From chaos to calm:
How consistency and collaboration change lives for young people affected by community violence. ***The policy recommendations***

As part of our Youth Justice team's evaluation, we produced a systematic review and five composite case studies, from which a range of policy recommendations were made. While these recommendations are explored in detail within the respective reports, this document provides a consolidated summary, organised under seven key themes.

Transition as an opportunity, not a cliff edge

Achieving long-term stability requires support that extends beyond securing accommodation, recognising that young people's needs continue to evolve throughout their transition from homeless to obtaining long-term accommodation, and beyond. The following recommendations focus on strengthening ongoing support, reducing systemic barriers, and promoting earlier intervention to improve longer-term outcomes.

- **Recognise that securing accommodation is not the endpoint**, but the beginning of a critical transition phase to stability that requires ongoing, consistent, flexible, and where required, increased relational support.

- **Improve and normalise long-term access to specialist and ongoing support**, particularly psychological services, recognising behaviours such as disengagement or emotional dysregulation as potential indicators of underlying need. Long-term psychological support should be consistently available to any young person who has had to relocate following community violence, acknowledging the last impact of both the community violence they have experienced, and the disruption caused by relocation.

- The NHYC Youth Justice Team combines **relational insight with detailed understanding of housing, risk and system navigation**. However, in many cases, their involvement is triggered once situations have already escalated. Earlier and more proactive involvement in decision-making processes would allow risks to be identified and managed before they reach crisis point, strengthening prevention and reducing the need for reactive responses.

- **Ensure systems enable young people to move forward by removing financial disincentives**, such as changing the benefit taper rate for those in supported accommodation or updating LHA rates, improving targeted financial support (such as deposit schemes) and offering realistic employment and education pathways.



Processes and protocols

Accessing suitable accommodation should be a coordinated, transparent and person-centred process that recognises the complexity of young people's circumstances and the impact that housing decisions can have on their safety and wellbeing. The recommendations from the synthesis report and composite case studies focus on improving coordination between services, making housing processes more accessible and strengthening decision-making around accommodation.



- **Improve the process of accessing accommodation by strengthening the sharing of information** to reduce duplication, improve coordination and provide clearer communication on timelines and responsibilities between services, particularly during transitions. This should include consistent protocols for sharing information across services to prevent young people having to repeatedly recount their experiences.

- **Make housing processes easier for young people to understand and navigate**, particularly for young people who are neurodiverse and/or have complex needs. These processes should always be co-designed and produced with young people themselves.

- **Strengthen how risk is assessed in housing decisions through a more structured and comprehensive approach**. This should consider factors such as proximity to support networks, young person's sense of safety (physical and psychological), the presence and behaviour of others in the environment, and how well a placement aligns with a young person's mental health and neurodevelopmental needs.

Sector / Workforce

The model of practice underpinning the New Horizon Youth Justice Team's work is both time-intensive and emotionally demanding. Practitioners are managing complexity across multiple systems, maintain relationships through instability, and carrying significant responsibility for young people's safety and wellbeing. Without sufficient capacity, effective practice becomes reliant on individual resilience rather than being embedded within sustainable service design, leading to burnout and negative effect on young people's outcomes.

To ensure service delivering this work are able to meet these demands and support staff wellbeing, appropriate resourcing is required.

This must include:

- **realistic caseload expectations;**
- **protected time for reflective practice and supervision, both for cases and clinical, enabling practitioners to process and hold the emotional demands of the role;**
- **adequate resourcing of the additional direct costs associated with safely supporting this cohort;**
- **monetary recognition of the skill and intensity involved in delivering this role;**
- **service design, including caseload decisions, should ensure that time is actively protected to balance stabilising work, and crisis response.**

Accommodation

As reflected throughout the synthesis report and composite case studies the type and quality of the accommodation young people were placed in had a direct impact on their safety, wellbeing and likelihood of further system involvement.

In response to these are the three significant recommendations;

1. Intentionally **design and locate accommodation** to support belonging and encourage young people to build new and healthier networks.

2. Shared accommodation for this cohort can often undermine emotional regulation and increase the likelihood of conflict, disengagement, or further systems involvement, and should be suggested after careful consideration to the young person's needs and with robust safeguarding measures in place. The evidence from the synthesis report and composite case study highlights the **self-contained accommodation is often the best option**. To ensure self-contained is a viable option, there should be a review and change to the Shared Accommodation Rate for under 35s.

