worker hands over to community support and/or steps away from supporting the individual because they are able to manage on their own.

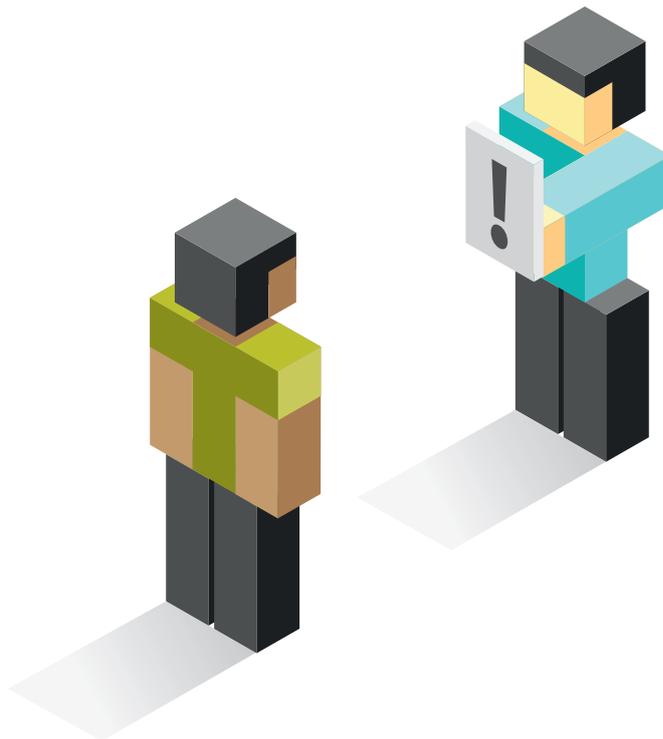
For future consideration: other ideas that emerged from the research

- ▀ To identify tenancy ready courses or workshops that the Alliance can deliver together to all young people who are likely to move into a tenancy or who have just moved into a tenancy for the first time.



The approach of support-centred teams versus other internal teams – unfortunately not all of our teams work with the same philosophy and some processes still require updating. A good example would be rent arrears/risk of eviction letters – normally in huge capitals, with black or red borders, these letters scare young people and often only succeeds in distancing the resident from us as a housing association. Better methods and processes of engagement for such issues need to be designed to affect positive change.

(Alliance member)



Flexible financial help – *Some support to pay*



Overview

- 6.1** The Together Alliance plans to support young people while they are experiencing homelessness by creating a flexible funding pot of money that can be distributed directly and swiftly by the youth homelessness charities to deal with immediate and critical needs.

The ask – that a pot of funding be made available to be used as a flexible fund.

Why has the Together Alliance chosen to make this a priority?

- 6.2** Below we have set out the research findings that led to this decision: from the literature, from the young people and from the Alliance members.
- 6.3** The context for this proposal is that when young people are in crisis, services available to support them are constrained, and financially, there are multiple ways and uses for a flexible funding pot. As such the Alliance has, or will need to, take decisions about what the funding pot is for and what it is not for; it can mitigate the consequences of not funding everything by ensuring there are good links to other hardship funds within and beyond the Alliance.

What the research says

- 6.4** In Section 4 above, we set out the findings of desk research into the reasons behind homelessness among young people (see 4.2,3,4 and 5). It's well documented that the biggest single reason behind young people experiencing homelessness and housing difficulties is some kind of breakdown in family relationships; and that the risk of homelessness becomes even greater when family breakdown is combined with other factors like mental health issues. But there is another critical dimension to young people's homelessness and housing difficulties and that is affordability.
- 6.5** 'Affordability' is the term we use to talk about the cost of housing as a proportion of income. Desk research for the Alliance found that living independently has become unaffordable for many young people due to high rents, low wages and benefits that do not make up the difference. Our research found lack of housing affordability is affecting both young people and their families. Where a young person does need to live independently, this is unaffordable due to the lower wages that young people receive while the cost of bills, rent and council tax remains the same irrespective of age.
- 6.6** These issues are likely to have been exacerbated by the pandemic as the national recession takes its toll on young people's employment. Not only are young people vulnerable to losing their jobs and facing increasing difficulty securing new employment, but they are also more likely to experience precarious job conditions as lockdown restrictions affect hospitality, the arts and similar industries. The Resolution Foundation's inter-generational audit of the impact of Covid 19 found that **one-third of 18–24-year-olds have been furloughed or lost their job, and it estimates that 30% of all employees in the sectors most hit by lockdown and social distancing are under the age of 25.**¹² Looking to the future, research by the Institute of Fiscal Studies found that there could be as many as 640,000 additional 18-24 year olds unemployed this year.¹³

