

End Youth Homelessness Cymru presents:

A Roadmap to Ending Youth Homelessness in Wales



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Introduction

This document has been drafted in cooperation with members of EYHC's steering group, as well as young people who have experienced homelessness, and represents a collaborative approach to ending youth homelessness in Wales.

The End Youth Homelessness Cymru coalition has been working to identify preventative approaches to youth homelessness for over 3 years now. During that period, we've had hundreds of conversations: with young people who have experienced homelessness; with colleagues from dozens of different sectors within Wales; with partners from across the world. These have helped us build a much better picture of the routes into youth homelessness and its triggers.

To further develop our knowledge about youth homelessness in Wales, we've delivered some important [research](#), with a particular focus on amplifying the voices of those with lived experience. From this, we know much of what works to prevent youth homelessness from happening in the first place, or to ensure that it is a brief and non-recurrent experience where it has not been initially prevented.

We are now bringing that knowledge together, setting out **What We Know** and **What We Should Do About It** in a single, accessible document, from which can be drawn expert, youth-informed and evidenced recommendations to end youth homelessness in Wales.

The response to COVID-19 has shown how quickly policy positions can change. We need to ensure that we are in the best possible position to ensure that the knowledge accumulated throughout EYHC's progress is accessible and ready to be used to influence future policy decisions. There are still gaps in our knowledge, but rather than wait until we know everything (!), we need to set out proposals for change ASAP and then fill in the gaps as we go.

What do we want to achieve with this Roadmap?

1. We want it to influence the content of a Welsh Government Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy; to effectively and finally end youth homelessness in Wales, Welsh Government must deliver a strategy committing to youth-oriented homelessness prevention, which acknowledges youth homelessness as a distinct issue which requires distinct solutions.
2. We want local authorities to be able to use it to cast an eye over the services available in their areas and for it to guide commissioning practices to fill in the gaps. This should influence their 5-year homelessness plans and other key documents (Local Development Plans, Corporate Parenting Strategies, etc.).
3. We want this to inform the Action Plan being developed, as a result of the Welsh Government's Homelessness Action Group.¹
4. We want existing service providers to see it as a blueprint for effective interventions, to inform service delivery or support funding bids for new projects.
5. We want funders to see this as a guide to what sort of projects they should be funding to move us toward ending youth homelessness.
6. We want young people to be able to look at this document and know that whoever they are, whatever their background, if they are at risk of homelessness they have been considered and an appropriate preventative solution is to be found here.

Definition of Youth Homelessness

For the purpose of this document, we are working to the definition established by FEANTSA in the European Framework for Defining Youth Homelessness (2020):

*“Youth homelessness occurs when an individual between the ages of 13 and 26 is experiencing rooflessness or houselessness or is living in insecure or inadequate housing without a parent, family member or other legal guardian”.*²

1 Welsh Government (2020) *The framework of policies, approaches and plans needed to end homelessness in Wales (What ending homelessness in Wales looks like)*. Accessed at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-03/homelessness-action-group-report-march-2020_0.pdf

2 FEANTSA (2020) *European definition of youth homelessness 2020*. Accessed at: https://www.feantsa.org/download/framework-for-defining-youth-homelessness_final_pdf3614092469143708469.pdf

Typology

The Roadmap uses a 5-part prevention typology, advanced by Fitzpatrick et al, to differentiate between specific types of intervention required at different points in time to prevent youth homelessness.³ As a general rule, to eradicate homelessness, we need to move resources further upstream, i.e. toward Universal and Targeted prevention. Crisis, emergency and recovery responses will probably always be needed to support people who experience traumatic situations which put them at risk of homelessness, but greater focus on earlier prevention, will lead to fewer of these situations.



3 Fitzpatrick, S. Mackie, P. Wood, J. (2021) *Advancing a Five-Level Typology of Homelessness Prevention* Manuscript submitted for publication.

Universal Prevention

Introduction

Universal prevention of youth homelessness means preventing or minimising homelessness risks across the population at large. These are the broad, society-wide, approaches to preventing issues that undermine young people's ability to access and maintain secure, stable and sustainable accommodation. Accepting that UK Government has responsibility for, and significant influence on, some aspects of these areas, there is still considerable responsibility with Welsh Government for issues like housing and poverty reduction, so action can be taken within Wales that addresses this level of prevention.

This section of the Roadmap focusses on four key areas, setting out what we know about each area and what we, as a country, should do about them.

These are: Poverty Reduction; Provision of Sufficient Affordable Housing Suitable for Young People; Minimising Discrimination; Dealing with Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Poverty Reduction: What We Know

"The most important driver of homelessness in all its forms is poverty... Other drivers include availability and affordability of accommodation, the extent to which prevention measures are used, and the demographics of people experiencing homelessness."⁴

Poverty is very often at the root of youth homelessness. In a 2016 UK-based study, Bramley and Fitzpatrick found that experience of childhood poverty was a strong predictor of latter homelessness.⁵ A recent Joseph Rowntree report (2020) has found that, in Wales, "child poverty has been on a downward trend falling from 33% in 2009-12, to 28% in 2015-18", but still points to worryingly high levels of poverty, with a particularly concerning factor being that 4 in 10 working households are still not earning enough to leave poverty.⁶ A recent Save the

4 Bramley, C (2017) *Homelessness projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain Crisis* Accessed at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237582/crisis_homelessness_projections_2017.pdf.

5 Bramley, C & Fitzpatrick, S (2016) *Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk?* Accessed at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02673037.2017.1344957>.

6 Matejic, P (2020) *Poverty in Wales 2020* Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Accessed at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-wales-2020#:~:text=What%20you%20need%20to%20know,the%20rest%20of%20the%20UK>.

Children report highlighted that in terms of both relative and severe poverty, Wales has the highest rate of child poverty of any nation in the UK.⁷

“Being able to afford food for the month is not living. Transport is needed and other things”

– Participant in Affordable Housing Review response (2019)

Furthermore, Shelter Cymru research (2020) into the living conditions of people in Wales during the COVID-19 crisis shows how the ongoing situation has the potential to worsen child poverty, finding that more than one in three children (35 per cent) – the equivalent of 220,000 children – lived in homes that saw a decrease in income during lockdown. Further, an estimated 30,000 children (5 per cent) lived in homes where parents or guardians had to choose between paying for food and paying housing costs.⁸

Beyond growing up in poverty, young people who have spoken to EYHC talked frequently of the limitations that poverty sets upon them as young adults. They talked about how even if they could cover the rent and bills, they were often only just scraping by, with a subsequent effect on their wellbeing and ability to move out of their precarious financial position.

“Young people deserve time and space and income to be able to enjoy life not just survive. This would also help my mental health and help me know what I really want to do with my life”

– Participant in Affordable Housing Review response (2019)

COVID-19 has driven some change in policy on child poverty, with a focus on children eligible for free school meals (FSM). “Additional spending both during the pandemic and beyond represents a tangible commitment from the Welsh Government to try and mitigate some of the effects of the financial impact of COVID-19 felt by children”⁹. Beyond the pandemic, this should be maintained, but a comprehensive and ambitious government strategy should address the underlying poverty causing children to require such support (the number of FSM eligible children has risen over the last decade to 85,731 in 2019/2020).¹⁰

7 Chamberlain, R. and Mullineux, R. (with Cocco, H. and Drysdale, S.), *Child Poverty Snapshots: The Local Picture in Wales*, Save the Children. Accessed at: <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/global/reports/hunger-and-livelihoods/Child-Poverty-Snapshots-English.pdf>

8 Shelter Cymru (2020) *Briefing Paper: Life in Lockdown in Wales*. Accessed at: https://sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Life-in-lockdown-in-Wales_Nov-2020.pdf

9 Matejic, P (2020) *Poverty in Wales 2020* Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Accessed at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-wales-2020#:~:text=What%20you%20need%20to%20know,the%20rest%20of%20the%20UK>

10 Welsh Government (2020) *Pupils eligible for free school meals by local authority, region and year*. Statswales. Accessed at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Provision-of-Meals-and-Milk/pupilseligibleforfreeschoolmeals-by-localauthorityregion-year>

As noted, in-work poverty affects a high proportion of people in Wales, placing stress on people's ability to pay rent. Young people are particularly at risk, as the most likely to work in low-paid roles, with reduced access to welfare payments compared to older people and in jobs that are most precarious due to the impact of COVID-19. "The proportion of young adult workers in low-paid sectors (like retail, hospitality and leisure) has risen in Wales over much of the 2010s. While 44 per cent of workers born in 1981-1985 worked in one of these three low-paying sectors at the age of 21, for those born in 1991-95 that had risen to 52 per cent".¹¹ These sectors were among the most likely to be negatively affected by COVID-19, with consequent and disproportionate impact on young people. "Young workers were not only much more likely to be furloughed, but are much more likely to have lost their job subsequently if they were".¹²

For young people in work their earning potential (and thus ability to access appropriate accommodation) was already limited, either due to a lack of experience or due to systemic discrimination and a lower minimum wage. They are now most likely to have been hit by the economic fallout of COVID-19. They are also often at the back of the queue for social housing, so more reliant on the private rented sector than older people:

"Young people are least likely to qualify for (social housing), unless they have dependent children, because they have not had time to advance themselves up the queue, so not many of them get access to this dwindling stock of affordable housing. Whilst 14% of 18–30 year olds were in some form of social housing in 1997, only 9% were so in 2015".¹³

Young people make up a significant proportion of the population housed in private rented accommodation (25% of private tenants in Wales were aged 16-24 in 2018).¹⁴ Poverty is disproportionately high amongst private renters in Wales, where "poverty rates amongst private renters remain higher in Wales than elsewhere in the UK. As of 2016-19, only the North East of England (45%) had a higher proportion of private renters in poverty."¹⁵

11 McCurdy, C. *From locking down to levelling up: The past, present and future of Welsh living standards*, Resolution Foundation, November 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2020/11/From-locking-down-to-levelling-up.pdf>.

12 M Brewer, N. Cominetti, K. Henehan, C. McCurdy, R. Sehmi & Slaughter, H. (2020) *Jobs, jobs, jobs: Evaluating the effects of the current economic crisis on the UK labour market*, Resolution Foundation, Accessed at: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2020/10/Jobs-jobs-jobs.pdf>.

13 Green A. (2017) Britain's Housing Disaster and Its Effects on Young People. In: *The Crisis for Young People*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. Accessed at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58547-5_4

14 Office of National Statistics, *UK private rented sector: 2018* (latest release). Accessed at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/ukprivaterentedsector/2018>

15 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2020) Briefing: Poverty in Wales 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/56856/download?token=KQV2npcS&filetype=briefing>

The nature of the UK welfare system disadvantages young people, who are entitled to lower benefit rates than older people: the basic allowance of Universal Credit for a single claimant under the age of 25 is £342.72 and it is £409.89 for a single claimant aged over 25, for example.¹⁶ This reduced access to income can make it difficult for young people to afford basic amenities.¹⁷ It can also present a barrier to access to housing: research from England in 2018 found that 47% of housing associations and 79% of private landlords were concerned about letting to young people on Universal Credit.¹⁸ Centrepoin (2020) suggest these lower entitlements are based on the idea that family and friends will step in to make up the difference, but many young people simply don't have the kind of support network able to do this.¹⁹

The economic impact of COVID-19 on young people's employment status increases risk of homelessness and requires bold policy to counteract. Policy makers must consider both ensuring that those young people unable to retain or access jobs are supported, while also addressing the fact that for those still in work, many are paid so poorly that any crisis (a relationship breakdown, for instance) could leave them unable to pay housing costs.

"There are limits to the extent to which policies designed to prevent and alleviate homelessness can (be) successful in the wider context of a labour market that increasingly does not provide people with the income they need to escape material deprivation and weather financial shocks (i.e. the need to pull together a deposit at short notice)."²⁰

16 Gov UK (2020) *Universal Credit*. Accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/what-youll-get>

17 Centrepoin (2018). *Ready to move on: Barriers to homeless young people accessing longer-term accommodation*. Accessed at: <https://centrepoin.org.uk/media/3048/ready-to-move-on.pdf>

18 As 17 Centrepoin (2018).

19 Centrepoin (2020) *Locked Out: Youth Homelessness during and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic*. Accessed at: <https://centrepoin.org.uk/media/4293/locked-out-report.pdf>

20 Jones, K. Ahmed, A. Madoc-Jones, I. Gibbons, A. Rogers, M. & Wilding, M. (2020) *Working and Homeless: Exploring the Interaction of Housing and Labour Market Insecurity*. *Social Policy and Society*, 19(1), 121-132. Accessed at: [SPS-TS19-2 Jones Et Al Working Homelessness - Final Version.Pdf \(Mmu.Ac.Uk\)](https://www.mmu.ac.uk/~socialpolicy/SPS-TS19-2/Jones%20et%20al%20Working%20Homelessness%20-%20Final%20Version.Pdf)

Poverty Reduction: What We Should Do

Welfare sits principally within the competence of UK Government, so major reform of the system is out of the hands of the Welsh Government. However, the Bevan Foundation (2021) make a compelling argument that the 12 financial support schemes provided by Welsh Government and Welsh local authorities as supplements to the UK system are, taken together, significant (with at least £400 million spent per year).²¹ They argue for these schemes to be brought together into a Welsh Benefits scheme, with simpler application processes via a single point of access and refined eligibility criteria based on clear criteria rather than discretion, in order to better address poverty in Wales. Exploration of how this system, if it is developed, could best operate to prevent youth homelessness could prove beneficial.

Wales needs a comprehensive and long-term child poverty strategy, an issue at the root of much youth homelessness. Social deprivation is associated with enduring, complex physical and mental health problems for children, young people and their families.²² These issues are, in turn, linked to homelessness.²³ Any future Welsh Ending Youth Homelessness Strategy should have at its foundation a linked commitment to tackling child poverty. The End Child Poverty Network Cymru has set out a series of clear, reasonable and deliverable recommendations in its 2021 manifesto and the Welsh Government must set out a strategy to deliver on these, in order to ultimately end youth homelessness.²⁴

Work has to pay enough for young people to be able to meet basic costs, including rent. Whereas levers exist among social landlords to flex rents to meet income (see for instance the use of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Living Rent model by housing associations such as Trivallis²⁵), young people are more likely to live in the private rented sector (where poverty rates are higher in Wales than elsewhere in the UK)²⁶. As such, intervention to ensure that working young people's incomes are sufficient to afford the rent should be considered.

21 The Bevan Foundation (2021) *The Case for a Welsh Benefits System*. The Bevan Foundation. Accessed at: <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/commentary/case-for-welsh-benefits-system/>.

22 Lund, C. Breen, A. Flisher, A. Kakuma, R. Corrigall, J. Joska, J. et al. (2010) Poverty and common mental disorders in low and middle income countries: A systematic review. *Social Science & Medicine*. 2010;71:517-28 Accessed at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20621748/>.

23 Hodgson, K. J. (2014) *The Mental Health of Young People with Experiences of Homelessness*. Thesis. University of Cardiff. Accessed at: <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/59590/2/2014hodgsonphd.pdf>.

24 McFarlane, K. (2021) *Senedd Elections – Child Poverty: A Manifesto towards Eradication 2021* Children in Wales. Accessed at: <https://www.childreninwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ECPN-Manifesto-2021.pdf>.

25 Trivallis (2019) *Rent Setting Policy*. Accessed at: <https://www.trivallis.co.uk/en/fair-rent-review/>

26 Matejic, P (2020) *Poverty in Wales 2020* Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Accessed at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-wales-2020#:~:text=What%20you%20need%20to%20know,the%20rest%20of%20the%20UK.>

Recommendation 1

Welsh Government should deliver a comprehensive child poverty strategy, with clear, measurable and ambitious milestones.

Recommendation 2

Welsh Government should build on work undertaken by the Bevan Foundation and addressed in detail in the second Homelessness Action Group report, to improve the welfare system so that young people in Wales are able to access and sustain tenancies.

Provision of Sufficient Affordable Housing Suitable for Young People: What We Know

"I think one of the things I would ask for is to build more houses. There are just not enough houses around here at all. There are just not enough places for young people to go"

– Eryn, 20, a participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks (2020)

At the core of EYHC's work is the principle that the only way to effectively end youth homelessness is to address the issue across a range of policy areas; the reasons for many young people's homelessness are more complex than simple lack of housing. However, young people's ability to access and sustain appropriate accommodation is, of course, a fundamental consideration in the prevention of homelessness. Research has pointed to a chronic undersupply of social housing in areas of Wales, and, in particular, the one-bed housing most likely to be accessed by single, young people.²⁷

"There's a lack of accommodation for one-bedrooms. These people are just happy enough just to have four walls around them and a roof. I mean I was just happy to be inside. As long as you are inside you are safe. It make sense"

– Ally, aged 23 a participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks (2020)

²⁷ Archer, T. Green, S. Wilson, I. (2018) *Effective housing for people on low incomes in the Welsh Valleys* Bevan Foundation/ JRF. Accessed at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/effective-housing-people-low-incomes-welsh-valleys>.

“There should be more options on where to go. There is nothing. When you see all them houses that are all boarded up. There is nothing being done with them.”

– Dafydd, 20

Young people have told us that their sense of frustration at the lack of affordable housing available to them is compounded by the visibility of empty buildings which are not being used to provide homes. Some young people described their anger at the failure to provide sufficient affordable housing for them and their peers, with one noting that they felt like they were being mocked.

“There is a huge building, it used to be (a bank), they are knocking it down to build a restaurant. We don’t need another restaurant. Give something to people who need it not another overpriced restaurant that we will never see...because we don’t earn enough. It’s mocking. It’s really, really mocking”

– Bill, 17, a participant in Don’t Let Me Fall Through the Cracks (2020)

There is support available in some local authorities for owners of empty properties to bring these back to use (with £25,000 grants available from Welsh Government), but this is not linked to work being undertaken to address youth homelessness, specifically.²⁸ Linking this refurbishment to youth homelessness policy by supporting programmes by which young people could work on the refurbishment of empty homes that they then move into (perhaps by supporting expansion of programmes like the OVO Foundation’s Future Builders²⁹) could be worth exploration, to address both empty homes and youth homelessness together.

UK Government welfare reforms have systematically disadvantaged young people, limiting their ability to access housing, as rents have risen without corresponding LHA rate rises. Under 35s have been bracketed together and, with some exceptions, limited to a lower rate of housing costs than older people. This puts pressure on the limited, lower-rent accommodation available.