3. On occasions where shared accommodation is used, placements should be supported by **dynamic risk assessments that are regularly reviewed**, enabling emerging challenges to be identified and addressed before they escalate into crisis. Expanding access to self-contained or low-density accommodation is likely to significantly improve young people's ability to stabilise and sustain progress.

Relocations and separations

Relocation is an important safeguarding response to reduce immediate risk for some young people affected by community violence but, it has significant practical, emotional and relational implications that require careful consideration. The following



recommendations focus on strengthening decision-making around relocation, increasing the range of available options, and ensuring that appropriate planning and support are in place before, during and after a move to promote longer-term safety and stability.

- **Decisions regarding the relocation of a young person should be made based on individual circumstances**, rather than a default response. This includes an analysis of the impact of the relocation, avoiding assumptions and adultification, and prioritising long-term sustainability over immediate availability.

- **Strengthen how relational risk is understood in decisions about relocation** with a more structured and comprehensive approach that explicitly considers the impact of actions like separation from existing support networks.

- **Increase the availability of housing options to support whole-family relocation** where that is the most appropriate option. Ensuring that these options do not force families to have to concede their tenancy agreements. A solution to this could be bringing back a revised version of the pan-London reciprocal.

- **Plan for the ongoing practical, mental and logistical impact** of relocation and separation with regular review points.

Evidence and learning

While practitioners hold deep experiential knowledge about how change unfolds for young people, including the importance of relational continuity, living environment and system context, this knowledge is not always captured in ways that can inform commissioning or decision-making at service or system level. Addressing this requires revising both what is recorded and how it is recorded.

This includes:

- **Designing recording and monitoring processes that are aligned with the realities of practice, including pace, complexity and variability of the work;**
- **Simplifying systems so they are useable under pressure and accessible to staff with different levels of technical confidence;**
- **Moving beyond destination measure to include indicators of foundational and developmental change, including early shifts in stability;**
- **Identifying and tracking key structural barriers, enabling practitioners to evidence how systems conditions shape young people's journeys over time, while ensuring that data is actively used both within the team to inform decision-making and externally to support advocacy and influence system change.**
- **Building in protected time for recording and reflection, recognising this as a core part of practice, rather than an additional administrative task.**

Within, or leaving custody

Young people's journey though custody, resettlement and support systems require a coordinated approach that recognises the importance of relationships, environments and continuity of care. The following recommendations, from the synthesis report and composite case studies, focus on strengthening transitions, improving decision-making, and ensuring young people receive the right support to achieve stability and independence.



- **Recognise custody as a disruption to the development of skills young people need** to live independently and ensure support within custody and after leaving custody addresses this.
- **Make release from custody feel like a supported transition**, not a cliff edge, and build in more streamlined and consistent support.
- **Allow a wider network of professionals and informal support networks**, into the decision making around licence conditions to increase stability, and to support young people to make life choices which are beneficial to them and their life aspirations.
- **Place a greater weight on environment in placement decisions, prioritising a trauma informed approached**. Placement decisions should prioritise environments that are calm, safe and suited to a young

person's individual needs, rather than focusing primarily on availability. This is imperative for young people who have experienced trauma, or where their mental health and neurodivergent needs shape how they respond to their environment. Where young people with similar vulnerabilities live together, additional support may be needed to reduce the risk of stress and escalation.

- **Recognise and resource the full scope of the third sector practitioner role**, particularly as a convenor of systems and ensure these roles are supported to do their work sustainably. Furthermore, ensuring third sector practitioners voice carries equal weight to those of statutory professionals, recognising the value of their work and the relationship with the young person.

- **The intersection between contextual harm and homelessness needs to be recognised when planning a young person's resettlement.** The composite case studies highlighted that resettlement arrangements can unintentionally increase isolation when young people are placed far from their personal and professional support networks or in accommodation that is unsafe or unsuitable. This can create a stronger pull back to areas where they are at risk, lead to disengagement from the housing process, and ultimately increase the likelihood of repeated homelessness.



Additional context and detail for each of these recommendations is explained in full in our ***Youth Justice evaluation***, which you can read **here**. For any questions, feedback or enquiries please contact us via **blueprint@nhyouthcentre.org.uk**