12. Resolution Foundation, 2020. *An intergenerational audit for the UK*. Available at: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/intergenerational-audit-uk-2020/>

13. Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2020. *Sector shutdowns during the coronavirus: which workers are most exposed?* Available at: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/intergenerational-audit-uk-2020/>

- 6.7** Finally, many young people who experience homelessness remain 'hidden' staying temporarily in people's homes, and while this can sometimes be useful to have 'time out' from difficult family situations, it can also place young people at risk of different kinds of exploitation.

What the young people said

- 6.8** The young people involved in the research gave a considerable amount of detail about the context for this form of support listing the following factors affecting them: precarious and low paid work; the sudden nature of transitions whether it is being told to move out of the family home, or having to move on or move into new accommodation; and crises arising from rent arrears that have accrued due to a change in circumstances such as moving from benefits to employment. Young people also highlighted rent arrears or other financial hardships that arise because they have not been supported at the start of a tenancy or when leaving care.
- 6.9** The purpose of a funding pot was discussed by Alliance members with a wide variety of uses put forward including: food and clothing; furniture and household items for moving into a tenancy; and paying rent, bills and deposits. There were mixed views about whether or not they, personally, would take up financial advice, but young people suggested that this should be offered alongside any payments from the single funding pot.



I was only told the day before that I had to move out from supported living into my own tenancy and I had nothing: no furniture, I could only take my mattress. I was lucky to be given a grant of £1000.

(Young person)

What the Alliance members said

- 6.10** In the discussions leading up to the decision to create a flexible funding pot, members of the Alliance identified the following areas of possible focus: young people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), young people at risk of becoming homeless because of rent arrears, young people moving into a tenancy and young people moving from benefits to employment. They thought that in the latter circumstances, it might help to offer one-off payments of rent arrears due to change in financial circumstances when a young person moves from benefits to employment and is waiting for their first salary. Alliance members also emphasised the important role played by other hardship funds, including those operated by the housing association Alliance members.



We need support for young people with no recourse to public funds, specifically for EU citizens (even before Brexit). I've had clients who are not entitled to anything even if they have lived in the country since being a child.

(Alliance member)



Most of the young people may not have had the life experience of having to fill a property from scratch, the prospect may be daunting and an all-consuming perspective that the place is not liveable. Things that we will promote will be to carpet the property and accessing furniture/white goods to ensure that they are not motivated to abandon the tenancy.

(Alliance member)

What will it take to make this happen?

6.11

The Alliance wants to ensure that every young person who becomes homeless or leaves an unsuccessful tenancy from a housing association has a safe place to be in the daytime and gets support to transition back into housing. For those that find themselves sleeping rough, we want to ensure that they get access to somewhere to stay through a flexible fund to pay for short term accommodation; and for those that are housed but find themselves in need of funds to support their tenancy sustainment a bursary could be used to help them through a short-term crisis.

What are the likely costs and benefits?