“I’ve been on the waiting list for 5 years. I’m currently renting in a private property and it’s costing a lot of money a month”

– Participant in Affordable Housing Review response (2019)

28 Welsh Government (2021) Empty Homes Grant (Valleys Taskforce areas). Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/valleys-taskforce-empty-homes>.

29 OVO Foundation *Future Builders: Lessons Learnt and Future Plans* (2018) accessed at: <https://www.ovenergy.com/binaries/content/assets/documents/pdfs/ovo-foundation/future-builders-lessons-learnt-and-future-plans.pdf>.

Research has shown that a steady increase in housing costs is driving poverty amongst young people. The Resolution Foundation (2019) found that 22% of millennials experience poverty after housing costs.³⁰

"I've been on the waiting list for 2 years – there are no available properties suitable for me. It's difficult – I'm a care leaver and my social worker's struggled (to help me find appropriate housing)"

– Participant in Affordable Housing Review response (2019)

Young people have told us they feel trapped on benefits and they are scared to progress into education, training and employment. They have told us they are worried about getting into financial difficulty.

"As a single person, the housing element (of Universal Credit) doesn't cover rent fully"

– Participant in Affordable Housing Review response (2019)

"I was limited to certain jobs because if you work above a certain amount, you get the first £60 and then past that they take 65p of every £1 you earn and I would have been better off on benefits... You have to get a job but if you get a job, you get less Universal Credit. It was difficult to find something out there."

– Participant in Affordable Housing Review response (2019)

"I don't want to go to college. I am living on my own so I've got that fear of my money being cut and it's not enough – I need to make sure my housing is covered and everything. Because, I have got no family I am literally in this world on my own"

– Carla, aged 20, Participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks (2020)

30 Rahman, F. (2019) *The generation of poverty: Poverty over the life course for different generations*, Resolution Foundation, Accessed at: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2019/05/Generation-of-Poverty-Report.pdf>.

Provision of Sufficient, Affordable Housing Suitable for Young People: What We Should Do

Options in Wales to respond to these challenges could include subsidised welfare payments for young people, to enable access to housing, or the introduction of flexible rents for young people. The former point is analysed in detail and recommendations made in the second report of the Homelessness Action Group.³¹ As noted, much work has been done by the Bevan Foundation on welfare in Wales to influence Welsh Government decision making about what it can do with its own limited welfare system and where further devolution of powers is needed to ensure that young people are able to access sufficient money to maintain accommodation and move forward in their lives.³²

The issue of rents flexing to young people's incomes was raised by young people in EYHC's Affordable Housing Supply Review response.

"If working for minimum wage, subsidised rent would be helpful so that you have extra money to spend on life changing/progress things like driving lessons, rather than just surviving"

– Participant in Affordable Housing Review response (2019)

Housing affordability – both in terms of rent and service charges, for those who pay them – is an area of real concern for young people. Rents ideally need to be flexible and proportionate to income, reflecting the fact that young people are likely to earn less in work and to be entitled to less from the welfare system. As noted above, some Welsh social landlords, such as Trivallis, Ateb, Melin and Merthyr Valleys Homes, are, or soon will be, working with a Living Rent model, which is designed to enable rents to be flexed so that tenants are never asked to spend more than 28% of their income on rent. Although a progressive approach to an extent, Stirling (2019) highlights concerns about how the Living Rent model fails to take into consideration young people's typically lower incomes by defining affordability on an area basis and proposes a range of alternatives (such as a higher-grant rate to allow for housing designated for young people to be offered at lower rent).³³

31 Homelessness Action Group (2020), *Second Report of the Homelessness Action Group*. Accessed at: <https://media.service.gov.wales/media-library/6gpv8-kzdbs-jyk0j-8ymoc-34c0a>

32 Bevan Foundation (2020) *The Case for a Welsh Benefits System*. Accessed at: <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/publications/the-case-for-a-welsh-benefits-system/>

33 Stirling, T. (2019) *Where next for social rent?* Welsh Housing Quarterly. Accessed at: <https://whq.org.uk/2019/04/18/where-next-for-social-rent/>.

Ultimately, an increase in the delivery of homes available for affordable rent continues to be urgently needed. The call in Community Housing Cymru's 2020 manifesto, based on considerable engagement with stakeholders, for the next government to support delivery of a 5-year, £1.5bn investment programme of 20,000 new energy efficient social homes is indicative of what social landlords could deliver in the short-mid term.³⁴ The Welsh Government's own estimated need projections suggest that around 7,400 new homes need to be delivered per year in that period, of which roughly half would need to be affordable.

An exciting and genuinely innovative approach is being developed in partnership between United Welsh Housing Association and Llamau. Based on [NAL](#), the Finnish Youth Housing Association, [Tai Ffres is a first in Wales](#). With initial work only getting underway in 2020, it is in a foundational phase, but will ultimately offer young people the opportunity to live in social housing designed with young people in mind, with support as needed. Young people are instrumental in designing the principles of the project, via a youth board, and consideration will be given to the issues young people have said matter to them, such as rent levels, location, community and bills. Over time, Tai Ffres should increase availability of suitable housing that young people can afford, taking pressure off limited supported housing by offering a route for those ready to move on and ensuring secure tenures which will give young people a stable base from which to access training, work and education, with support as required. It also aims to act as a demonstration project for how youth housing services can be successfully developed, influencing other landlords to work in a similar fashion. Tai Ffres, as with all of the Youth Homelessness Innovation Fund projects, is at an early stage and progress needs to be evaluated, but if it can be demonstrated that it delivers for young people, while remaining financially viable, it will be a vital addition to the options available in Wales to prevent youth homelessness.

Beyond this specific project, young people need to be taken into consideration at the outset of planning for new homes in each local authority. [EYHC collected the views of a number of young people](#) and supported them to present them to the Independent Housing Supply Review Board recruited by Welsh Government in 2019.³⁵ While the engagement from the panel was good, ultimately what young people were asking for fell outside of their review's scope and the resultant recommendation that "...more attention should be given to the requirements of older and younger age groups...(in the collation of Local Housing Market Assessments)", does not go far enough. Key recommendations developed with young people as part of that process remain valid and should be taken into account in the implementation of a strategy to end youth homelessness in Wales.

34 Community Housing Cymru (2021) *Home Creating a Better Wales for All: 2021 Senedd Election Manifesto*. Accessed at: <https://hereforhomes.org.uk/uploads/resources/Home-Manifesto-ENG.pdf>.

35 End Youth Homelessness Cymru (2019) *A Youth-Led Response to the Affordable Housing Supply Review* Accessed at: <https://bit.ly/3kWMk6j>.

Recommendation 3

Local Authorities should proactively seek the views of young people when determining housing need for local development plans. Consultation mechanisms should be reviewed to ensure that, in particular, the views of those young people for whom affordable housing is least accessible are heard. This should result in a better mix of properties being developed, with more delivered in areas, and at prices, accessible to young people.

Recommendation 4

Registered Social Landlords should specifically consider young people when determining rent affordability across their housing stock. If additional grant is required to develop housing which is both suitable and affordable for young people, then Welsh Government should work with the sector to determine how this could be most effectively delivered.

Recommendation 5

Welsh Government should continue to support Tai Ffres, a uniquely youth-focussed route into stable, secure housing, as it develops. At an appropriate point, this support should include funding for a comprehensive evaluation of its potential to reduce youth homelessness with further expansion.

Recommendation 6

Welsh Government should introduce a Right to Adequate Housing to increase accountability on this most fundamental of needs.³⁶

36 Hoffman, S. (2019) *The right to adequate housing in Wales: Feasibility Report*. Accessed at: <https://www.taipawb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RightToHousing-Full-ENG.pdf>.

Minimising Discrimination: What We Know

Young people have told us that they have experienced discrimination, which has contributed to their homelessness, both directly and indirectly. EYHC's research in this area, to date, has concentrated on homophobic discrimination, but there is evidence that discrimination in other forms can play a part in youth homelessness.

“My Dad used to beat me because I was bi-sexual and I have had a lot more female partners than male partners and my Dad didn't accept that”

– Participant in Out on the Streets (2019)

EYHC's research paper [Out on the Streets](#) (2019) identified intolerance in the home as a key trigger for homelessness amongst LGBTQ+ young people, building on a small but growing evidence base that identifies this group as at particular risk of homelessness and at increased risk of harm when homeless than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. Young people interviewed for this paper cited family breakdown as a key cause of homelessness, with abuse from family members noted, along with a failure to accept them for who they were, as contributory. Our findings indicated high levels of mental ill health amongst LGBTQ+ young people who have been homeless, a finding supported by other research into the issue (“LGBTQ+ youth homelessness is a major public health concern that has significant consequences for a young person's physical and psychosocial well-being”).³⁷ Although data is (still) not captured on the numbers of LGBTQ+ young people who present as homeless in Wales, there are indications that they are disproportionately overrepresented to a significant degree: Llamau in-house data shows that the numbers of homeless LGBTQ+ young people supported is around double the number of LGBT people in the wider population. A UK wide study conducted by the Albert Kennedy Trust in 2015 found that 24% of homeless young people identified as LGBT.³⁸ See more on [page 31](#).

37 McCann, E. & Brown, M. (2019). *Homelessness among youth who identify as LGBTQ+: A Systematic Review*. Journal of Clinical Nursing. 2019: 1-12.

38 Albert Kennedy Trust (2015) *LGBT Youth Homelessness: A UK National Scoping Of Cause, Prevalence, Response, and Outcome*. Accessed at: https://www.theproudtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/download-manager-files/AlbertKennedy_ResearchReport_Youth-Homelessness.pdf.

“They just refused to call me by my name, kept calling me she. Well I’m not she. Kept calling me by my deadname. Well that’s not who I am. Truth be told, I’ve never been her. It’s not like this should have been a surprise. I’d been telling them for years. So that’s when I left. Packed all my stuff and left. Just like that. I had to get away. But I had nowhere to go.”

– Participant in Out on the Streets (2019)

Research by Stonewall Cymru (2017) showed that the number of lesbian, gay and bi people in Wales who have experienced hate crime increased by 82 per cent in five years, from 11% in 2013 to 20% in 2017. Data released in October 2020 showed that this had increased still further in 2019/20, including a 10% annual increase in transgender hate crime.³⁹

Racial discrimination may also play a role in youth homelessness in Wales, though research in Wales is limited. A Shelter Cymru and Tai Pawb report from 2015 provides a range of possible factors that could lead to a greater risk of homelessness for Black and Minority Ethnic people in Wales, specifically, such as “continued disadvantage and discrimination in areas such as education; employment; poverty; and physical and mental health – all of which can trigger a risk of or actual homelessness”.⁴⁰ Statutory data is of limited value in determining the impact of racial discrimination on youth homelessness in Wales, as it is not broken down by age and there is evidence that hidden (i.e. unrecorded) homelessness is high amongst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people. Accepting these qualifications, the statutory figures still show an over-representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people presenting for help with homelessness (8.5% of the total number of people who approached a local authority for help in 2018-19, the last year of available data⁴¹; this contrasts with the 5% Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic proportion of the total population of Wales in the same year).⁴² The aforementioned Shelter Cymru and Tai Pawb report noted a number of reasons for the greater level of hidden homelessness amongst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in their literature review, including lack of knowledge of systems that could help them and language barriers. Recent research from Shelter in England showed that “in the year up until September 2020, one in every 23 black households became homeless or

39 Welsh Government (2020) *Hate Has No Home in Wales*. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/hate-has-no-home-wales>.

40 Campbell, J. (2015) *Homelessness amongst People from Black and Minority Ethnic populations in Wales*. Shelter Cymru/ Tai Pawb. Accessed at: <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BME-REPORT-20141.pdf>

41 <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/households-for-which-assistance-has-been-provided-during-the-year-by-ethnic-group-of-applicant>

42 <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Equality-and-Diversity/Ethnicity/ethnicity-by-area-ethnicgroup>

were threatened with homelessness.⁴³ The figures also showed 1 in 83 households of all other ethnicities combined, became homeless or were threatened with homelessness.⁴⁴ Although this focussed on England and was population wide, rather than focussed on young people, it is an area that warrants further examination in Wales.

Research on youth homelessness from the USA explains that although youth homelessness is a serious concern responding to it has been constrained by the absence of reliable data on the size and characteristics of the population as well as no way to track the youth homeless population over time.⁴⁵ To address this they completed the first national estimates in the USA of youth homelessness based on a telephone survey of 26,161 households and 150 follow-up interviews to gain additional information.⁴⁶ The study from the USA found the risk of experiencing homelessness was significantly higher for young people with certain characteristics such as being lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ+), being BAME, for those who had not completed education, and for those from low-income households.⁴⁷ The findings of this study strengthen increasing evidence of the greater risk of homelessness amongst LGBTQ+ youth, BAME youth (mirroring racial disparities in school exclusions and youth justice involvement) with one of the stronger correlates of risk of youth homelessness was failure in education. The study concludes the evidence from the survey demonstrated the need for prevention services and youth-centred systems as well as strategies to address the risks of homelessness for certain groups.⁴⁸ While this study is based on the USA, Morton et al (2018) suggest the strength of the study is its methodology which can be replicated as it is cost-efficient as it can be built in with existing survey infrastructure rather than needing to commission new research. Therefore, this approach could be used to measure youth homelessness in Wales and track trends in youth homelessness over time.

Youth Homelessness amongst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups

EYHC is yet to do research on ethnicity and youth homelessness. There is clearly a shortage of research on ethnicity and youth homelessness, particularly in Wales. We must start by acknowledging that BAME is a contested term. While

43 Shelter (2020) *Black people are more than three times as likely to experience homelessness*. Accessed at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/black_people_are_more_than_three_times_as_likely_to_experience_homelessness

44 As 43 Shelter (2020).

45 Morton, M. H. Dworsky, A. Matjasko, J. L. Curry, S. R. Schlueter, D. Chávez, R. and Farrell, A. F. (2018). Prevalence and Correlates of Youth Homelessness in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 62, 14-21.

46 As 45 Morton et al. (2018).

47 Morton, M. H. Dworsky, A. Matjasko, J. L. Curry, S. R. Schlueter, D. Chávez, R. and Farrell, A. F. (2018). Prevalence and Correlates of Youth Homelessness in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 62, 14-21.

48 As 47 Morton et al. (2018).

ideally, we would refer to groups of young people by their specific ethnicities we are using the term Black, Asian and minority ethnic. When EYHC does research on ethnicity we will co-design the study with Black, Asian and minority ethnic young people and concentrate on specific ethnicities and communities to understand both the causes of youth homelessness for young people from those communities and how we can prevent it.

Research from England tells us whilst housing deprivation amongst Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups reflects structural inequalities in the housing market, this is not just about where ethnic groups live, social status, their age, family structure or when they arrived in Britain.⁴⁹ The Joseph Rowntree Foundation explains that whilst poverty and ethnicity are strongly related, it is complicated and ethnicity interacts with gender, class, education, disability and geography to affect poverty.⁵⁰

We also know that people from some Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups are more likely to live in overcrowded housing than White British people. Census data from 2011 tells us 28.7% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers and 27% of Bangladeshi's, 19.4% of Black people and 18.5% of Arabs lived in overcrowded housing compared to 4.9% of White British people. While this data is from 2011, and might not still be accurate, research suggests Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, and particularly certain ethnic groups are more likely to be living in substandard and overcrowded housing.⁵¹ This might be because Black, Asian and minority ethnic people are often concentrated in areas of deprivation such as inner cities, as well as being affected by poverty and social exclusion.

We also need to be aware of how existing inequalities Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups experience have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Research from England tells us Black, Asian and minority ethnic and people living in poverty experienced the worst mental health before the pandemic.⁵² The research also suggests the pandemic's impact on employment has been disproportionately felt amongst Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups with Pakistani and Bangladeshi being particularly vulnerable because of a high rate of self-employment.⁵³

49 Homelessness Link (2019) *Youth Homelessness Scoping Report*. Accessed at: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Youth%20Homelessness%20scoping%20report%20July%202019%20pdf.pdf>

50 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2014) *Tackling Poverty across All Ethnicities in the UK*. Accessed at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/tackling-poverty-across-all-ethnicities-uk>

51 Price, J. (2021) *Improving Race Equality in Housing and Accommodation*. Accessed at: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Improving-Race-Equality-in-Housing-and-Accommodation-pdf>.

52 Youth Access (2021) *Generation COVID? Socio-economic factors impacting young people's mental health in the wake of the pandemic*. Accessed at: <https://www.youthaccess.org.uk/downloads/resources/generation-covid.pdf>.

53 Youth Access (2021) *Generation COVID? Socio-economic factors impacting young people's mental health in the wake of the pandemic*. Accessed at: <https://www.youthaccess.org.uk/downloads/resources/generation-covid.pdf>.

We know in the adult population Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are more at risk of becoming homeless. In 2018/19, 7% of homelessness prevention applicants and 6% of relief from homelessness applicants were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds this compares to 5-6% of the population of Wales as a whole.⁵⁴ We do not have data on the homelessness of Black, Asian and minority ethnic young people. But the data on adults suggests they may be overrepresented in the youth homelessness population. There are clearly racial and ethnic inequalities in terms of access to housing and homelessness in particular.⁵⁵ Moreover, research points to problematic reporting of data which means Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are potentially not represented in policy decisions based on data.⁵⁶

The impact of intersectionality on young people at risk of homelessness is covered on [Page 37](#).

Minimising Discrimination: What We Should Do

Tackling discrimination through campaigns, education and training in workforces is at the heart of ending homelessness caused by intolerance.

Recommendations in EYHC's Out On The Streets (2019) paper are covered later, under Targeted Prevention, though recommendation 7 (below) will have some impact on a universal level, increasing understanding of LGBTQ+ young people's needs:

Recommendation 7

Local authorities, third sector providers and health practitioners working with young people should commission training from LGBTQ+ organisations to ensure that their staff feel fully confident when working with young LGBTQ+ people and know where to refer for specialist interventions. Improved understanding across Wales would reduce intolerance and ensure problems were picked up earlier, reducing the numbers of young people entering crisis.

54 Price, J. (2021) *Improving Race Equality in Housing and Accommodation*. Accessed at: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Improving-Race-Equality-in-Housing-and-Accommodation-.pdf>.

55 Power, S. (2020) *WISERD Research on Race and Ethnicity*. Accessed at: https://wiserd.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/WISERD%20Research%20on%20Race%20and%20Ethnicity%20finalwc_0.pdf.

