

Improving services for young people experiencing homelessness

CASE REPORT FEBRUARY 2024

NEW
HORIZON
YOUTH
CENTRE

LSE

Housing and
Communities

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Estimates suggest that almost half of all young people experiencing homelessness do not contact their local authority, or face barriers in doing so¹. And only 38% of those who do get a positive outcome².

In the autumn of 2023, New Horizon Youth Centre and LSE collaborated on a piece of research exploring young people's experiences of engaging with local authority homelessness services.

We spoke with young people with experience of homelessness, housing leads from local authorities, a spokesperson from a Government department, voluntary sector and partnership organisations.

The research found that:

- 01** Young people often don't feel listened to or understood by local authorities.
- 02** There are unrealistic demands on young people to 'evidence' their situation before they are eligible to receive support.
- 03** Young people often did not know where to go or how to access support, and council's communication can be confusing

04 Young people are often passed from person to person and having to repeat their story. This is exhausting and upsetting and leads to some people giving up.

05 The level of support provided by local authorities can be inconsistent, there are some positive stories and some very negative.

06 Local authorities often provide accommodation that is not gender- or age-appropriate.

07 Many formal support services designed to protect children disappear when a young person turns 18, meaning they must learn to navigate adult services overnight.

08 Young people reported that having a charity to advocate on their behalf was crucial in being able to access local authority support.

09 Young people need more than just support with housing. They need support to gain jobs and education, as well as emotional and mental health support.

¹NHYC (2023). *Plan for the 136k Policy Briefing*. https://nhyouthcentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Youth-Homelessness-Strategy_Policy-Briefing-v15.pdf

²Nicoletti, A. (2023). Unaccounted: The scale of youth homelessness in the UK. *Centreport*. <https://centreport.org.uk/research-reports/unaccounted-scale-youth-homelessness-uk>

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE PROCESSES AND HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS:

SHORT TERM

→ **LOCAL AUTHORITIES:** Young people should be provided with gender/age-appropriate accommodation where possible via needs assessment, with better sharing of facilities across local authorities.

→ **NATIONAL:** The Homelessness Code of Guidance should be updated to include a specific chapter on engaging with, and offering exemplar support to, young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.



"At least listen to what we're saying and not be against us. Be on our side... just listen to us."

"[The local authority] was asking me for a letter of evidence that I was experiencing domestic abuse, like he was asking me if I reported it anywhere. I was like what do you mean evidence, why are they asking for evidence? But then eventually the charity made a complaint. If I didn't have a charity on my side, I might not have had the help."

- Young people being supported by NHYC



MEDIUM TERM

→ **LONDON:** London Councils should help create a pan-London centralised website for young people setting out rights and the options available to them if they become, or are threatened with homelessness. It would identify help available within each borough alongside voluntary support services.

→ **LONDON:** A pan-London reciprocal should be established to ensure underutilised housing stock and void properties can be brought into use for young people, and to ensure more effective sharing of resources and facilities across boroughs.

LONG TERM

→ **LOCAL AUTHORITIES:** Co-location of council housing and other statutory and voluntary services including mental and physical health, education, training, and advice. Holistic and wraparound support to meet young people where they are. Council housing teams should undertake training on specific needs of young people and how best to support them.

→ **NATIONAL:** Government should commit to a national strategy to end youth homelessness with a focus on specific allocations for new housing that meets the needs of young people.



"I'm not saying it's easy; it's not, because there are multiple challenges for different parts of the system. But if we can reduce all of that movement, and if we can bring our resources together, cross-sector, cross-systems, and make it easy for the person that needs the assistance rather than all the bits that we want to do, then... they're much more likely to experience positive outcomes."