Costs	Benefits i.e. it has the potential to benefit these numbers of Young People
<p>A flexible fund based on c£300 per person assisted could be raised to enable the Alliance members who are youth homelessness charities to support young people who have been housing association tenants. The funds would be easy to access and support young people into short-term/crisis accommodation or meet other emergency needs.</p>	<p>The London Youth Gateway members who actively participated in the research estimated that around 200 of the young people they work with each year had had a social housing tenancy and that approximately half of these could benefit from access to a flexible fund.</p>

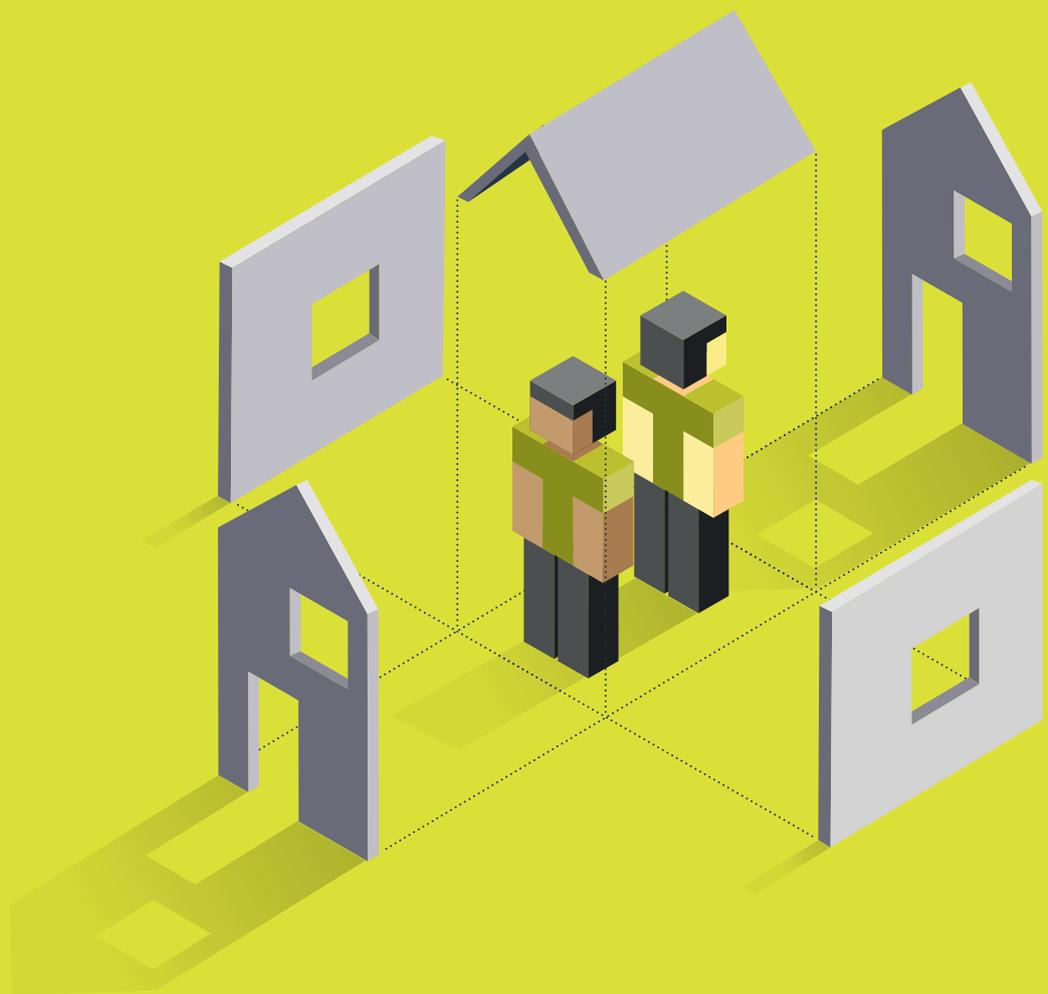
For future consideration: other ideas that emerged from the research

- To share practice, learning and intelligence between housing associations and youth homelessness charities about using housing association supply chains to find work and traineeships/apprenticeships for young people.
- To create a Together Alliance 'passport' that allows young people living in or referred to any of the Alliance members and G15 organisations to access each other's services.