56 As 55, Power, (2020).

Tackling links between Discrimination and Youth Homelessness

We know that discrimination is at the root of some youth homelessness. EYHC's research has focussed, previously, on LGBTQ+ young people's experiences of homelessness, which are often grounded in discrimination and in many cases is the result of being kicked out of home upon coming out to family.

Address discrimination by highlighting the impact of youth homelessness on groups that face discrimination with their representative bodies and working with them to achieve policy change (see Stonewall Cymru's forthcoming Action Plan, for example).

What Should We Do: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Youth Homelessness

Welsh Government's [Race Equality Action Plan](#) for Wales explains:⁵⁷:

"COVID-19 has shone a light both on the importance of a decent, appropriate and affordable home for everyone's mental and physical well-being and every aspect of their lives. The pandemic has also thrown into stark relief the deep inequalities that exist for some people in accessing such homes".

We would ask Welsh Government and Local Authorities to disaggregate data by race and ethnicity, as well as age, in order for us to understand the risk factors of homelessness for Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups. While, there are understandably difficulties collating and reporting data during the COVID-19 pandemic Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups are more likely to have been negatively impacted by the pandemic and are therefore more likely to be at risk of homelessness.

Dealing with Adverse Childhood Experiences: What We Know

Evidence shows that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) correlate significantly with likelihood of homelessness. Public Health Wales research found that those who reported four or more ACEs were 16 times more likely to become homeless.⁵⁸ This report made a number of key recommendations to reduce the impact of

57 Welsh Government (2021) *An Anti-Racist Wales – Race Equality Action Plan for Wales*. Accessed at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-03/race-equality-action-plan-an-anti-racist-wales_2.pdf

58 Grey, C.N.B. and Woodfine L. (2019) *Voices of those with lived experiences of homelessness and adversity in Wales: informing prevention and response*. Cardiff: Public Health Wales NHS Trust. Accessed at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/files/aces/voices-of-those-with-lived-experiences-of-homelessness-and-adversity-in-wales-informing-prevention-and-response-2019/>.

these ACEs on later life, including the need for trauma-informed practice to be introduced from an early point in a child's life, in early-years settings and throughout their childhoods, with trained professionals working in sufficiently resourced services to provide a holistic system of support. The availability of consistent, trusted adults and a sense of belonging to a community are also significant factors in minimising the likelihood of homelessness for young people who have had ACEs.

Dealing with Adverse Childhood Experiences: What We Should Do

It is important to avoid becoming fatalistic about ACEs. Traumatic childhood experiences increase the likelihood of homelessness, but this is not predetermined, especially as evidence suggests that, with the right, trauma-informed support, people can, and do, recover from trauma.⁵⁹

The issue of ACEs and their prevention, in order to minimise homelessness is addressed, with detailed recommendations, accepted in principle by Welsh Government, in the second HAG report.⁶⁰ The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales has also given the issue of ACEs and their prevention significant consideration and presented a set of recommendations in the Future Generations Report 2020.⁶¹ Taken together with those in the HAG report (2020) and Public Health Wales' (2019) recommendations, these could have a significant effect on the issue and include prioritising long-term funding for evidence based interventions and the establishment of a 'real life fast track', whereby public bodies would seek to recruit people who are experts in their own lives, in order to diversify public servants' perspectives.

Furthermore, we can address the impact that ACEs can have on some people by continuing to promote **trauma informed practice** through commissioning and through the linking of youth homelessness and ACEs strategies.

59 Keats, H. (2012) Psychologically informed services for homeless people: Good practice guide. Accessed at: <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/340022/1/Good%2520practice%2520guide%2520%2520%2520Psychologically%2520informed%2520services%2520for%2520homeless%2520people%2520.pdf>.

60 Homelessness Action Group, (2020) Second Report of the Homelessness Action Group. Accessed at: <https://media.service.gov.wales/media-library/6gpv8-kzdb8-jyk0j-8ymoc-34c0a>

61 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (2020) *Future Generations Report 2020*. Pp.654-687 Accessed at: https://www.futuregenerations.wales/public_info/the-future-generations-report-2020/.

Targeted Prevention

In order to effectively prevent youth homelessness, evidence shows us that we need to be able to target specialist services at the young people most at risk of experiencing it. Targeted prevention is upstream prevention focussed on high-risk groups, such as vulnerable young people, and those going through risky transitions, such as leaving local authority care, prison or mental health in-patient treatment.⁶² We know that some groups of young people are at greater risk and that the transition between some systems can be a point of danger.

“Youth homelessness prevention requires targeted interventions and approaches that account for the distinct challenges that young people face”.⁶³

Groups Vulnerable to Youth Homelessness: What We Know

Young People Leaving Care

In [Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks](#), we examined the links between care experience and youth homelessness. Research tells us that children in state care are not a homogenous group. Paths into care differ, as with the family experiences that led to children being taken into care and the ages when they were taken into care, reflecting wide and diverse trajectories and backgrounds.⁶⁴ However, when we look at the outcomes for many care experienced young people, a more consistent picture emerges of disproportionate vulnerability to homelessness, poor mental health, poor educational achievements, being known to the criminal justice sector, unemployment, teenage parenting and poor social networks.⁶⁵ UK research has found that one third of care leavers become homeless in the first two years immediately after they leave care⁶⁶ and 25% of homeless people have been in care at some point in their lives.⁶⁷

62 Fitzpatrick, S. Mackie, P. and Wood, J. (2019) *Homelessness Prevention in the UK – Policy Briefing*. Accessed at: <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/publications/homelessness-prevention-in-the-uk/>.

63 Schwan, K. French, D. Gaetz, S. Ward, A. Akerman, J. and Redman, M. (2018) *Preventing youth homelessness: An international review of evidence*. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy. Accessed at: <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/WCPPP%20Preventing%20Youth%20Homelessness%20international%20evidence%20review.pdf>.

64 Holt, S. and Kirwan, G. (2012) The “Key” to Successful Transitions for Young People Leaving Residential Child Care: The Role of the Keyworker, *Child Care in Practice*. 18: (4). 371-392. Accessed at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/297032464.pdf>.

65 As 64 Holt & Kirwan (2012).

66 Stein, M. and Morris, M (2010) *Increasing the Number of Care Leavers in ‘Settled, Safe Accommodation, London, C4EO*. Accessed at: <https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/73544/1/Document.pdf>.

67 Mackie, P. and Thomas, I. (2014) *Nations Apart? Experiences of single homeless people across Great Britain*, London: Crisis. Accessed at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20608/crisis_nations_apart_2014.pdf

Care-experienced young people have told EYHC that they know that they are at greater risk of experiencing homelessness. One young person who had experienced street homelessness after returning to his birth family wanted us to do better for our care-experienced young people:

"I want to see a decrease of homelessness. I don't want to see an increase of it. I want people from your company to come up to me and say: 'guess what, we've just built a new block of flats now for young care leavers.' So if they are homeless (they have) a nice little refuge. I want them to go into training flats. I don't want a person who has been through the care system begging for money off me. I want them to have a better life than what I had"

–Dylan, 23, Participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through The Cracks

Young People Leaving the Secure Estate

Shelter Cymru research in 2018 found that 13% of rough sleeping people had first become homeless after being released from prison⁶⁸, and currently, one in four prisoners in Wales were homeless when they entered custody.⁶⁹ The most recent Welsh Government statistics show that 216 people cited being a prison leaver as their main reason for homelessness in 2018/19.⁷⁰ Prison inspectors have expressed concern over the levels of homelessness amongst prison leavers in Wales, with 50% of prison leavers from HMP Swansea not returning to sustainable accommodation. They also noted an 'extremely high' level of discharge into homelessness from HMP Cardiff and 7% of prison leavers being discharged into homelessness from HMP Berwyn (with an unclear picture from HMP Parc and HMP Prescoed because of a lack of monitoring).⁷¹

One young person we spoke to, who had been discharged from prison, told us that a night shelter was the only option available to him on his release.

"They gave me housing forms (in prison). They were supposed to set me up for a hostel. It's supposed to be a probation hostel for when people come out. I got promised that place and they didn't give me that"

68 Jackson, R. (2018) *Trapped on the Streets: Understanding Rough Sleeping in Wales*. Swansea: Shelter Cymru. Accessed at: <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Trapped-on-the-Streets-FullReport.pdf>.

69 Jones, R. (2020) *Prison, Probation and Sentencing in Wales 2019 FACTFILE*. Accessed at: https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2446129/Prison,-Probation-and-Sentencing-in-Wales-2019-Factfile.pdf.

70 StatsWales (2020) *Households found to be threatened with homelessness during the year. Main reason for being threatened with homelessness by type of household (Section 66)* Accessed at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/main-reason-for-being-threatened-with-homelessness-by-type-of-household-section-66->

71 Jones, R. (2020) *Prison, Probation and Sentencing in Wales 2019 FACTFILE*. Accessed at: https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2446129/Prison,-Probation-and-Sentencing-in-Wales-2019-Factfile.pdf.

place when I came out. I went straight to housing options the second I came out. I didn't go for no food. I didn't see none of my cousins, I went straight to housing. I got promised a hostel and I was looking forward to it. Before I went to jail too I was homeless for about two months. Literally staying on the street and when I came out they said 'go down to the night shelter' and I have been waiting for my hostel ever since"

– Nick, 20 participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through The Cracks

Young People Discharged from Healthcare Institutions

Research has linked unsupported transitions from healthcare institutions including mental health units to youth homelessness.⁷² As soon as people are discharged into homelessness from hospital they find themselves in an environment where they cannot recuperate. The complex issues young people at risk of homelessness can face can be exacerbated by inappropriate admission and discharge protocols that fail to address their complex support needs and this can lead to a loss of accommodation.⁷³

Two of the twenty-seven young people we interviewed for our research on care experience and homelessness had been discharged into homelessness from a mental health unit. One of them told us that he had received no support to prevent his homelessness:

"When I was put in hospital, they asked me if I had family to go to. 'No.' 'Do you have anywhere to go?' 'No.' They didn't help me... (They put) nothing, nothing in place"

– Bill, 17 participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through The Cracks

Bill went on to explain he had no support and ended up sleeping in his car:

"I think it is all about the support. I think it is about someone saying 'I do care; I want to help you'. That would have meant more to me because I have no family no friends, nothing. I was (sleeping) in my car"

– Bill, 17, participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through The Cracks

72 Schwan, K. French, D. Gaetz, S. Ward, A. Akerman, J. and Redman, M. (2018) Preventing youth homelessness: An international review of evidence. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy. Accessed at: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/publication/preventing-youthhomelessness/>.

73 Bradley, J. & Hobbs, R. (2014) Hospital Discharge Protocol for Homeless People in Wales. Accessed at: http://www.publichealthnetwork.cymru/files/5214/4613/4011/Hospital_Discharge_Protocol_for_Homeless_People_in_Wales_John_Bradley_Rhiannon_Hobbs_2014.pdf.

Young People at Risk of Criminal Exploitation

Young people we have spoken to during the course of research for EYHC have noted their vulnerability to exploitation, with the behaviour of county lines gangs a concern. The Home Office describe county lines as a form of criminality predicated upon the exploitation of the vulnerable – usually those with harmful substance use issues, attachment/emotional issues, poverty and mental health difficulties.⁷⁴ Gangs use violence as a control mechanism to maintain discipline in their distribution network, often using debt servitude to maintain leverage against the customer base and workforce.⁷⁵ Young people are at particular risk. Jack, aged 21, who is now living in a supported housing project, told us what it was like being involved with a county lines gang:

“You see about these county lines and you say to yourself ‘nah that is not going to happen to me’ before you even know it: you’re done, it has happened. I was doing it years ago and it took the police to get me out of it because I was in a dangerous place every weekend coming out with a broken arm or a broken leg; that was just a normal weekend for me. Because that’s how I thought it was meant to be and that’s when they pulled me out of it all and I never stepped back in. It starts with a £1 (debt) and then they are threatening to take your toes off for £20. It is not a nice life.”

County lines gangs exploit young people in places where they are likely to be under reduced monitoring and supervision including Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and children’s homes.⁷⁶ The Home Office suggests that young people who have been excluded from secondary school, whether this is by placing them on reduced timetables, or home schooling or sending them to PRUs, are more likely to be targeted by county line gangs, as their own vulnerabilities are exacerbated.⁷⁷ The evidence suggests that being in mainstream full time education is a protective factor that decreases the risk of young people being targeted by county lines gangs.

Similarly, the issue of ‘sex for rent’ is an exploitative act, which is more likely to affect young people, whose lower income makes them more vulnerable to exploitation in return for accommodation. This was addressed by Welsh Government Ministers in late 2018, when the then Housing Minister noted that she had instructed officials to

74 The Home Office (2018) *County lines - a national summary & emerging best practice*. Accessed at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/County%20Lines%20National%20Summary%20-%20Simon%20Ford%20WEB.pdf>.

75 As 74 Home Office (2018).

76 The Home Office (2018) *County lines - a national summary & emerging best practice*. Accessed at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/County%20Lines%20National%20Summary%20-%20Simon%20Ford%20WEB.pdf>.

77 As 76 Home Office (2018).

amend the code of practice for landlords and agents licensed under Rent Smart Wales to make it clear “that anyone who advertises property for rent with a requirement of sex risks losing their license to operate in Wales”.⁷⁸ The guidance available on Welsh Government’s website has not been updated to include this, but the act of placing adverts offering such an arrangement is considered incitement and is illegal under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Criminal exploitation of young people and youth homelessness are not necessarily interconnected issues, however, the experience of homelessness can make a young person vulnerable to exploitation. Important research by Centrepont (2019) notes that “criminal exploitation can affect young people at every stage of their journey through homelessness” and highlights specific situations where the two interconnect:

- Criminal exploitation can undermine a young person’s relationship with their family, leading to them being kicked out of the family home
- Inability to access accommodation can make young people vulnerable to sex for rent situations.
- Hostels and accommodation projects can become known to those seeking to criminally exploit vulnerable young people
- Young people in independent accommodation can become victims of cuckooing, leading to eviction and repeat homelessness.⁷⁹

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Once an asylum seeker has been awarded refugee status, they are granted the same entitlement to welfare benefits as UK nationals. There is a high risk of homelessness when they transition from being an asylum seeker to a refugee.⁸⁰ The limited time to secure housing and benefits between receiving refugee status and having to leave Home Office accommodation is a common cause of homelessness among refugees. Securing housing can be problematic for refugees. This is recognised in Welsh Government’s ‘Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan Nation of Sanctuary’, which includes an action to “explore opportunities to reduce refugee homelessness by working with Registered Social Landlords, local authorities, credit unions and others to identify clearer pathways into accommodation during the ‘Move On’ period”.⁸¹

78 Landlord Today (2018) *Welsh government to clampdown on ‘sex for rent’ landlords*. Accessed at: https://www.landlordtoday.co.uk/breaking-news/2018/5/welsh-government-to-clampdown-on-sex-for-rent-landlords?source=related_articles.

79 Centrepont (2019) *Escaping the Trap*. Accessed at: <https://centrepont.org.uk/media/3425/escaping-the-trap.pdf>.

80 Refugee Action (2019) *Missing the Safety Net*. Accessed at: <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Missing-The-Safety-Net-Report.pdf>

81 Welsh Government (2019) *Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan*. Accessed at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/nation-of-sanctuary-refugee-and-asylum-seeker-plan_0.pdf.

High numbers of refugees live in the private rented sector experiencing potentially greater housing instability as a result.⁸² Young refugees, as with other young people unless they meet one of the exceptions, can only access the Shared Accommodation Rate until they are aged 35, restricting the availability of accommodation available to them.

Neurodivergent Young People

Neurodiversity refers to variations between how different people's brains operate. We all have neurodiverse brains but some people are marginalised by their neurodiversity. As a concept, it seeks to move society from a position of considering issues such as Autism, Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) (previously referred to as Dyspraxia), ADHD and Dyslexia as deficits or dysfunctions, to a place of consideration about how we can recognise and adapt to differences of cognitive functioning.⁸³ This is no less true when considering risk of homelessness for young, neurodivergent people.

"Well I think Autism is controlling those types of situations because you know like a normal person they take things calmly. Me, I just flip out at things... (When) I was living in temporary accommodation it was like a hostel type thing and I just made myself homeless. I didn't get kicked out by staff. I made myself homeless because the structure of that place is so bad...I kept asking for help and they didn't want to do nothing about it"

– Dillan, 20

Neurodivergent young people may be at a greater risk of experiencing homelessness due to the relationship between neurodiversity and poor socio-economic outcomes, social vulnerability, unemployment and difficulties interacting with services, all of which can be a catalyst for homelessness. Young people who are neurodivergent and homeless, or at risk of homelessness, may have a reduced ability to advocate for themselves. Doyle (2020) suggests agency can be compromised by intersectional exclusion including race, gender, class and sexual orientation, and these can be further compounded by challenges with communication.⁸⁴

82 Tai Pawb (2017) *Advancing rights and increasing fairness: Increasing the provision of accessible housing in Wales*. Accessed at: <http://www.taipawb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Tai-Pawb-Strategy-context-2017-2021.pdf>.

83 Green, M. (2020) *Neurodiversity: What is it and what does it look like across races*. Accessed at: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/mental-health/neurodiversity-what-it-and-what-does-it-look-across-races>.

84 Doyle, N. (2020) *Neurodiversity at work: a biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults*. *British Medical Bulletin*. 135, 108 – 125. Accessed at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32996572/>.

LGBTQ+ Young People

As discussed under discrimination in the Universal Prevention section, LGBTQ+ young people are at a disproportionate risk of homelessness. While it is correct that we should consider what ought to be done to tackle the discrimination, trans- and homophobia that underlies much of the homelessness experienced by young LGBTQ+ people, we should also be aware that until that is behind us, there will remain a need for targeted services designed with LGBTQ+ young people in mind.

“My family treated it like it was a mental illness: ‘You can get help for this’, ‘You can be cured’. It was definitely one of the main reasons why I did become homeless.”

– Participant in Out on the Streets (2019)

While quantification of the numbers of LGBTQ+ young people experiencing homelessness every year in Wales is impossible to achieve without changes to the data collected by local authorities and collated by Welsh Government, there are clear signs that this is a significantly overrepresented group. Llamau’s in-house data has shown that for the last 2 years of complete data 9% of the young people they support described themselves as LGBT. A UK wide report found that 24% of the youth homelessness population across the UK identified as LGBT.⁸⁵ EYHC’s 2019 report Out on The Streets – LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness in Wales explored the experiences of some of these LGBTQ+ young people, finding that family breakdown was frequently the cause for their homelessness, that mental health problems were rife and that support services were, in many cases, lacking in the specialist knowledge required to support LGBTQ+ people effectively.