07

Proposal 3

Provide accommodation –
Somewhere to stay



Overview

- 7.1 The Together Alliance plans to create a good next step for young people once they leave emergency accommodation by making available underused housing association stock to provide accommodation to young people experiencing homelessness.

The ask – that housing associations work with the Alliance to find new innovative ways to make homes available e.g. through underused stock.

Why has the Together Alliance chosen to make this a priority?

- 7.2 Below we have set out the research findings that led to this decision: from the literature, from the young people and from the Alliance members.

What the research says

- 7.3 There is a shortage of affordable housing options whether in the private or social rented (council and housing association) sectors. And council housing policies and practice mean that **many young people are turned down for housing without being given the advice and support they need to find an alternative**. Since 2017 the Homelessness Reduction Act means that everyone who is at risk of homelessness should be advised and have a personal housing plan in place that addresses their homelessness risk. When young people get turned down for social housing the only option available is the private rented sector. The research found that advice and support can be lacking even with the introduction of the 2017 Act. .
- 7.4 When a young person does get rehoused this can be challenging: managing finances can be daunting, they may be out of work or working for low wages and their job may be insecure, the benefits they receive are also lower. These factors can be made worse by, or can themselves worsen, mental health, confidence and self-esteem. Young people who are excluded or marginalised – unaccompanied young people seeking asylum or with disabilities for example – may find themselves further disadvantaged.
- 7.5 Accommodation projects work well, we found, when they also provide (or link up with) support. It is especially important for accommodation projects to be designed to support young people through ‘critical transitions’ or big changes in their lives, whether that is leaving care, moving into new accommodation or some other change.¹⁴
- 7.6 Within a context of the increasing challenges facing young people as a result of Covid-19, the need for more homes for young people that can offer appropriate support is not just evident, but ever more urgent. New Horizon Youth Centre has found that compared to the same period last year, between July and September 2020 it has seen more young people arriving with additional support needs, particularly surrounding mental health (38% compared to 21%) and emotional wellbeing (35% compared to 24%).

14. It may be worth looking at how these findings fit with the idea of Critical Time Interventions (see Proposal 1).

What the young people said

- 7.7** This proposal aligns well with the peer research findings and advisory group discussions. The decision is welcomed by young people and they identify three main areas for consideration. First, the property should be in good condition and safe; including safety from the point of view of young people who have experienced domestic abuse. Second, housing associations need to consider how they can achieve a flexible length of stay (perhaps setting a minimum/maximum rather than a fixed period) because each young person's circumstances are different and having a fixed end of tenancy date can exacerbate stress and anxiety. Third, there needs to be good communication on both sides about expectations especially about support (help with navigating common tensions when sharing accommodation, help with beginning to think about next steps).



I was really scared about moving and that needed to be understood, as well as the fact that I couldn't be housed in certain places.

(Young person)

The accommodation ... is only for one year. I think after this year they should do an evaluation of how your time was there and what suits you as a person, something like an assessment. Because the one-year deadline is a lot of pressure and nothing is guaranteed. You don't know whether you'll be in a good or bad position in a year.

(Young person)

Having a tenancy support manager was good as you meet on a monthly basis or sooner if needed. They are the one person you go to to access help – they ask you if you need help with paying bills/ can cook/need any facilities and if you say yes they always have resources to get you sorted, it's not just a one time offer of help.