“When you go for support in homeless places there are lots of dodgy characters around... it can be very intimidating being amongst loads of other homeless people. The majority, when I was being supported, all of them were straight so it was very daunting because they were naturally intimidating people and being gay can feel like you are a target almost. I had just turned 16 and was the youngest there.”

– Participant in Out on the Streets (2019)

85 Bateman, W. (2015). *LGBT Youth Homelessness: UK National Scoping Exercise*. Albert Kennedy Trust. Accessed at: https://www.theproudsttrust.org/wp-content/uploads/download-manager-files/AlbertKennedy_ResearchReport_Youth-Homelessness.pdf.

Young People Excluded from School

Research from Cardiff University reports that school exclusion is associated with a range of negative outcomes, including long periods of unemployment, poor mental and physical health, involvement in crime and homelessness.⁸⁶ Explaining, those who are most likely to be excluded from school are also likely to be the most vulnerable in society – they are four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have a special educational need and ten times more likely to have a mental health issue.⁸⁷ Power and Taylor (2020) explains the data from their own research shows if the definition of what counts as exclusion was expanded – to include practices where schools remove pupils from the mainstream classroom while keeping them on the school register – rates of exclusion would be higher than what data suggests.

Research in England has found that children with particular characteristics are disproportionately likely to be excluded from school including White Irish traveller, Roma / Gypsy, and Black Caribbean children, as well as children with special educational needs and disabilities, those who have been or are in state care and those who are or have been eligible for free school meals.⁸⁸ Ferguson (2021) suggests there has been too little focus on school exclusion, children who have dropped out or informal and illegal exclusions. Suggesting, instead school exclusion is either seen as a gateway to other social problems and moral panic e.g. child sexual exploitation and knife crime.

Exclusion rates for care experienced children are also high. CASCADE explored the educational experiences of care-experienced children and young people in Wales. The CASCADE study cites figures from England, which show care experienced children are ten times more likely to be excluded from school than children who are not care experienced, whose behaviour is seen as challenging.⁸⁹ The Fostering Network noted in 2018 that, in addition to fixed term exclusions for care experienced children, they were concerned that some schools in Wales unofficially excluded pupils by asking foster carers to keep the child at home for a period of time without a proper exclusion process being followed. In one of the Fostering Network's focus groups, this finding was true for 50% of foster carers.⁹⁰

86 Power, S. and Taylor, C. (2020) *Not in the classroom, but still on the register: Hidden forms of school exclusion*. International Journal of Inclusive Education 24 (8): 867-881. 10.1080/13603116.2018.1492644 file.

87 As 87 Power & Taylor (2020).

88 Ferguson, L. (2021) *Children at Risk of School Drop Out. Excluded Lives*. Accessed at: <https://excludedlives.education.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Children-at-Risk-of-School-Dropout.pdf>.

89 Mannay, D. Staples, E. Hallett, S. Roberts, L. Rees, A. Evans, R. & Andrews, D. (2016). *Exploring the educational experiences and aspirations of Looked After Children and young people (LACYF) in Wales: CASCADE Research Briefing*. Cardiff: CASCADE Cardiff University.

90 The Fostering Network (2018) *Raising the Ambitions and Educational Attainment of Children who are Looked After in Wales - a review of the second year of the Welsh Government's looked after children's education strategy 2017-2018*. Cardiff: Cardiff.

Recommendation 8

“No care-experienced young person should be excluded from school. They must be considered a protected group for whom alternative provision should be offered, perhaps via a regional approach” – This is one of the priorities of the EYHC working group on ‘Reducing the Links between Care Experience and Youth Homelessness’.

The evidence suggests rates of school exclusion are high amongst the homeless population. A UK study interviewed 500 single people experiencing homelessness and found that 27% had been excluded from school.⁹¹ International studies have found low rates of high school completion in young people experiencing homelessness due to a combination of undiagnosed learning difficulties, mental health conditions, trauma or harmful substance use issues.⁹² Research has also shown that school exclusion is largely a male experience, which disproportionately affects young people from economically disadvantaged families.⁹³ Discrimination and disproportionate impacts on minority groups are a common theme, with young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) disproportionately overrepresented in rates of exclusion.⁹⁴

“Just being allowed to leave school made me feel that it didn’t matter”

Research by Public Health Wales found that “compared to those who were rarely or never absent from school, those with frequent absences from school were 7.5 times more likely to report lived experience of homelessness”.⁹⁵ This was consistent with findings from Llamau/ Cardiff University’s (2015) SEYHoPe project, which found that 57% of the homeless young people they interviewed had frequently skipped school or experienced absence because of extremely high rates of suspension and expulsion (over half and a third of participants, respectively).

“Participants’ average age on leaving school was 15.56 years... although they often reported that they stopped regularly attending school earlier (mean = 13.79 years).”⁹⁶

91 Mackie, P. & Thomas, I. (2014) *Nations Apart: Experiences of Single Homelessness Across Great Britain*. Cardiff: Cardiff University and Crisis.

92 Gaetz, S. & O’Grady, B. (2013) *Why don’t you just get a job? Homeless youth, social exclusion and employment training*. In S. Gaetz, B. O’Grady, K. Buccieri, J. Karabanow & A. Marsolais (Eds.), *Youth homelessness in Canada: Implications for policy and practice* (pp. 243-268). Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

93 Valdebenito, S. Eisner, M. Farrington, D. P. et al. (2019) *What can we do to reduce disciplinary school exclusion? A systematic review and meta-analysis*. *J Exp Criminol* 15, 253–287. Accessed at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-018-09351-0>.

94 As 94 Valdebenito et al. (2019).

95 Grey C. N. B. and Woodfine L. (2019) *Voices of those with lived experiences of homelessness and adversity in Wales: informing prevention and response*. Cardiff: Public Health Wales NHS Trust. Accessed at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/files/aces/voices-of-those-with-lived-experiences-of-homelessness-and-adversity-in-wales-informing-prevention-and-response-2019/>.

96 Hodgson, K. J. (2014) *The Mental Health of Young People with Experiences of Homelessness*. Thesis. University of Cardiff. Accessed at: <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/59590/2/2014hodgsonphd.pdf>.

Research by Bramley & Fitzpatrick (2018) explains that alongside poverty, disengagement from social systems and not being in education, training or employment (NEET) can exacerbate the risk of homelessness.⁹⁷ Research suggests that the majority of young people who have been homeless will have had traumatic experiences with adults early in their lives and lack supportive and trustworthy adults, teachers and other significant mentors to help them develop their relationship building, decision-making and emotional skills.⁹⁸ When young people are homeless they will more than likely have had limited and fraught relationships with friends, peers, families and carers.⁹⁹ It is, therefore, important to consider, at a universal level, the need for better social integration of young people and minimisation of educational disengagement.

In 2018 EYHC asked young people who had experienced homelessness why they had disengaged from school before completing year 11:

“I asked and asked and asked and asked for help with mental health and in the end I got fed up of asking and threw a chair”

“Getting moved around a lot – not knowing from one week to the next what you’re doing, who you’ll be doing it with – feeling uprooted”

Welsh Government guidance on school exclusion explains that, other than in the most exceptional circumstances, schools should avoid excluding learners with statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN).¹⁰⁰ However, the statistics suggest pupils with special educational needs have higher rates of exclusions than those without.¹⁰¹

Linked to the issue of ACEs, an important report from Samaritans Cymru (2019) describes the exclusion of children from school as part of a ‘cycle of inequality’, noting that the number of exclusions rose by 51% in the 4 years to 2019.¹⁰² There is some evidence that educational exclusion is an effective predictor of

97 Bramley, C & Fitzpatrick, S (2016) *Homelessness in the UK: who is most at risk?* Accessed at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02673037.2017.1344957>

98 Keats, H. Maguire, N. Johnson, R. and Cockersell, P. (2012) *Psychologically informed services for homeless people Good Practice Guide*. London: Communities and Local Government.

99 Schwan, K. French, D. Gaetz, S. Ward, A. Akerman, J. and Redman, M. (2018) *Preventing youth homelessness: An international review of evidence*. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy. Accessed at: <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/WCPPP%20Preventing%20Youth%20Homelessness%20international%20evidence%20review.pdf>.

100 Welsh Government (2015) *Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units*. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/exclusion-from-schools-and-pupil-referral-units.pdf>

101 Welsh Government (2019) *Statistical First Release: Permanent and fixed-term exclusions from schools in Wales, 2017/19*. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-10/permanent-fixed-term-exclusions-from-schools-2017-18.pdf>.

102 Samaritans Cymru (2018) *Exclusion from School in Wales: The Hidden cost*. Accessed at: https://media.samaritans.org/documents/Samaritans_Cymru_Exclusion_from_school_in_Wales_-_The_hidden_cost.pdf.

homelessness. The report 'Prevention is Better than Cure', published by Crisis in 1999, argued that being thrown out of school is a key 'trigger' leading to homelessness, finding that children who have been excluded from school are 90 times more likely to end up living on the streets than those who stay on and pass exams, that more than a quarter of all those living rough had been excluded from school and that 62% had no educational qualifications.¹⁰³ The large scale SEYHoPe study run jointly by Llamau and Cardiff University in 2015 interviewed 121 homeless young people supported by Llamau and found that the majority had been suspended at least once from school, with 32% expelled from at least one school.¹⁰⁴

Young People Experiencing Poor Mental Health

The Study of Experiences of Young Homeless People (SEYHoPe), which interviewed 121 young homeless people, revealed that just under 88% of this group met the criteria for a current mental health disorder (Hodgson, 2014). This compares to 32.3% for a current disorder amongst the general population (Hodgson, 2014). Research consistently reports a high prevalence of mental health conditions among homeless youth including depression, anxiety disorder, substance use, posttraumatic stress disorder, and psychosis (Edidin et al, 2012). Studies suggest that mental health difficulties are both a cause and consequence of youth homelessness (Schwan et al, 2018), and in the former case, targeted support could prevent homelessness. In either case, it is unquestionably clear that homelessness has a detrimental effect on mental health and wellbeing, and can exacerbate existing difficulties (Reeve et al, 2018¹⁰⁵).

Young Women and Girls

Research points to a paucity of evidence on women and homelessness, suggesting this could be in part because of the way welfare systems work which means women are less likely to sleep rough or stay in emergency homelessness hostels (though EYHC has interviewed women who have experienced both of these).¹⁰⁶ These distinctive experiences, however, should be viewed in the context of the difficulties women face such as the greater exposure to unbearable living situations such as domestic abuse and a higher risk of financial hardship. The

103 BBC News (1999) *UK Education Link to Homelessness*. Accessed at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/382383.stm>.

104 Hodgson, K. (2015) *Study of the Experiences of Young Homeless People (SEYHoPe) Key findings & implications* Accessed at: <https://www.llamau.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=3a84ee00-b19e-4007-b0a4-a2629ea344de>.

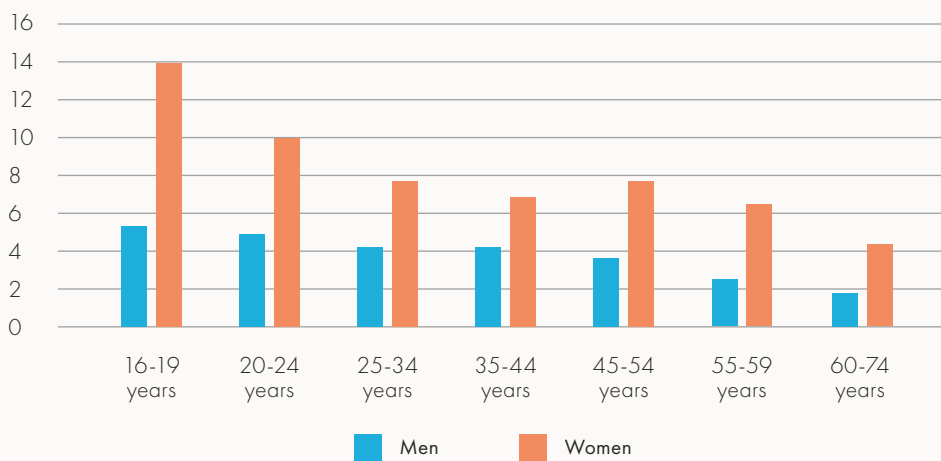
105 Reeve, K. McCarthy, L. Pattison, B. Parr, S. Batty, E. Maye-Banbury, A. Bashir, N. and Dayson, C. (2018) *The mental health needs of Nottingham's homeless population: an exploratory research study*. Project Report. Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University. Accessed at: <https://shura.shu.ac.uk/21958/1/mental-health-nottinghams-homeless-population.pdf>.

106 Baptista, I. (2010) *Women and Homelessness*. Accessed at: https://www.cesis.org/admin/modulo_news/ficheiros_noticias/20150814164752-1women_and_homelessness.pdf.

research on gendered homelessness is scant, and the available evidence seems to be on the adult homeless population.¹⁰⁷

For the year ending March 2020, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed an estimated 1.6 million of women (7.3%) and 75,000 men experienced domestic abuse that year.¹⁰⁸ The data shows women aged 16 to 19 were much more likely to be victims of domestic abuse than women aged over 25.¹⁰⁹ The table below shows that in the last year women aged 16 to 19 years old were more likely to experience domestic abuse than all other age groups.¹¹⁰

Percentage of adults aged 16 to 74 years who were victims once or more



Welsh Government homelessness data shows that 1,194 households were threatened with homelessness due to violent relationship breakdown with partner in the last full year of collection (2018-19).¹¹¹ The majority of single person household applicants were female. This data is blunt, and violent abuse captures only part of the picture (other forms of abuse, such as coercive control or financial abuse are not covered, for example), but it does provide a clear indication of the direct link between domestic abuse and homelessness, as well as demonstrating the extent to which it is a gendered issue.

¹⁰⁷ Baptista, I. (2010) Women and Homelessness. Accessed at: https://www.cesis.org/admin/modulo_news/ficheiros_noticias/20150814164752-1women_and_homelessness.pdf.

¹⁰⁸ ONS (2020) Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020#age>.

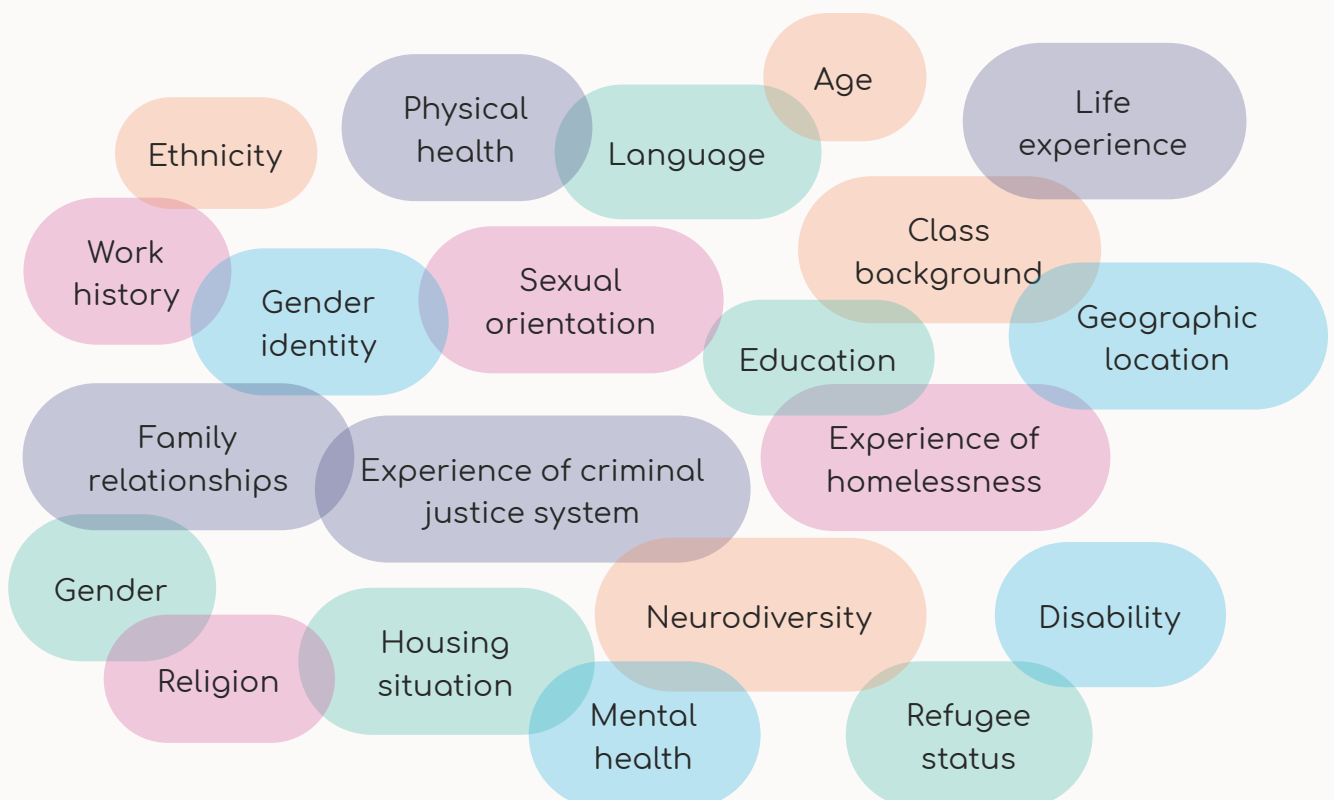
¹⁰⁹ As 109 ONS (2020).

¹¹⁰ As 109 ONS (2020).

¹¹¹ Stats Wales (2020) Households found to be eligible, homeless subject to duty to help to secure during the year. Main reason for loss of last settled home by type of household (Section 73). Accessed at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/households-found-to-be-eligible-homeless-subject-to-duty-to-help-to-secure-during-the-year-main-reason-for-loss-of-last-settled-home-by-type-of-household>.

A Note on Intersectionality and Youth Homelessness

It is important to note that the groups set above are not necessarily distinct and that intersectionality of the characteristics or situations that make a young person more vulnerable to homelessness can compound that vulnerability. Where systems of race, gender, and class domination occur, intervention strategies based on people who do not share the same class, race or backgrounds will be of limited help because people will face different barriers.¹¹² In terms of intersectionality, intervention strategies need to look at the potential multiple barriers a young homeless person can face in accessing services. People do not fit into neat boxes and we also need to be aware of the differences within groups. The concept of intersectionality was devised to show how social categories intersect and shape people’s experiences differently.¹¹³ For example, BAME people and/or people living in poverty will experience heterosexism and anti-trans biases differently, as discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation intersects with racial and class inequality.¹¹⁴



112 Crenshaw, K (1991). *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*. *Stanford Law Review*. 43 (6), 1241-1299.
 113 Couch, J. (2011) *Refugee young people and homelessness in Australia*. *Journal of Social Inclusion*. 2 (1), 39-52.
 114 As 114 Couch (2011).

Research has repeatedly indicated that family breakdown is a significant cause of youth homelessness as a consequence of young people revealing their gender identity or sexual orientation to their families.¹¹⁵ Researchers in Canada suggest that by just focusing on the family-rejection narrative we have reduced LGBTQ+ youth homelessness to a single issue and by default excluded other issues and experiences.¹¹⁶ Wheeler et al (2017) suggests if we only look at family breakdown as significant, we may not recognise poverty and racism as a cause of LGBTQ+ youth homelessness.¹¹⁷ Research in America has looked at the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people who had been in the child welfare system and how they felt this had influenced their housing insecurity or homelessness.¹¹⁸ The research found congregate living spaces such as group homes were unsafe. This could lead to frequent placement moves and challenges finding placement permanence research indicates that multiple placements can make homelessness more likely.¹¹⁹ In addition to this, when LGBTQ+ young people feel unsafe they are more likely to run away and become homeless.¹²⁰ Couch (2011) suggests an intersectional analysis can take away attention from just focusing on individual stories and experiences and consider larger systemic and structural inequalities.¹²¹ Research suggests when we look at intersectionality it should not be an additional approach, instead we should look at how specific forms of inequality are interdependent.¹²² We need to be aware of intersectionality but it should work alongside rather than replacing focus on larger systemic and structural inequalities.

Targeted Youth Homelessness Prevention – What We Should Do

As set out above, we have a good idea of the groups we need to target youth homelessness interventions at, though there is still more that needs to be learned. Below we have set out what we know about the interventions that could work to address the needs of vulnerable young people and prevent their homelessness before the point of crisis.

115 For example see *End Youth Homelessness Cymru* (2018) [Out on the Streets: LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness in Wales](#). Cardiff: EYHC.

116 Wheeler, C. Price, C. & Ellasante, I. (2017) Pathways Into and Out of Homelessness for LGBTQ2S Youth. In: Abramovich, A. and Shelton, J. *Where am I going to go? Intersectional Approaches to Ending LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada & the U.S.* Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. 49 – 62.

117 As 117 Wheeler et al (2017).

118 Robinson, B. A. (2018) *Child Welfare Systems and LGBTQ Youth Homelessness: Gender Segregation, Instability, and Intersectionality*. *Child Welfare*. 96 (2), 29-45.

119 Bridgeman, J. and Russell, H. (2020) *Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks: Homelessness Amongst Care Experienced Young People in Wales*. Cardiff: End Youth Homelessness Cymru.

120 Robinson, B. A. (2018) *Child Welfare Systems and LGBTQ Youth Homelessness: Gender Segregation, Instability, and Intersectionality*. *Child Welfare*. 96 (2), 29-45.

121 Couch, J. (2011) *Refugee young people and homelessness in Australia*. *Journal of Social Inclusion*. 2 (1), 39-52.

122 Hopkins P. (2019) *Social geography I: Intersectionality*. *Progress in Human Geography*. 43(5):937-947. doi:10.1177/0309132517743677.

Given the level to which systemic issues are responsible for failing to prevent youth homelessness, it is important to note that these ought to be set within a context of shared responsibility for youth homelessness prevention, across silos and disciplines. To an extent, co-location of different teams can enhance this type of shared responsibility. This could mean having housing workers located on mental health wards, or mental health professionals based in housing departments to ensure people receive the holistic advice and support that helps prevent them from experiencing homelessness. One young person, interviewed by EYHC, had received a number of short custodial sentences, which meant that he found maintaining a tenancy was impossible. He was in favour of co-location of housing staff in prisons:

“It would be good if we had the staff from the housing (at the prison). That would be helpful. They could do the papers and everything for when they are ready to move out and stuff”

– Jon, 25

As an additional underlying point, by improving data collection and sharing between departments and agencies, we can better target services. As an example, in *Out On The Streets* we called for Welsh Government to mandate local authorities to collect gender identity and sexual orientation data, in order to provide an improved understanding of where we need to focus resources on LGBTQ+ youth homelessness prevention.¹²³ Work in Scotland on youth homelessness prevention (*A Way Home Scotland’s* forthcoming pathway) includes a call for school data to be captured at presentation of a young person to housing options, to enhance targeting of resources.¹²⁴ The work undertaken to develop the *Upstream Cymru* model (described in greater detail below) has demonstrated that, in fact, much of the data that could make such a valuable contribution to our understanding of young people’s journeys into homelessness is already captured by different departments of local authorities. By routinely linking data captured by schools, homelessness teams, social services and youth services, rather than asking people to collect more data, we could better target scarce resources at groups and individuals at high risk. The partner agencies working to develop *Upstream Cymru* showed that by linking schools’ data, with that collected by homelessness teams, the schools from which young people were at greatest risk of becoming homeless could be identified, and resources more effectively directed.

¹²³ End Youth Homelessness Cymru (2018) *Out on the Streets: LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness in Wales*. Cardiff: EYHC.

¹²⁴ A Way Home Scotland (2021) *Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway*. Accessed at: <https://www.awayhomescotland.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2021/03/YHPP-for-All-Young-People-1.pdf>.

Upstream Cymru

Upstream Cymru is a collaborative, targeted intervention that works through schools to identify young people at risk of homelessness. Upstream Cymru builds on the success of an earlier Australian initiative which achieved a 40% reduction in youth homelessness, as well as enabling a dramatic reduction in levels of school disengagement, which in itself can have a bearing on likelihood of later homelessness.¹²⁵ The innovative, school-based initiative asks pupils to complete a survey developed by Cardiff University in conjunction with international partners, which allows for identification of known risk factors for homelessness at an early stage, at which point experienced, school-based Llamau staff can intervene accordingly.

Key principles of the model are:

- **Universal Population screening:** The aim is to ultimately ask every child in years 7 to 11 to complete a short series of questions, once a year, to determine whether they are experiencing any issues which are linked to an increased likelihood of becoming homeless. The questions asked have been robustly tested for their effectiveness in drawing out indicators of susceptibility to homelessness. The universal approach ensures that there is no stigma attached to engagement with the model and also highlights young people who otherwise show no indication of risk. A significant finding of the Australian approach was that often young people who were at risk of homelessness had high attendance, as school provided a consistency which was not to be found elsewhere in their lives.
- **Provision of support:** The model works by developing a community of schools and services. There is both a moral and practical imperative to provide appropriate support to all those who demonstrate a vulnerability in the screening process. Experienced Llamau staff from the Family Mediation and EMPHASIS teams offer flexible, youth-focussed support to those identified by the screening to be at risk.
- **Collaborative decision-making** between school and early-intervention workers as to how to most effectively respond to those issues raised in the screening process, through a single point of entry, with appropriate data-sharing between agencies built into this process. In-school welfare staff work in a formal cross-sectoral collaboration with external early-intervention youth and family workers.

¹²⁵ Mackenzie, D. Interim Report – *The Geelong Project*. Swinburne University of Technology and Barwon Child, Youth and Family Accessed at: <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2018-02/apo-nid133006.PDF>.

- **Youth-focussed and family-centred support** for vulnerable families and young people. Family dysfunction is a precursor to many adverse outcomes for young people (1,398 homelessness presentations in 2018/19 were because a parent was no longer willing or able to accommodate)¹²⁶, meaning that working with a young person must involve working with family members.
- **Robust outcomes measurement, monitoring and evaluation**, embodied in the model and provided by Cardiff University, will inform ongoing decision-making as well as demonstrating the success of the model.
- **International shared learning:** The learning from Upstream Cymru is shared with partners who are also working with this model in Canada¹²⁷, the United States and Australia, ensuring that all involved can build on the successes and learn from the mistakes of other partners.

The Welsh pilot, which works in 6 schools across 3 local authorities in a partnership between Llamau, Cardiff University and Do-It Profiler, has started to collect surveys and support young people based on the findings. Data collection will continue and interim results will indicate whether Upstream Cymru can have the same level of impact on youth homelessness in Wales that was achieved in Australia.

The services attached to Upstream Cymru, Family Mediation and EMPHASIS, are detailed below.

Family Mediation

“Before I became homeless and before I approached (third-sector homelessness provider) I was not a confident person at all, I always felt negative. That is what helped me, so exactly what I have been through and what (third-sector homelessness provider) gave me is exactly what needs to happen with the LGBT community, just more of it. For people who couldn’t go back home, but there is a struggle, just more mediation, more support and more help to try and keep them with their families if necessary.”

– Participant in Out on the Streets (2019)

The best place for a young person to grow up is at the family home, where it is safe and appropriate for them to do so. As set out, above, Family breakdown is consistently the principle cause for youth homelessness in Wales, so services

¹²⁶ StatsWales (2020) *Households found to be threatened with homelessness during the year. Main reason for being threatened with homelessness by type of household* (Section 66) Accessed at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/main-reason-for-being-threatened-with-homelessness-by-type-of-household-section-66->

¹²⁷ Sohn, J and Gaetz, S. (2020) *Upstream Canada: Preventing Youth Homelessness And School Disengagement Through Early Intervention*. Accessed at: <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/UPSTREAM%5BEarlyIntervention%5D2020.pdf>

which can intervene at a sufficiently early point that this can be prevented are a particularly important element of the Roadmap. Family mediation services have long been an effective homelessness prevention strategy employed in Wales. A study into the benefits of mediation services to prevent youth homelessness is currently underway at Cardiff University. Providers' outcomes data shows the effectiveness of the service: Llamau note that "71% of young people involved in Family Mediation remained at or returned home - that means they prevented 547 young people from becoming homeless last year."¹²⁸

Family mediation sits across both Targeted and Crisis Prevention, as a service which can be delivered via a targeted intervention, like Upstream Cymru, working early with young people identified as vulnerable to homelessness, or as a Crisis intervention and kicking in when a young person presents as at risk of homelessness.

EMPHASIS: Educational Re-Engagement Support

Services that acknowledge the vulnerability to homelessness that can be triggered by disengagement from education are valuable and should form part of targeted youth homelessness prevention strategies. As an example. Llamau's EMPHASIS programme prevents homelessness by working intensively with young people and their families. The programme works with young people who are on the brink of dropping out of education and employment with most being socially excluded and at risk of homelessness. Young people who are at risk of becoming homeless are identified by a range of agencies including youth offending teams, schools, colleges, the youth service, pupil referral units and alternative curriculum schemes (as well as through the new Upstream Cymru service). EMPHASIS provides intensive, holistic support to young people and their families in relation to homelessness, family relationship breakdown, education and employment as well as physical and emotional health and isolation.

Emphasis Case Study: Elodie

Elodie¹²⁹ aged 16 was referred for Emphasis support from the Upstream Cymru team because she was experiencing high anxiety about going to school and there were concerns around her attendance. She felt very anxious while at school because she felt like she was being judged by others. Her grandmother, who she was close to, had recently died and she had lost several family members over the last two years. Elodie had been referred to bereavement services and was working with Careers Wales to make a plan for when she left school. She felt that she wasn't academic and she didn't know what to do next.

¹²⁸ Llamau (2020) Webpage: Preventing Youth Homelessness. Accessed at: <https://www.llamau.org.uk/preventing-youth-homelessness>.

¹²⁹ Elodie's name has been change to protect her identity.

Elodie engaged well with the Emphasis service and attended face-to-face meetings with her Emphasis worker. However, lockdowns across Wales meant her school needed to close and she had to rely on online platforms to attend school and receive support. The Emphasis team worked hard to continue this work. The Emphasis worker spoke to Elodie's mum to ensure support was still encouraged by the family. Weekly support sessions have been continuing over the phone, at a time that works for Elodie. Over the weeks Elodie has become increasingly talkative, she has opened up about her feelings and the challenges she faces and has been willing to work with her Emphasis worker to find ways to build on her strengths and to face up to challenges and resolve them.

While Elodie continues to have doubts and is anxious for the future, her Emphasis worker is discussing positives with her about where she can succeed at school. Elodie has been comfortable with widening this discussion with her worker to include her future, so she can look at what it is important to focus on now. Elodie's engagement with Emphasis has improved her outlook on school and future opportunities. With support, Elodie's confidence has grown and she is working towards attending college when she leaves school.

Screening Tools: Youth Assessment Prioritisation Tool

Screening tools can also be used by housing and homelessness organisations to understand young people's support needs and their risks of homelessness. In interviews, young people have told us that they often have to repeat their stories and this can be re-traumatising. Young people have also told us that some organisations can focus on their weaknesses and not their strengths. Ally aged 23 lost her tenancy and became homeless despite receiving support. She felt because on the surface she looked like she was doing ok and she didn't like repeating her story her support needs were missed. Ally suggested a strengths-based model of support would have been more beneficial for her, she commented:

“Rather than looking at me going ‘oh she’s fine’ like use a strength based approach. So, you have something to work on. If someone has a lot of strengths and not very many weaknesses then use a strengths based approach and improve on those strengths rather than just looking at negatives”

– Ally, 23, Participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through The Cracks (2020)

When a screening tool is used, depending on the circumstances, young people tend to be assessed with a short screening tool to understand how they can be helped immediately. Then a more comprehensive assessment will likely follow, this

is used to understand the needs of the young person. [Research](#) suggests that the tools used for screening and assessment should be youth centred and specific, and standardised and measure more than housing need or risk.¹³⁰

The [Youth Assessment Prioritization Tool](#) – known as the YAP Tool – is a strengths based assessment for young people who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The YAP is an assessment that is undertaken when a young person comes into contact with services. It has been designed to learn what a young person's risk factors and strengths are, through a short 'pre-screen' survey followed by a fuller interview, if considered necessary. The pre-screen focuses on identifying the level of risk to homelessness the young person is facing. The second more comprehensive interview helps the interviewer (who is usually a support worker) understand the best way to support the young person. The YAP tool uses the knowledge of both the young person and the support worker when completing the assessment, there is also a space for discussion, explanations and recommendations.

In Wales, you can contact [Team around the Tenancy « TGP Cymru](#) if you would like to find out more about the YAP screening tool.

Youth Homelessness Coordinators

Welsh Government's Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness cites the role of the youth service in targeted prevention work to prevent youth homelessness.¹³¹ Similarly, youth homelessness prevention is highlighted as a targeted provision in the Youth Work Strategy for Wales.¹³² The strategy explains that targeted provision involves youth work provision for vulnerable young people and includes neighbourhood and street work outreach teams, youth advice and guidance services, youth justice teams, drug and alcohol misuse services, sexual health services and homelessness support.¹³³

Recognising the role of targeted prevention within the youth service Welsh Government have provided funding for youth homeless coordinators in each local authority in Wales. There are already examples of promising practice following the award of this funding.

130 Gaetz, S. Schwan, K. Redman, M. French, D. & Dej, E. (2018). *The Roadmap for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness*. A. Buchnea (Ed.). Toronto, ON: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

131 Welsh Government (2019) *Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness*. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-10/homelessness-strategy.pdf>.

132 Welsh Government (2019) *Youth Work Strategy Wales*. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/youth-work-strategy-for-wales.pdf>.

133 As 133 Welsh Government (2019).

The Youth Service at Pembrokeshire County Council, for example, have developed many innovative ways to prevent youth homelessness. The service aims to tackle the housing issues that affect young people, especially the factors that lead to tenancy failure and homelessness.¹³⁴ They include:

- A Virtual Learning Platform with resources co-designed with young people where they can learn the skills needed to sustain a tenancy.
- An Independent Living Centre where young people can practice these skills and learn new ones.
- A furniture and equipment library where young people can borrow the things they need to turn their house into a home for free.
- QR codes on housing letters that link to videos that explain the information in a clear way avoiding jargon.

The potential for these roles to act as the much-needed hub, bringing together different services, such as housing, education and social services, is significant. With their sole focus on youth homelessness prevention, they could well be the key to addressing the siloed approach of departments with more varied priorities, applying a homelessness-prevention lens to school based youth work, for instance. As a practical example, they could be responsible for instigating and overseeing the routine data linkage mentioned above, thus improving their authorities' abilities to target more precisely their resources.

Youth workers participating in the EYHC sessions held to prepare for this paper highlighted an important role for the Youth Homelessness Coordinators in addressing the needs of 16-18 year olds (which they referred to as 'too often the lost years'), focussing on housing, as well as the more traditional focus on education, employment and training. Pre-existing relationships with these young people would mean that youth workers could do this in a more seamless fashion than would be the case if a new, or specific, service was introduced at this point.

Finally, given the nature of youth services' relationships with young people, these roles offer a distinct opportunity for youth voice to shape the way that homelessness services are provided, through ongoing consultation that other statutory services would be less well set to deliver.

¹³⁴ Hemingray, J. (2020) *New project aims to avert youth homelessness in Pembrokeshire*. Accessed at: <https://www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/news/18818370.new-project-aims-avert-youth-homelessness-pembrokeshire/>.

Transition Pathways and Support

As set out, we know that young people leaving specific institutions are vulnerable to homelessness. Pathways which are designed to guide them through the transition must be fit for purpose and sufficiently resourced (i.e. where sustained housing is the end goal of the pathway, there must be sufficient stock of housing available; this also applies to the workers offering support, whose caseloads must enable them to provide sufficient time to each young person). These pathways, which encourage co-working across departments and agencies, can be usefully augmented by specific support projects.