(Young person)

What the Alliance members said

- 7.8** Alliance members agreed that there is a lack of accommodation options available to young people at the end of a support accommodation 'pathway'. Frontline staff in particular (as well as young people) wanted to see housing associations take back some control over their own housing stock and use it to accommodate young people who experience homelessness. Whatever accommodation options they develop, the following considerations were raised: there is a need for a range of options; while sharing is positive for some young people, for others it is unsafe or undesirable; and alongside the accommodation there needs to be support with tenancy sustainment and a seamless transfer of support into the housing association.¹⁵

15. Related to this proposal, frontline staff recommended an exercise to share learning between housing associations about their practice when a young person accrues arrears: *The approach of support-centred teams vs other internal teams - unfortunately not all of our teams work with the same philosophy and some processes still require updating. A good example would be rent arrears/risk of eviction letters - normally in hug caps, with black or red borders, these letters scare young people and often only succeeds in distancing the resident from us as a Housing Association. Better methods and processes of engagement for such issues need to be designed to affect positive change.* (Alliance member)

[There is a] huge amount of young people who in my opinion are simply unable to maintain a shared accommodation property. Young people more often than not end up in supported accommodation because of various traumatic events. With this stems mental health difficulties including depression, anxiety and PTSD amongst many others. These are often not acknowledged through benefits such as PIP [Personal Independence Payment]. Without PIP they are often only eligible for shared accommodation housing benefit rate. And there comes the impasse. My clients feel totally unable to share what they need to be a 'safe space' with strangers, regardless of who they are.

(Alliance member)

The support needs to be intensive for several weeks after moving in...

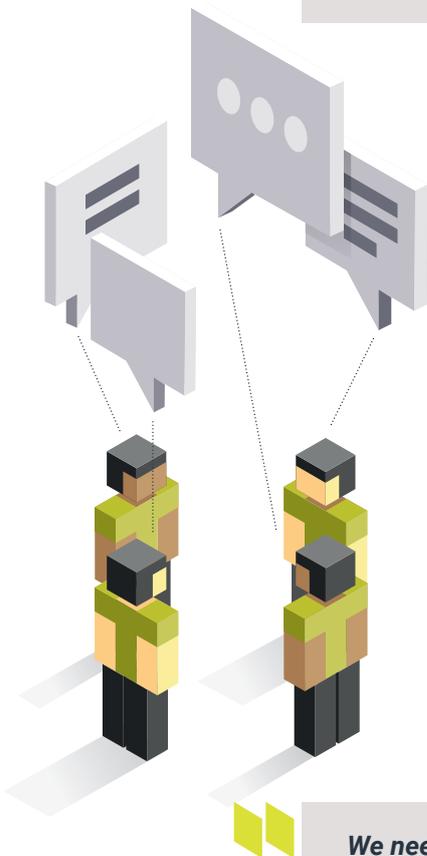
(Alliance member)

Emergency and short-stay [accommodation is needed] as increasingly young people's hostels are closing or being brought within local authority pathway provision.

(Alliance member)

We need to be careful about moving young people into private rental properties very quickly. We used to partner with the council and had access to funds to pay private renters incentives to take young people on even if they are on benefits. There are loads of reasons why this doesn't work, a big one is that young people have not had time to build relationships with services and will disengage very quickly. If they haven't already had experience of private renting then they usually find it very difficult to sustain the tenancy and get evicted, usually they will not ask for help until they are evicted again. Now they will be engaging with services with a lot of rent arrears that they will need to pay back and are a lot harder to support.

(Alliance member)



What will it take to make this happen?

What is the ask and to who?

7.9 The Alliance identified the following groups of young people who could benefit from the provision of accommodation:

- ✦ Aged 18-24 with medium support needs e.g. some mental health issues, trauma, fleeing violence, who are in receipt of Universal Credit and are not able to be housed in private rented accommodation.
- ✦ Aged 18-24 with medium to low support needs who require support around life skills and who are ready to explore work.
- ✦ Aged 18-24 who have been in receipt of additional support via a voluntary sector organisation and lived in a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) or shared flat and are now ready to move on.