Transitions from Care:

The Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework is a pathway document which aims to help local authorities and other organisations working with care experienced young people to find suitable accommodation. It can also be used by commissioners to inform housing strategies, ensuring a supply of appropriate accommodation.¹³⁵

The Framework sets out a number of useful key principles, stating that. “Young people leaving care should be:

- given as much information, choice and control as possible
- able to make mistakes and never ‘fall out’ of the framework
- helped to succeed
- offered flexible support that adapts to meet their needs
- offered supportive and unconditional relationships
- the shared responsibility of their corporate parent

Two 2018 studies found that the Framework was potentially very useful but that its use was inconsistent, with one (Stirling, 2018) describing it as “well used in some local authorities - and little used in others”.¹³⁶

In light of evidence provided in End Youth Homelessness Cymru’s 2020 paper Don’t Let Me Fall Through the Cracks, Welsh Government has agreed to review the use of this pathway with support providers to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. Other recommendations from Don’t Let Me Fall Through the Cracks are

135 Barnardo’s (2016) *Care leavers’ accommodation and support framework for Wales*. Barnardo’s & Shelter Cymru. Accessed at: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Care%20leavers%20accommodation%20and%20support%20framework%20for%20Wales%20October%202016%20%28PDF%29.pdf>.

136 Stirling, T. (2018) *Youth homelessness and care leavers: Mapping interventions in Wales*. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy.

covered throughout the Roadmap in terms of preventing the homelessness or repeat homelessness of care experienced young people:

Young people we interviewed spoke of losing their tenancies because they had associated with negative peer groups, because they were lonely. We recommended that Welsh Government should explore the feasibility of a 'Right to Return to Care' policy. Care-experienced young people should be able to make mistakes and still be supported by the system. Young people should be provided with the option to return to their care placement or another option such as Community Hosting. Other young people are able to return home and/or receive ongoing support from their parents. There should be parity for care experienced young people.

Another issue two of the 27 young people had was no one had established they were care experienced when they had presented as homeless. One was fleeing domestic abuse and another had mental health issues. We recommended that local authority housing options teams must always proactively seek to establish whether a young person is care experienced, upon presentation as at-risk-of-homelessness.

The care experienced young people we spoke to identified budgeting as the area they needed the most support. Many felt unprepared for independent living and felt this had contributed to them losing their tenancies. We recommended that corporate parents needed to ensure care leavers' financial capabilities are developed through the pathway planning process and support is given to them from professionals to prepare for financial independence.

Care Transition Support Services

In addition to statutory approaches, such as the provision of Personal Advisors, there can be benefit in employing specific youth-focussed services designed to support young people through transition from care into a more independent form of living. TGP Cymru's Team Around the Tenancy service, for example, has been operating in Conwy and Wrexham since October 2019 with plans to expand across North Wales, following an announcement of expansion funding from the Big Lottery Fund, provided based on positive outcomes initially achieved. This service is another funded by Welsh Government's youth homelessness Innovation Fund, in its initial incarnation. The Team Around the Tenancy prioritise helping young people secure a home, recognising the importance of the stability that comes with steady accommodation to all other areas of a person's life. Working restoratively and focussing on young peoples' strengths, they seek to empower individuals to be involved in finding their own solutions to any challenges that they face, working with them, rather than doing to or for them, to ensure a sustainable outcome. They provide tailored advice for the individual and focus

on coordinating the systems that young care experienced people are involved with. Small caseloads allow practitioners the time needed to help young people navigate these systems effectively.

Transitions from the Secure Estate

Welsh Government's 'National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate' sets out to improve services designed to meet the housing needs of people leaving the secure estate.¹³⁷ The prisoner pathways were introduced in response to changes in legislation including the removal of prisoners from the list of people in priority need for housing in The Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

The adult pathway explains how the probation service is responsible for a prisoner's resettlement. Planning for a prisoner's resettlement begins at the reception stage and includes the preparation of a resettlement plan. This is followed by the identification of any housing needs. Once a housing need is identified, the prisoner will be supported to resolve the housing issue identified at assessment. No matter the length of sentence, housing need should be identified and support put in place at reception to meet this need and prevent their homelessness.¹³⁸

The children and young people's pathway expands on the agencies that can provide support to young people in the secure estate. Youth offending teams work closely with the secure estate to ensure there are appropriate resettlement arrangements in place when a child or young person leaves the secure estate. The Youth Offending Team has a responsibility to help provide suitable accommodation on release and they should do this with Children Services and/or the Housing Options in the relevant local authority.¹³⁹

Recent evaluations of homelessness services have been undertaken focussing on both adults leaving the secure estate (Madoc-Jones et al, 2018¹⁴⁰) and young people (Pierpoint and Hoolachan 2019¹⁴¹ specifically focussed on those aged 16-17 or aged 18 if they were still in contact with children's services). The review

137 Welsh Government (2015) *National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate*. Accessed at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/homelessness-services-for-children-young-people-and-adults-in-the-secure-estate_0.pdf.

138 Welsh Government (2015) *National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate*. Accessed at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/homelessness-services-for-children-young-people-and-adults-in-the-secure-estate_0.pdf Page 6.

139 As 139 Welsh Government (2015).

140 Madoc-Jones, I. Hughes, C. Dubberley, S. Gordon, C. Washington-Dyer, K. Wilson, F. Ahmed, A. Lockwood, K. and Wilding, M. (2018) *Evaluation of Homelessness Services to Adults in the Secure Estate*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/evaluation-homelessness-services-adults-secure-estate-0>.

141 Pierpoint, H. and Hoolachan, J. (2019) *Evaluation of homelessness services to young people in the secure estate*. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statisticsand-research/2019-07/evaluation-homelessness-services-young-people-secure-estate.pdf>.

of the adult pathway reported stakeholder concerns about an increase in the homelessness of prisoner's due 'to supply side' housing issues.¹⁴² The review noted an increase in the homelessness of released prisoners who would have been previously accommodated in temporary accommodation. The review also found there was a group of prison leavers caught in a revolving door of short prison sentences, followed by brief periods in the community before they reoffend or they are recalled to prison. Finding housing for this group was noted as challenging, due to histories of harmful substance use, tenancy failures and exclusions.¹⁴³

The review of the child and young people's pathway found the main impact of the pathway had been to 'bring agencies to the table' and encourage closer relationships between partners.¹⁴⁴ The review found the pathway was being implemented, as envisioned, but that contextual challenges remained. Notably, stakeholders fed back to the review their concerns about 'shrinking resources' and supported housing accommodation shutting down.¹⁴⁵

Further to these two reviews, there is additional scope to consider the specific experiences of, and services available to, young people aged 18-25 in the secure estate. A recent report from the House of Commons Justice committee (2018) suggests that, as young adults are a distinct group with needs that are different from children aged under 18 and adults aged over 25, they need a distinct approach with less focus on managing risk and more focus on enabling positive progression.¹⁴⁶ This is an area for further research in order to develop some practical recommendations to prevent the homelessness of these young people.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that research be undertaken to examine if there is a need for a distinct housing pathway for young people aged 18 – 25 leaving the secure estate. These young people will face difficulties finding housing and there needs to be a specific pathway that takes into account young people's needs.

142 Madoc-Jones, I. Hughes, C. Dubberley, S. Gordon, C. Washington-Dyer, K. Wilson, F. Ahmed, A. Lockwood, K. and Wilding, M. (2018) *Evaluation of Homelessness Services to Adults in the Secure Estate*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/evaluation-homelessness-services-adults-secure-estate-0>

143 As 143 Madoc-Jones et al. (2018).

144 Pierpoint, H. and Hoolachan, J. (2019) *Evaluation of homelessness services to young people in the secure estate*. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statisticsand-research/2019-07/evaluation-homelessness-services-young-people-secure-estate.pdf>.

145 As 145 Pierpoint, and Hoolachan (2019) P. 50.

146 The House of Commons Justice Committee (2018) *Young Adults in the Criminal Justice System*. Accessed at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmjust/419/419.pdf>.

Justice Sector Transition Services

In many cases, the criminal justice sector comes into contact with young people at a high risk of homelessness at an earlier point than housing and homelessness services.¹⁴⁷ Homelessness upon release could be reduced by the prison service working more closely with housing and homelessness services.¹⁴⁸ An example of a service designed to enable this joint working and smooth the transition from prison is Pobl's Enhanced Support Service (ESS). The ESS delivered by Pobl at HMP Parc provides individualised support to young people focussing on pre and post release to help prevent homelessness. The ESS aims to align with existing statutory services and plug the gap between prison-based and community-based services. In addition, this service will provide support to maintain tenancies for people after release.

Transitions through and out of Health Systems

Given the vulnerability of young people with poor mental health to homelessness and the increased pressure on stretched mental health services, evident before COVID-19¹⁴⁹ and increased still further since¹⁵⁰, there is a clear argument for support services which can support young people to access the help they need before it reaches crisis point.

As an example, NYAS Cymru's Newid project supports care-experienced 16-25 year olds to move between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the community, or into Adult Mental Health Services.¹⁵¹ The Newid Project targets a group already vulnerable to homelessness. Part of the service involves supporting young people with the move from CAMHS to adult mental health services, which many young people have said that they consider a point of precarity (nearly half of the young people interviewed in a 2012, UK-wide examination of the transition between the two services found themselves in supported accommodation during the period of the study).¹⁵² They also support young people who are moving from CAMHS into the community, who need help to access support from mental health services or have received help from mental health services but need further support to manage their own health and well-

147 Fitzpatrick, S. Mackie, P. and Wood, J. (2019) *Homelessness Prevention in the UK – Policy Briefing*. Accessed at: <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/publications/homelessness-prevention-in-the-uk/>.

148 Fitzpatrick, S. Mackie, P. and Wood, J. (2019) *Homelessness Prevention in the UK – Policy Briefing*. Accessed at: <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/publications/homelessness-prevention-in-the-uk/>.

149 Smith, M. (2019) *The Young People Failed by Mental Health Services in Wales*. Accessed at: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/young-people-who-feel-failed-15917609>.

150 BBC News (2020) *Covid in Wales: Children's mental health 'collateral damage'*. Wales Politics. Accessed at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-54470934>.

151 NYAS Cymru (2019) *The Newid Project*. Accessed at: <https://www.nyas.net/wp-content/uploads/NYAS-NEWID-Leaflet.pdf>.

152 Hovish, K. Weaver, T. Islam, Z. Paul, M. and Singh, S. (2012) *Transition Experiences of Mental Health Service Users, Parents, and Professionals in the United Kingdom: A Qualitative Study*. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*. 35 (3) 251–257. Accessed at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22246124/>.

being. The wellbeing support is guided by the young person. Young people are supported to understand the tools and techniques that can improve wellbeing and mental health and find out what works for them.

In England, a duty to refer homeless people to a local housing authority exists, which covers hospital A&E and Urgent Treatment Centres.¹⁵³ This has not yet been introduced in Wales, though the Homelessness Action Group has recommended that learning from evaluation of the English model is applied to Welsh policy in its recommendation that All public bodies must ensure that everybody discharged from a public institution has a sustainable housing solution.¹⁵⁴

Beyond the UK, lessons could be learned in Wales from a youth-focused approach to preventing discharge from hospital to homelessness which is being studied in London, Ontario. This 3-4 year long research project will study a co-ordinated multi-agency response to ensuring young people are supported to access appropriate housing upon discharge from hospital, interviewing 93 young people at three intervals to determine its impact.¹⁵⁵

The Whole School Approach to Mental Health

The Whole School Approach to mental health being embedded under the current government is moving education in the right direction and we share the view of Psychologists for Social Change that funding should be maintained for this approach.¹⁵⁶ This should address, to an extent, both the issue of effectively supporting those who have lived through ACEs and also impact on the numbers of schools resorting to exclusion of children

Exclusion Prevention

As we have set out, young people excluded from school are at greater risk of homelessness than their peers. As well as targeted educational re-engagement support, focussed on homelessness prevention, there are steps which could be usefully taken to reduce and ultimately end exclusion from schools altogether. A recent meta-analysis of programmes aimed at tackling school exclusion

153 Shelter Legal (2020) *Duty of Pubic Authority to Refer*. Accessed at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/legal/homelessness_applications/applying_as_homeless/duty_of_public_authority_to_refer.

154 Homelessness Action Group, *Second Report of the Homelessness Action Group* (2020). Accessed at: <https://media.service.gov.wales/media-library/6gpv8-kzdb5-jyk0j-8ymoc-34c0a>.

155 Richmond, R. (2021) *Could project keep discharged hospital patients from homelessness*. The London Free Press. Accessed at: <https://www.branfordexpositor.ca/news/local-news/could-project-keep-discharged-hospital-patients-from-homelessness>.

156 Psychologists for Social Change (2020) *Manifesto: Build Back Better Mental Health in Wales*. Accessed at: <http://www.psychchange.org/elections-2021.html>.

concluded four approaches presented as promising and showed significant results in reducing exclusion:¹⁵⁷

1. **Enhancement of academic skills** – programmes that enhance academic skills and seek to improve academic performance, increase motivation and promote more adaptive behaviour. They can include academic remediation and social skills training.
2. **Counselling** – the provision of counselling in schools.
3. **Mentoring/ monitoring** – consisting of the building of structured and supportive relationships between a young person with academic, emotional or behavioural difficulties and an adult acting as a role model and providing support.
4. **Skills training for teachers** – interventions targeting teacher’s skills involving training in facilitating mutual respect between teachers and students as well as training to establish clear classroom rules. Skills for teachers also involve strategies for working in an alliance with parents to promote students’ engagement in school activities.

Targeted Employment Support

It is generally accepted that employment provides many benefits to health and well-being that can reduce the risks of homelessness, depending on the quality and nature of the work involved.¹⁵⁸ Traditional training and support programmes do not always meet the needs of homeless young people, or young people vulnerable to homelessness.¹⁵⁹ Young people at risk of homelessness will have the same aspirations and dreams as other young people but they may not have had the opportunity to gain the skills needed to realise those ambitions. Research tells us that, unsurprisingly, homeless young people will face far greater challenges obtaining and maintaining work.¹⁶⁰ This will be largely because of the greater barriers they face they will be more likely to have left school at an earlier age (often due to school exclusion); they will lack resources such as money, housing and food, all necessary for employment.¹⁶¹

157 Valdebenito, S. Eisner, M. Farrington, D.P. (2019). et al. *What can we do to reduce disciplinary school exclusion? A systematic review and meta-analysis.* *Journal of Experimental Criminology.* 15. 253–287. Accessed at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-018-09351-0>.

158 Qian, J. Riseley, E. and Barraket, J. (2019) *Do employment-focused social enterprises provide a pathway out of disadvantage? An evidence review.* Australia: The Centre for Social Impact Swinburne.

159 Gaetz, S. & O’Grady, B. (2013) Why don’t you just get a job? Homeless youth, social exclusion and employment training. In S. Gaetz, B. O’Grady, K. Buccieri, J. Karabanow & A. Marsolais (Eds.), *Youth homelessness in Canada: Implications for policy and practice* (pp. 243-268). Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

160 As 160 Gaetz & O’Grady (2013).

161 As 160 Gaetz & O’Grady (2013).

Symud Ymlaen/ Moving Forward (SYMF) is an intermediate employment project run by Llamau. SYMF provides individualised and tailored support and training alongside on-going mentoring and culminates in a 26 week paid work placement. The project has been designed to help care experienced young people and young people known to the criminal justice system, two groups at high risk of homelessness without targeted intervention, to overcome the greater disadvantage they face accessing the labour market. Participants on the SYMF programme face many barriers to accessing education and employment including school exclusion, so the project helps them with support to prepare for work placements: if young people are not ready to begin work, specialist staff work with them on their basic skills, employability skills and confidence.

SYMF Case Study: Freya¹⁶²

Freya was living independently when she joined the Symud Ymlaen/ Moving Forward (SYMF) programme. Freya's mother had recently died and as she had been her mum's main carer, she had missed a lot of school and had no qualifications. Freya was referred to the SYMF programme and began to work towards her goals and targets. Although Freya had recently lost her mother and was living on her own for the first time, she displayed such strong resilience, remained focused and worked really hard to achieve her targets.

Freya needed a work placement in order to progress. She was interested in working in a beauty salon. We knew this would be difficult because this was one of the sectors that had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

An employer at a beauty salon was informed about the SYMF programme and how it helps young people become self-sustainable. The employer was also informed that Freya would receive her pay from Llamau and would effectively become a Llamau employee during her work placement. Freya is settling in well to her placement and has developed the skills and experience to provide beauty treatments. Alongside her placement, Freya has received support to develop her CV, her confidence, her employment skills and her budgeting skills.

Research has found that taking part in SYMF improves a young person's chance of sustaining positive outcomes including employment and further education.¹⁶³ A robust international research study [Preventing Youth Homelessness through Social Procurement](#) examined how the supported employment project could help prevent youth homelessness.¹⁶⁴ The analysis looked at SYMF in its original

¹⁶² Freya's name has been changed to protect her identity.

¹⁶³ Tamburello, H. & Morris, F. (2015) *An Impact Study of the Symud Ymlaen/ Moving Forward Project*. Cardiff: Llamau.

¹⁶⁴ Loosemore M, Bridgeman J, Russell H, Zaid Alkilani S. (2021) *Preventing Youth Homelessness through Social Procurement in Construction: A Capability Empowerment Approach*. Sustainability. 13(6):3127. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13063127>.

format, which ran from 2013 until 2016. While work placements were provided in a number of sectors, the study concentrates on construction placements. In total 437 young people completed a 26-week work placement as part of the first SYMF project with 52 of these placements being within the construction industry. The study demonstrated that an intermediate employment project, and construction employment, when targeted at vulnerable groups, can help address the multiple factors that can lead to youth homelessness.

Building on our experience of working with the construction sector, there is potential to expand these targeted interventions, taking advantage of major public works to support young people at risk of homelessness into decent work. Welsh Government have announced plans to decarbonise 1.4 million homes in a new energy efficient retrofit programme starting in 2021.¹⁶⁵ This offers a major opportunity to train and employ young people. This is much needed: the COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly have a negative impact on young people who are already facing barriers to employment - 640,000 18-24 year olds, in the UK, could find themselves unemployed this year alone.¹⁶⁶ In Canada, there is evidence of an innovative, environmentally friendly construction training programme for homeless youth supporting them to overcome barriers to achieve green jobs. This programme tackles youth homelessness, unemployment and energy conservation all at the same time. The Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2013) explains that the Train for Trades programme retrofits low-income and social housing for greater energy efficiency.¹⁶⁷ Construction specific job guarantee schemes linked to green jobs could help build skills in the industry and help young people build better lives for themselves in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A recent paper published by the Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) (2020), analyses available evidence and recommends that Welsh Government work with local authorities, DWP and voluntary sector partners to implement employment pathways for people at risk of homelessness. The CHI recommends that these be based on the youth homelessness positive pathway framework developed by St Basils and MHCLG, with dedicated employment specialists to support successful implementation.¹⁶⁸

The same paper also recommends that Jobcentre Plus staff should systematically ask the increasing numbers of people approaching them for

165 Dobbins, L. (2019) *Decarbonising Welsh Homes*. Cardiff: Welsh Government

166 Henehan, K. (2020) *Class of 2020: Education Leavers in the Current Crisis*. London: Resolution Foundation.

167 Canadian Homeless Research Network. (2013). *Case Study Choices for Youth Train for Trades*. In: Gaetz, S, O'Grady, B, Buccieri, K, Karabanow, J and Marsolais, A. *Youth Homelessness in Canada: Implications for Policy and Practice*. Toronto: Canadian Homeless Research Network. 311-322.