7.10 The Alliance wanted to see access to a variety of accommodation options for each of these groups of young people. Summarised as:

Young person	Type of accommodation
Aged 18-24 with medium support needs	Large House of 8-10 units of Multiple Occupation (HMO) and example of a similar project being the Origin 99 Project. ¹⁶
Aged 18-24 with medium to low support needs	<p>Shared 3-4 bedroom flats where young people can receive the Shared Accommodation Rate of housing benefit.</p> <p>An example of a similar project is Network Homes' Project Vista, an intermediate rent project providing shared housing for people on lower income that includes all utilities and council tax.</p>
Aged 18-24 who are now ready to move on.	<p>Option 1 – Alliance members and G15 members seek to influence local authorities to boost the Choice Based Letting's points of a young person if they can demonstrate they are tenancy ready through a stay in shared housing with support from a voluntary sector organisation, or completion of a tenancy ready course.</p> <p>Option 2 – Housing associations could seek to negotiate agreements with local authorities to ring fence some association units for young people who have been in shared housing and supported by voluntary sector organisations.</p>

16. A project of 10 units managed by Origin with support to young people being provided by New Horizons Youth Centre.

What will be involved?

7.11 To create the kind of accommodation options set out above there will need to be a commitment from Alliance partners to identifying suitable units currently not in use or that could be re-purposed. There would need to be a careful transition for the young person and good joint-working between the youth homelessness charities and the housing association with pre-tenancy support in place.

7.12 There would also need to be a commitment by housing associations to seek to influence how local authorities use their nomination rights to housing association accommodation. Housing associations would also need to look at how they can better facilitate access to their accommodation as part of move-on from shared housing and how they can prepare new tenants aged 18-24 for tenancy sustainment.

What are the likely costs and benefits?

Costs	Benefits i.e. it has the potential to benefit these numbers of Young People
<p>10 unit HMO</p> <p>Rent and service charges (including utilities) – £159 per week.</p> <p>Housing Management costs for a 10 bedroom scheme – £6,200-7,800 per year.</p> <p>An additional £4,500-5,000 per year for maintenance and repair costs</p> <p>Voluntary sector support costs – £19,000 per year</p> <hr/> <p>Total costs estimated at £31,800 (using the higher figures in the range above)</p>	<p>For a 10 unit scheme, with a six month stay 15 young people would benefit per year at a cost of £2,120 per young person per year.</p> <p>The cost of a single person sleeping rough in the UK for 12 months has been estimated at £20,128.¹⁷</p>
<p>Shared housing - 4 units</p> <p>The cost of providing intermediate rent at a monthly discount to each young person – of £207 per month – £9,936.</p> <p>In-between tenancies repairs: at an annual cost of approximately £97 per room – £4,656</p> <p>Voluntary sector support costs – £19k</p> <hr/> <p>Total costs estimated at £33,592</p>	<p>For a 4 unit scheme with a six month stay 6 young people would benefit per year at a cost of £5,599 per young person per year.</p> <p>Properties used could be hard to let or those that are void and require re-purposing. Using the accommodation in this way provides rental income and reduces management costs.</p> <p>Evidence shows that people who experience homelessness for three months or longer cost on average £4,298 per person to NHS services, £2,099 per person for mental health services and £11,991 per person in contact with the criminal justice system.¹⁸</p>

17. Crisis, 2018. *Cost of homelessness*. Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/cost-of-homelessness/>

18. Crisis, 2018.

For future consideration: other ideas that have emerged from the research

- ✦ Research whether and which housing associations have sons and daughters policies and what the Alliance can learn from how these are working in practice.
- ✦ Create smaller, cheaper units with white goods and utilities included to support affordability for young people.
- ✦ Create accommodation and tenancy support together as an alliance that will offer access to low cost accommodation for short term stay and provide transition support from the youth homelessness agencies.
- ✦ To support tenancy sustainment, low level support that helps avoid things escalating should be provided as part of housing association's minimum standards for tenancy sustainment.
- ✦ To pilot a Critical Time Intervention project – to support young people to prepare for and/or when they first move into a housing association or a private rented sector tenancy.

08

Conclusion and recommendations for the Alliance's future development

8.1 In this final part of the report we assess the Alliance's progress and make some suggestions to support its future development.