168 Gray, T. (2020) *Employment and homelessness in the context of the new economy following Covid-19*. Centre for Homelessness Impact. Accessed at: https://uploads-s3.amazonaws.com/59f07e67422cdf0001904c14/5f69bb4cc2178efbae6ad003_CHI%20Employment%20policy%20paper.pdf.

support whether they are at risk of losing their home. Appropriate advice and support could then be offered, with the aim of preventing that individual's homelessness.

Using Social Value Requirements to Help Prevent Youth Homelessness

Local authorities in Wales will already include social value clauses in their procurement strategies, we would ask that young people at risk of homelessness are considered as part of social procurement policies. In England Trowers & Hamlins (2020) have developed a social value toolkit in order to help local authorities in England achieve the outcomes of the Care Leaver Covenant.¹⁶⁹ In England, the Care Leaver Covenant is a commitment from the public, private and voluntary sector to support young people leaving care, support could include apprenticeships, work experiences or free or discounted goods and services.¹⁷⁰

The social value toolkit has been designed to help LAs implement an entire organisation approach to include executive officers, social services, community investment, health, housing, corporate services and procurement teams to create social value in alignment with the objectives of the Care Leavers Covenant, which can be secured through the procurement process. The Toolkit suggests LAs should engage with their local care leavers to get a list of what they want and need to inform the council's social value requirements.¹⁷¹ Suggesting there are significant benefits of engaging care experienced young people before the procurement process and this feedback can be shared with potential bidders to provide additional ideas and feedback for procurement requirements.¹⁷²

Manchester City Council have developed '[A Social Value for Suppliers Toolkit](#)' outlining what the council hopes to achieve through social value for Manchester's residents and neighbourhoods. The Toolkit offers suppliers the opportunity to provide social value in two ways firstly through 'Social Value in Kind' e.g. through work placements and apprenticeships as part of a large construction contract. Secondly, suppliers can offer a cash contribution to a 'Social Value Fund' to fund activities such as early intervention activities for young people not engaged in employment, education or training. One of the objectives of Manchester City Council's Social value Policy is to promote equity and fairness – target effort towards those in the greatest need or facing the greatest disadvantage and tackle deprivation across the borough. In

¹⁶⁹ Trowers and Hamlins LLP (2020) SOCIAL VALUE TOOLKIT A guide to supporting care leavers through procurement. Accessed at: <https://mycovenant.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CLC-A-Toolkit-for-incorporating-social-value-v4.pdf>.

¹⁷⁰ Gov.UK (2018) Care Leaver Covenant. Accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/care-leaver-covenant--2>.

¹⁷¹ As 170 Trowers and Hamlins LLP (2020).

¹⁷² As 170 Trowers and Hamlins LLP (2020).

Manchester they have targeted social value efforts at priority groups including care experienced children and young people; young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and young people involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. These are all young people that we know are at risk of homelessness.¹⁷³

Recommendation 10

We recommend young people at risk of youth homelessness – including those with care experience, those not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those known to the criminal justice sector or those at risk of becoming known to the criminal justice system – are included in Welsh Government and Local Authority social procurement policies. Based on the findings of EYHC’s work on [Preventing Youth Homelessness through Social Procurement](#) we know that supported employment can help prevent the homelessness of at risk young people in Wales. As in Manchester, we suggest that suppliers provide ‘Social Value In Kind’ opportunities such as work experience, apprenticeships and job opportunities for young people at risk of homelessness. Alternatively, they should contribute to a ‘Social Value Fund’ to fund education and training opportunities for young people at risk of homelessness.

Overcoming Work Barriers for Young People in Supported Accommodation

Shelter Cymru are currently undertaking research on overcoming work barriers for young people living in supported accommodation. Many studies have found young people living in supported accommodation want to be able to work. The research is needed because overcoming work barriers is not straightforward. However, there is strong will in the sector to change things and help young people into independence.

The homeless young people EYHC have spoken to tell us how much they want to access employment. Mike aged 20 had been street homeless we spoke to him on his second day of staying in a mixed aged hostel. He told us how much he wanted to access employment and he saw this as a way out of homelessness, he explained:

“I just want to strive through it and get over the wall that they want to put in front of me. Because if I get a ladder it doesn’t matter how big the wall is. If needs be I will just get a bigger ladder”.

Young people who are experiencing or who are at risk of homelessness will face a range of social and personal barriers to accessing and sustaining employment.

¹⁷³ Manchester City Council (2021) *Powering Social Value through recovery*. Accessed at <https://www.cdes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/All-dslides.pdf>

Rent Arrears Notifications

Eviction can be a cause of homelessness for young people. When we are looking at preventing youth homelessness, we need to include measures to prevent this pathway into homelessness. In Europe, some countries have developed information systems and partnership working for early intervention in order to prevent evictions.

In Sweden all housing companies are required to send a written notice to the local welfare committee the first time a tenant has a problem paying the rent. This means outreach services have enough time to intervene long before any legal proceedings are commenced.¹⁷⁴

In the Netherlands in order to implement the Dutch homelessness strategy, most cities have established partnerships between the city administration, housing corporations, homelessness services and debt advice services to encourage joint working and prevent evictions.¹⁷⁵ The reduction of evictions is one of the indicators that Dutch cities report on as part of their strategic plans. In Amsterdam, they introduced early outreach services where housing corporations inform service providers of a tenants risk of eviction when they have two months' rent arrears. In response a home visit takes place with a social worker and a financial worker to explore support needs and financial situation and offer support with debts and budgeting.¹⁷⁶

In Wales, landlords in the Private Rented Sector must register with Rent Smart Wales and either obtain an additional licence to manage property or use a licenced managing agent.¹⁷⁷ Landlords seeking a licence must pass checks (e.g. they can't have criminal convictions) and must undertake training on the rights and responsibilities of tenants and comply with a code of practice.¹⁷⁸ . This might present an opportunity for landlords to receive training on financial assistance available to tenants rather than serving notice. For example, there is support with Discretionary Housing Payments and they can encourage tenants receiving housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit to go for this rather than serving notice.¹⁷⁹

174 The European Commission (2013) *Confronting Homelessness in the European Union*. Accessed at: http://aei.pitt.edu/45917/1/swd2013_0042.pdf.

175 FEANTSA (2012) *On the Way Home: FEANTSA Monitoring Report on Homelessness and Homelessness Policies in Europe*. Accessed at: https://www.feantsa.org/download/on_the_way_home-16908290734892551038.pdf.

176 As 176 FEANTSA (2012).

177 Moore, T. (2017) *The convergence, divergence and changing geography of regulation in the UK's private rented sector*, *International Journal of Housing Policy*. 17 (3) 444-456. Accessed at: DOI:10.1080/19491247.2017.1312795.

178 As 178 Moore (2017).

179 Shelter Cymru (2020) *Discretionary Housing Payments*. Accessed at: <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/get-advice/paying-for-housing/housing-benefit-and-council-tax-reduction/discretionary-housing-payments>.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that PRS landlords in Wales are compelled to tell LAs when their tenants have rent arrears so appropriate support can be put in place. This could be one of the requirements to register with Rent Smart Wales. We recognise that this type of support is already in place in the social housing sector. However, young people are much less likely to be allocated social housing. In light of this, we need to adapt support services to work in the PRS in order to prevent the homelessness of young people.

Research: Lack of Affordable Housing for those Claiming Local Housing Allowance

[The Bevan Foundation](#) are currently investigating the link between homelessness, and the lack of affordable housing for those claiming the Local Housing Allowance. They will be analysing data on current housing market trends, and will be speaking with people with lived experience of homelessness and the numerous issues in the housing system. They are also particularly interested in the experiences of young people, as they are uniquely disadvantaged due to the Shared Accommodation restrictions. They will be publishing their initial research findings in August 2021.

Critical Time Interventions

A Critical Time Intervention (CTI) is a time-limited, case management model which aims to provide support for people through periods of transition, for example during the transition from prison into stable accommodation within the community. During the transition, the CTI approach works toward achieving person-centred goals, developing a person's independence and increasing support networks so they have support at the end of the time-limited intervention.¹⁸⁰ Support begins while the person is still within the institution and follows them into the community, ensuring a seamless discharge.¹⁸¹

A study in Denmark examined the journeys of 406 people who received support from a CTI programme, finding a 95% success rate for critical time interventions in terms of 'being housed and maintaining housing'. One quarter of the people who received support from a CTI in this study were aged 18-24, so the model has

180 Fulfilling Lives (2019) *Implementing a Critical Time Intervention Model: Interim Evaluation*. Accessed at: <https://www.incommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/CTI-Interim-Evaluation-Report-WEB.pdf?mtime=20200318171942&focal=none>.

181 Hanratty, J. Miller, S. Hamilton, J. Keenan, C. and Coughlan, J. (2020) *Discharge programmes for individuals experiencing, or at risk of experiencing homelessness: a systematic review*. Accessed at: https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/59f07e67422cdf0001904c14/5f68e2b9be0491cd66e6c6da_CHI%20Discharge%20Review.pdf.

a precedent for being able to ensure youth can successfully manage transitions without falling into homelessness.¹⁸²

Crisis are operating pilots of CTI within the UK, including a prison-leaver focussed pilot in Swansea and the surrounding area, which will improve understanding of the efficacy of the model in a Welsh context. Stuart Mander, who is overseeing this pilot for Crisis, talked to EYHC about the pilot in February 2021 and described a layered process. This begins with relationship development with a person while still in custody, finding out what is important to them and what is going to help them to transition smoothly back into their community. Next follows a period of intensive support focussed on key areas that the person identifies as crucial to their resettlement, of which housing must be one, and with a goal of developing/ redeveloping the relationships that will help that person to sustain their accommodation.

Additional Crisis pilots in England include work with ACH, a refugee integration service, to support people after they have received their refugee status supporting people through transitions with more intensive support being given at the start of the tenancy.¹⁸³ ACH works with tenants over a 9-month period, divided into three key stages including 'support planning and transition; education, training and employment services; and assistance with benefits, renting and local services to help tenants move on independently with the tools to achieve their ambitions'.¹⁸⁴

The information gleaned from these pilots with specific groups will help to develop understanding of how CTIs can be practically implemented, but the findings of existing research into the efficacy of the model, in the context of our knowledge of the precarity of young people making transitions, presents a strong argument for the uptake of CTI across Wales, as a key element of the Targeted Prevention of youth homelessness.

182 Benjaminsen, L. (2013) *Results from the Housing First based Danish Homelessness Strategy and the challenges of youth homelessness*. Accessed at: https://www.feantsa.org/download/lb_review4223864335925447213.pdf.

183 ACH (2021) *Launch Project to Help Refugees Experiencing Homelessness: The CTI Project*. Accessed at: <https://ach.org.uk/news-and-features/ach-crisis-launch-project-help-refugees-experiencing-homelessness>

184 As 184 ACH (2021).

Crisis Prevention

Crisis Prevention: What We Know

This section of the Roadmap covers the prevention of youth homelessness likely to occur within a specified time. The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 empowers local authorities to intervene when a household alerts them to the fact that they are threatened with homelessness within the next 56 days.

This preventative legislation was at the time of its introduction a first-of-its kind, and has inspired change across the world, since.

“There has been a paradigm shift in homelessness policy-making in the developed world: we have entered an era of homelessness prevention.”¹⁸⁵

Accepting that this relatively recent legislative change moved us significantly further forward, toward a society in which homelessness prevention is normalised, there is still much more to be achieved. Crisis prevention can be improved with greater notice: the Homelessness Action Group has called for the 56 day notice period to be tripled to 6 months to reflect proposed changes to private rental agreements which would extend notice periods to the same period.¹⁸⁶ More sustainably, as set out in the chapters on Universal Prevention and Targeted Prevention, we can build on the progress achieved with this shift to preventative working by priming these earlier stages of prevention with resources, plugging the channels into homelessness and targeting our attention much earlier on those at greatest risk.

With this in mind, the bulk of our insights into the changes required to end youth homelessness sit within the former two chapters. There are still, however, significant improvements that can be made at Crisis, Emergency and Recovery Prevention stages, which will only be enhanced by improvements to Universal and Targeted Prevention.

¹⁸⁵ Mackie, P.K. (2015) *Homelessness Prevention and the Welsh Legal Duty: Lessons for International Policies*, Housing Studies 30(1) pp.40-59.

¹⁸⁶ Homelessness Action Group, *Second Report of the Homelessness Action Group* (2020). Accessed at: <https://media.service.gov.wales/media-library/6gpv8-kzdb5-jyk0j-8ymoc-34c0a>.

Crisis Prevention: What We Should Do

Youth-Specific Services

As an underlying principle, as with all services established to prevent youth homelessness, those with which a young person is met at crisis point should be youth-specific, or co-located with specialist youth services. As we have stressed, young people experiencing homelessness are at a key developmental period, mentally, physically, socially and emotionally. They often have no experience of independent living and lack the resilience of adulthood. They are treated differently under law, have reduced access to some benefits and generally earn lower incomes than older adults where they are able to access work. Some will have involvement with youth-specific systems, notably the care system, which increase their risk of homelessness.

“Can the services be just for the youth? Because the only services around here are mixed, so we have no choice but to go in with 40-year-old smack heads. I don’t mean to put it that way, but that’s the way it is”

– Dafydd, 20

Asking young people to navigate adult homelessness services is inappropriate and anachronistic. Those who have spoken to EYHC about the issue describe feeling intensely uncomfortable when sharing services with older homeless people.

For all of the reasons set out above, to be effective, youth homelessness prevention requires a distinct approach from that taken to combat adult homelessness, with a need for youth-specific services and staff to be made available, offering tailored, preventative services, ideally meeting young people where they are or at least not relying on young people to attend adult services.

A good example of this type of co-located service is offered in the Vale of Glamorgan, where the local authority’s Housing and Children’s Services departments are co-located at a youth-specific ‘one-stop-shop’ in Barry with a Llamau team, who offer specialist services such as Family Mediation. This means that if a young person is at risk of homelessness they need only present to one venue, where they will be able to receive support from a multi-disciplinary team which is expert in young people’s needs and rights. During consultation on this Roadmap, a member of the local authority team noted that an additional benefit of this co-location of services is the mix of statutory and voluntary services, with young people perhaps more inclined to speak openly with a voluntary service, who can then work closely with statutory colleagues to provide a response.

Family Breakdown:

Among the most frequently cited reason for young people to present as homeless in Wales, at crisis-point, is Family Breakdown. The figure presented by Welsh Government for households made homeless when a 'parent (is) no longer willing or able to accommodate' alone is significant, but combined with 'other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate' it is a greater cause of homelessness even than rent arrears across all housing sectors.¹⁸⁷ Given this situation, it is important that services are available at this point (and before) which can directly address family breakdown in an effort to overcome communication difficulties and, where safe, help a young person to stay at home. Even if this is not possible, support to overcome differences and maintain family links may help to diminish the sense of loneliness that homeless young people frequently raise as having a severe impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

There is evidence to suggest that Family Mediation Services, can be most effective when implemented early, hence the reference to this service in the Targeted Intervention section (see page 35) with targeting data provided via Upstream Cymru.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, Family Mediation Services are a crucial tool also at point of crisis and have for many years been predominantly introduced at this stage, when someone presents as threatened with homelessness. When delivered in this fashion, the last full year of Llamau data shows that 499 young people who worked with Llamau's Family Mediation Service – 66% of all cases – either remained at home or returned home, with further soft outcomes, such as improved communication between family and young person, achieved even where a return home was deemed unviable.¹⁸⁹

As an example of how such a service can practically help end homelessness at this point, Seren, a 17 year old whom EYHC interviewed, became homeless after her mum kicked her out and told her to 'find somewhere else to go'. She presented to her local authority and was given a place to stay in a supported housing project. Shortly after this, Seren dropped out of school because she was embarrassed about being homeless. With help from her support worker, Seren and her mum accessed family mediation, which helped them understand each other better and she has since moved home. Seren says she is now more aware of the challenges her mother faces, which contributed to the breakdown in their relationship previously:

187 Stats Wales (2019) *Households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the year. Main reason for loss of last settled home by type of household (Section 75)*. Accessed at: <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Statutory-Homelessness-Prevention-and-Relief/households-found-to-be-eligible-unintentionally-homeless-and-in-priority-need-during-the-year-main-reason-for-loss-of-last-settled-home-by-type-of-household-section-75->

188 Centrepoint (2016) *Preventing Youth Homelessness: What works?* Accessed at: <https://centrepoint.org.uk/media/1700/prevention-what-works-summary.pdf>

189 Llamau (2020) *Llamau: What We Do*. Accessed at: <https://www.llamau.org.uk/what-we-do>

“She don’t get money for me anymore because obviously, I am older. I am not in education (so) I don’t get the child benefit, whatever it is. She is stressing because I want money to go out or whatever. She struggles to give it to me and I feel bad then when she gives me money”.

– Seren, 17, Participant in Don’t Let Me Fall Through The Cracks (2020)

Testing, Prioritising and Restricting Access

Within the Welsh legislation are a number of measures designed to restrict access to local authorities’ thinly spread housing stock. These prioritise access to housing to those who are considered to be most vulnerable to the negative outcomes associated with homelessness, who have a local connection to the area and to those who have not been deemed to have made themselves homeless when other options were available to them. Given that we know that a high proportion of homeless people first become homeless while young, that there is a high likelihood of repeat homelessness after that first instance, and that the burden on other overstretched public services is unsustainable (see the 96% rate of mental illness in homeless youth exposed by Hodgson [2014]¹⁹⁰), it is clear that these measures to limit access to housing are no longer appropriate. Approaches to each are set out below, but, ultimately, to end youth homelessness we need to move past systems which restrict access to sustainable accommodation for young people in need, in tandem with the sort of intensive development of social housing noted under Universal Prevention.