Alliance members' reflections

8.2 Membership of the Alliance will remain restricted to the current 10 organisations, noting that eight of these have so far been active members. Members wanted a mixture of quick wins and bigger ambitions that they could test and learn from. It was suggested that all project proposals must be achievable and realistic, should be initiated quickly, be targeted, and run for a maximum of three months initially. By trying out new projects together, the learning from 'getting it wrong' will be shared.

8.3 Alliance members discussed the challenges of participating in the Alliance. For housing associations, it may centre on finding ways through their internal management structures and decision-making processes. Related to this it was noted that there is a role for senior colleagues among Alliance members to 'push up' and garner support from senior executives across the Alliance as well as the G15 group of housing associations. For youth homelessness charities, the challenge of participating in the Alliance was capacity; it was not known whether a lack of capacity might explain why some members have not so far been active in the Alliance.

Campbell Tickell's recommendations

8.4 Based on our experience of working alongside the Alliance for the past five months, there would appear to be four factors that the Alliance would benefit from attention.

Who's at the table	Action learning	Commitment	Co-production
Who are the right people to have 'round the table'? If senior people are absent, how do partners go about securing their organisation's buy-in? If frontline staff are absent, how do you ensure that project plans are informed by their experience?	How will the Alliance organise itself so that it reflects and learns from the projects that it plans to pilot? Who will need to be involved? How will the Alliance ensure that what is learned informs the decisions and actions taken about what to do next?	What is expected from members of the Alliance? As partners, the Alliance has come together and committed to developing and implementing a project plan. Is it an expectation that if an organisation is 'around the Alliance table' it has to be active in delivery?	The findings and projects bear out the value of co-producing them with young people. How would the Alliance see this co-production approach in the future working of the partnership? How can the Alliance draw on the expertise of members to ensure that young people continue to have a voice?

- 8.5** The Alliance has worked collaboratively throughout the research project. The Alliance has also worked collaboratively with young people experiencing homelessness to ensure that the work of the Alliance reflects what they think will work. The three projects selected provide a firm foundation for the collective effort of members going forward. The combination of a project led by the youth homelessness charities, one led by the housing associations and one that will be co-led provides a sound platform to further strengthen collaboration across Alliance partners.
- 8.6** There are also a number of further areas of future joint working that have been identified and could be taken forward. These would further strengthen the Alliance and ensure that the issues affecting young people who are or have been housing association tenants and are at risk of or are actually experiencing homelessness, can be tackled through this unique collaboration.

Appendix 1

Record of workshop attendance

Frontline Staff Workshop Attendees, 21st November 2019

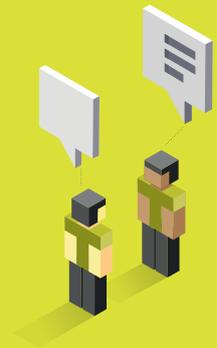
Organisation	Roles of those attending
The Hyde Group	Employment Officer, Neighbourhood Investment Officer, Graduate Trainee, Tenancy Sustainment Officer, Youth Engagement Officer, Regional Resident Involvement Officer, Resident Service Improvement Officer, Youth Project Worker
Peabody	
Network Homes	
Metropolitan Thames Valley	
Clarion	

Together Members Workshop Attendees, 10th December 2019

Organisation	Roles of those attending
Berkeley Foundation	Youth Project Worker, Research and Policy Analyst, Youth Engagement Officer, Chief Executive, Accommodation Projects Officer, Domestic Abuse Housing Officer, Head of Funding and Research, Programme Officer, Grants Programme Manager
The Hyde Group	
New Horizon Youth Centre	
Peabody	
Network Homes	
Metropolitan Thames Valley	
Clarion	
Safer London	

Housing Solutions

**for Young People
Experiencing
Homelessness
in London**



Together Alliance

November 2020

For more information on this
project and the Together Alliance
please get in touch via:

lyg@nhyouthcentre.org.uk

[@LDNyouthgateway](https://twitter.com/LDNyouthgateway)