Ending Priority Need Testing for Young People

Welsh Government recently published a review of the Priority Need system in Wales, an element of our homelessness legislation which seeks to ensure that the limited housing stock available is prioritised for those who would be worst effected by homelessness.¹⁹¹ The review sets out and quantifies the impact of different options for government, ranging from maintaining the status quo to total removal of Priority Need testing. When EYHC provided evidence for this report, we were among many who put forward the argument that young people under the age of 35 should be automatically accepted as being in priority need, since UK Government’s welfare legislation limits the amount that they can access

¹⁹⁰ Hodgson, K. J. (2014) *The Mental Health of Young People with Experiences of Homelessness*. Thesis. University of Cardiff. Accessed at: <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/59590/2/2014hodgsonphd.pdf>.

¹⁹¹ Mackie, P. Gray, T. Hughes, C. Madoc-Jones, I. Mousteri, V. Pawson, H. Spyropoulos, N. Stirling, T. Taylor, H. Watts, B. (2019). *Review of Priority Need in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 70/2020. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/review-priority-need-wales>.

to pay rent with until this age. Whether as the first of a tapered set of groups for whom testing ceases, or as part of a wholesale removal of the priority need test from legislation, this move would present one less barrier to young people trying to access accommodation.

Reviewing Local Connection for Young People

In [Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks](#), we presented the experiences of care-experienced young people who put part of the blame for their homelessness on the inflexibilities of the Local Connection system, which they felt denied them the ability to stay in local authorities where they felt at home. Instead, they told us about being relocated to local authorities that they may have been born in but in which they had none of the support networks that are so crucial to maintaining tenancies.

"Yeah, I was sent back to Bylia¹⁹² not long ago. A relationship breakdown with my mum again... I ended up homeless. But I have no one in Bylia my partner is in Ber Falls so I ended up coming back to Ber Falls. But Ber Falls won't do anything because I've not got a local connection, so..."*

– Grace, 18, Participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through The Cracks (2020)

We know that loneliness and isolation are closely connected to homelessness. Six of the young people we spoke with for that research considered it to be the principle cause of their homelessness, with impacts on mental health and harmful substance use. Young people told us in some cases it led to them inviting people over who would end up having profoundly negative effects on their lives, again risking homelessness.

"When I moved over here I didn't know anyone. I was a fresh face in (local connection LA) I was getting looks left, right and centre and when I made friends I made friends with the wrong crowd and started getting myself into trouble. I started getting into debt and taking drugs and that wasn't me. That's not me. Over (LA with foster parents) I would never have thought of doing anything like that"

– Dylan, 23, Participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks (2020)

¹⁹² Place names have been changed to maintain young person's anonymity.

“(I got moved to a hostel) in the most depressing and gloomiest place in the world...there was no support. I couldn’t even get hold of family I was 15 miles away from any family in any direction. My mum couldn’t help me and I just had to suffer it to the point where I attempted (suicide) three times. It got that bad for me that I couldn’t cope with it any more”

– Lewys, 20, Participant in Don’t Let Me Fall Through the Cracks (2020)

“I have got to the point where I am laying alone in a freezing cold fucking house no one is there and I was drinking. Drinking... it helps me fall asleep”

– Bill, 17 Participant in Don’t Let Me Fall Through The Cracks (2020)

In [Don’t Let Me Fall Through the Cracks](#), we argued that Welsh Government and Local Authorities should review local connection rules and practice with regard to care experienced young people. We stated that care experienced young people placed out-of-county should be able to have the area they have been placed in considered as an additional ‘local connection’ when moving on – the choice should lie with the young person. This additional flexibility would enable young people to live close to support networks and reduce the loneliness described in this paper.

Multi-Agency Case Reviews

“It’s confusing because your foster carer and social worker tries to take you out of environments that are risk fuelled and are damaging to your health, physically and mentally. What’s annoying, you’ve gone through trauma, you’ve seen parents take drugs, you’ve been affected by drugs yourself. It’s counterproductive to put you back in the environment that they took you out of. You are supposed to be doing a job, taking us out of environments that are a risk to us. You know that there has been trauma and flashbacks, anxiety, panic attacks; to put them back into that environment... well, social services might just as well not exist. It seems pointless that they’ve been with you for ten, twelve years of your life then you become homeless and you’re back in the same spot you were in, in the first place.”

A further point of recommendation made in [Don’t Let Me Fall Through the Cracks](#) was for the introduction of a new policy across Welsh local authorities, triggered whenever a care-experienced person presents as homeless or at risk of homelessness. At this stage, a multi-agency review should be undertaken, led by the director of children’s services, or a local authority colleague of equivalent seniority, to ensure that the group’s findings can swiftly lead to remedial action. This would firstly ensure that the young person gets the help they are entitled to,

principally rapid access to sustainable accommodation. This approach would also provide an opportunity for all relevant partners to review and address any flaws within systems, caused by miscommunication, lack of resource or disconnection between services, to ensure that future, similar cases are prevented.

Young People found to be 'Intentionally' Homeless

The third key 'test' which can be applied at presentation is that of intentionality. A local authority can decline to provide support to someone if he or she 'deliberately does or fails to do anything' which leads to them losing access to accommodation that they could reasonably have stayed in. The statistics suggest that this is a relatively infrequent occurrence, in practice. Shelter Cymru (2018) found that since the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 fewer households have been deemed to be intentionally homeless only 126 households in 2016/17, compared with 895 a decade earlier.¹⁹³

Grace aged 18 was told by her LA that they could do nothing for her when she didn't make it back to the B&B she was staying in she said because of that they did nothing:

"Yeah, so I was told I had to be back by 10pm didn't make it home like two nights in a row at 10 o'clock so I ended up getting kicked out".

Grace told us she had no support in the B&B. Shelter Cymru (2018) reports that generally a failure to recognise support needs has been strongly linked to intentionality decisions in Shelter Cymru casework.¹⁹⁴

Grace is care-experienced, she grew up in residential homes she has experienced family and relationship breakdowns and trauma. Shelter Cymru suggests trauma-informed practice is key to understanding ACEs and Housing Solutions teams need to be trained to understand the signs of trauma and will be useful for teams who have already reduced intentionality decisions to a low level to reduce decisions by zero.¹⁹⁵

193 Shelter Cymru (2018) *From Intention To Action: strategies for avoiding intentional homelessness decisions*. Accessed at: <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Intention-to-Action-report.pdf>

194 As 194 Shelter Cymru (2018).

195 Shelter Cymru (2018) *From Intention To Action: strategies for avoiding intentional homelessness decisions*. Accessed at: <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Intention-to-Action-report.pdf>

Evictions

Although the evidence suggests that youth homelessness is more likely to occur as a result of family breakdown than eviction from private or social rented housing there is still scope to prevent homelessness from these routes.

Youth Evictions into Homelessness from Social Housing

Welsh Government data on the subject of ‘main reason for loss of last settled home by type of household’ shows, in the last full year for which data is available (2018/19), 9 single households were found to be eligible for preventative support and unintentionally homeless due to rent arrears from social sector homes. In the same period a further 9 were made homeless for the same reason from private accommodation.

Significant efforts have been undertaken to reduce evictions into homelessness from many social landlords, following campaigning from Shelter Cymru and others. A 2019 study found that the picture was mixed with many social landlords taking a trauma-informed approach, working with tenants and “providing more in-house services to deliver prevention, early intervention, and strong relationships with tenants, individualised support and understanding root causes to issues”.¹⁹⁶ By contrast, the report noted that there are still some landlords working in a more traditional fashion, using Notices of Seeking Possession as tools to stimulate cooperation from tenants.

An example of good practice which could be considered here is the employment of youth workers by housing associations whose role is specifically designed to engage with young tenants. This approach has been successful for English landlord LiveWest, whose work was recognised with a TPAS award for excellence in engagement in support and care.¹⁹⁷

Although not a youth-specific approach, Clwyd Alyn’s employment of an early intervention officer to work with tenants in low-level arrears is another example of an approach to driving down evictions (to zero, as Clwyd Alyn intend).¹⁹⁸

196 Opinion Research Services (2019) *Understanding Social Housing Evictions in Wales*, Welsh Government. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-07/understanding-social-housing-evictions-in-wales.pdf>.

197 LiveWest (2020) *Our support for young people praised after winning TPAS Awards*. Accessed at: <https://www.livewest.co.uk/my-community/our-support-for-young-people-praised-after-winning-tpas-awards>.

198 Budden, C. (2020) *Ending homelessness from social housing can happen – a ‘zero evictions’ approach will be a catalyst*. Accessed at: <https://www.cymorthcymru.org.uk/en/news-blog/news/ending-homelessness-social-housing-can-happen-zero-evictions-approach-will-be-catalyst>.

Young People in the Private Rented Sector (PRS)

The housing market can be difficult and some young people will face multiple disadvantages in finding accommodation. The private rented sector (PRS) is the only housing option for many young people. However, research suggests landlords in the PRS may not want tenants who are on benefits, and they may also be apprehensive about letting to young people.¹⁹⁹ However, the PRS is increasingly being used as a way to both prevent and reduce the homelessness of young people.²⁰⁰ Young people may also struggle to find rents in the private rented sector because Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is failing to cover the cost of the majority of rents in Wales. LHA rates can further disadvantage young people. If a young person is aged under 35, single and has no children they are generally only entitled to the 'shared accommodation rate' this is the standard rate for a single bedroom in a shared house. This is lower than the rate for a one-bedroom property but it applies even if there is no shared accommodation in the area.²⁰¹ The evidence suggests young people are more likely to have to share accommodation and have issues with privacy, lack of independence and personal safety.²⁰²

The UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence examined alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in the UK private rented sector in the UK, including mediation.²⁰³ The report only looks at court/tribunal-connected mediation across the UK and found there was a distinct lack of affordable (either free or low cost) mediation services for landlords and tenants.²⁰⁴ The report suggests there should be less formal and less costly mediation services made available to landlords and tenants in the PRS to avoid disputes being escalated to courts or tribunals.²⁰⁵

199 Gallagher, J. Luby, J. and Clark, J (2012) *Working with the private rented sector to tackle youth homelessness: A good practice report*. Accessed at: https://www.nhas.org.uk/docs/Youth_PRS_report.pdf

200 As 200 Gallagher et al (2012).

201 Shelter (2019) *What is Local Housing Allowance*. Accessed at: <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/get-advice/paying-for-housing/housing-benefit-and-council-tax-reduction/what-is-local-housing-allowance/>. Last accessed 17th September 2019.

202 Hoffman, S. (2019) *The right to adequate housing in Wales: Feasibility Report*. Accessed at: <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/RightToHousing-Full-ENG.pdf>.

203 The UK Centre for Collaborative Evidence (2020) *Alternative approaches to resolving housing disputes The role and potential of alternative dispute resolution in the UK private rented sector*. Accessed at: https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/200227-ADR_Report_c.pdf.

204 As 204 The UK Centre for Collaborative Evidence (2020).

205 As 204 The UK Centre for Collaborative Evidence (2020).

Emergency Prevention

Emergency prevention involves providing emergency support for those young people at immediate risk of homelessness, especially those sleeping rough. Research shows that when young people leave home they try, to at least temporarily, stay with friends or family.²⁰⁶ EYHC's recent report [Don't Let Me Fall Through The Cracks: Care-Experienced Young People and Homelessness in Wales](#) demonstrated that this wasn't an option for many care experienced young people, with some having slept on the streets and in tents and others staying in unsuitable emergency and temporary accommodation. EYHC has also spoken to young people who are not care experienced who have shared similar experiences of rough sleeping, sleeping on floor space and sofa surfing. The introduction of more appropriate emergency housing options to prevent young people from experiencing the worst forms of homelessness is clearly a pressing issue. No young person in Wales should be forced to sleep rough or in temporary accommodation where they do not feel safe.

"You've always got a choice when you become homeless. You can choose to sofa surf. You can choose to go make yourself a camp and put up a tent, so there is always a decision. In terms of where you stay when you first present as homeless. There is floor space and that is pretty much it. There are the churches as well but they are also floor space"

– Lilly, 22 Participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through The Cracks (2020)

Emergency Prevention: What We Know

Welsh Government's response to ensuring homeless people are safe during the COVID-19 pandemic has set out clear ambitions to ensure that the progress achieved in recent months translates to long term changes, including Wales' approach to use of temporary accommodation.

Specifically, their guidance for local authorities and partners, released in June 2020, on Phase 2 of their response, 'Planning Guidance for Homelessness and Housing Related Support Services' aims to "ensure the long-term resettlement of

²⁰⁶ Schwan, K. French, D. Gaetz, S. Ward, A. Akerman, J. and Redman, M. (2018) *Preventing youth homelessness: An international review of evidence*. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy. Accessed at: <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/WCPP%20Preventing%20Youth%20Homelessness%20international%20evidence%20review.pdf>.

every person currently residing in a form of temporary accommodation in Wales” and argues for improvements to quality of temporary accommodation, noting that:

*“It is no longer acceptable to offer ‘floor space’ or ‘pods’; we must move rapidly and permanently to provision of new types of short term accommodation that meets minimum expectations and the needs of people facing homelessness in Wales”.*²⁰⁷

This is a most welcome change – many of the worst experiences shared with EYHC by young people have stemmed from having no option but to accept this type of unsuitable accommodation.

The separation of young people from older homeless people in emergency accommodation should be addressed, with sufficient youth-specific options made available in emergencies. The comment below, from a young person made homeless at 16 years old after a family breakdown, illustrates why this is important:

“People can’t stay in the night shelter when they are 16 years old... It didn’t leave me traumatised, but if a quiet kid went there and he didn’t know what he was doing it would leave them traumatised. The people there, they are just out of control, they are throwing their life away and I think the people down there are violent too; the drugs that are going around it is all way too much, way too much”

– Nick, 20 Participant in Don’t Let Me Fall Through The Cracks (2020)

Young people have told us that when they are housed with older people who engage in harmful substance use, it is difficult not to get involved in using or selling. The quote below is from a young person staying in a mixed aged hostel:

“They shouldn’t put anybody except drug and alcohol users in that hostel... if you want to spice yourself up say... crack, whatever... they like get away with it in the (hostel)... I was 17 years old in the (hostel) with crack heads, junkies, heroin addicts, alcoholics, then they question, why are you involved”

– Rees, 20, Participant in Don’t Let Me Fall Through the Cracks (2020)

207 Welsh Government (2020) Phase 2 – Planning Guidance for Homelessness and Housing Related Support Services. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-06/planning-guidance-for-homelessness-and-housing-support-services-coronavirus.pdf>.

Emergency Prevention: What We Should Do

Community Hosting: Emergency Accommodation

EYHC has completed research on the use of Community Hosting A Better Way Home – Community Hosting to Prevent Youth Homelessness. We believe Community Hosting is one of the ways of preventing youth homelessness in Wales for young people who benefit from living in a more nurturing environment. Community Hosting is where a young person stays in the home of a trained and vetted ‘host’. A ‘provider’ a specialist organisation, such as Llamau or a local authority, runs the Community Hosting scheme and provides support to the host and the young person. In this section of the Roadmap we examine Community Hosting as a method of the emergency prevention of youth homelessness. Emergency Community Hosting, includes the Nightstop model, this is where a young person stays with a host for a short period of time normally between one night and three weeks.

Emergency Community Hosting Community Hosting can provide short, emergency stays (perhaps providing time for support workers to arrange for a young person to stay more permanently with another family member). This is a form of housing that provides young people and their families with a break aimed at providing short term accommodation while preventing young people from having to stay in inappropriate emergency accommodation such as B&B’s and mixed age hostels. In some local authorities in Wales they offer emergency placements as part of their Supported Lodgings scheme. In the Vale of Glamorgan, for instance, the local authority can authorise retainer fees to keep emergency Supported Lodgings placements open, over weekends when they are concerned that they could need additional, emergency accommodation capacity.

Nightstop

Nightstop is the most extensive Community Hosting programme in the UK, promoted by DePaul UK.²⁰⁸; it provides same-night accommodation, linking young people in crisis with trained hosts in their own homes.²⁰⁹ Research suggests emergency accommodation such as Nightstop is particularly important as it can offer flexible, non-institutional, respite housing to give young people and their families a time-out for reconciliation work and if that is not possible more permanent accommodation can be secured.²¹⁰

208 Depaul (2020) *Nightstop: Preventing Homelessness through Volunteer Hosting*. Accessed at: <https://uk.depaulcharity.org/nightstop/>.

209 Schwan, K. French, D. Gaetz, S. Ward, A. Akerman, J. and Redman, M. (2018) *Preventing youth homelessness: An international review of evidence*. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy. Accessed at: <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/WCPP%20Preventing%20Youth%20Homelessness%20international%20evidence%20review.pdf>.

210 Waits, B. Johnsen, S. and Sosenko, F. (2015) *Youth homelessness in the UK*. OVO Foundation. Accessed at: <https://www.ovofoundation.com/binaries/content/assets/documents/pdfs/ovo-foundation/youthhomelessnessbriefing.pdf>.

Nightstop is currently operated in Anglesey by Digartref, and in Flintshire and Conwy operated by Local Solutions, with accreditation provided by Depaul UK to ensure that the accommodation meets quality standards, is healthy and that all appropriate safeguarding considerations have been met.

Based upon the input of stakeholders including young people, hosts and staff members of both local authority and third sector providers, we presented a set of recommendations in our report 'A Better Way Home: Community Hosting in Wales'. Existing Community Hosting schemes in Wales have been developed to meet local need, meaning there is little or no standardisation or sharing of resources. Schemes have been developed sporadically by local authorities and there is a lack of consistency across services including in relation to the fees paid to hosts. If we decide to scale up Community Hosting in Wales, there needs to be more standardisation and sharing of good practice.

Emergency Beds in Supported Housing Projects

One of the emergency accommodation options for vulnerable young people in some local authorities are emergency beds in supported housing projects. These are short stay assessment units or 'ring fenced' beds in houses otherwise used for longer-term supported youth homelessness accommodation.²¹¹ Not only does providing emergency accommodation in specialist supported housing projects for young people mean that support is on hand, as needed, but it also provides an alternative to the use of unsuitable adult homeless accommodation and B&B accommodation. Some local authorities in Wales provide emergency beds in supported housing projects: Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Wrexham provide an emergency bed for young people in supported housing accommodation, for example, and Swansea have four emergency beds in the foyer.²¹²

What We Should Do: Additional Forms of Emergency Prevention

The Youth Homelessness Helpline

The Youth Homelessness Helpline provides vital, out-of-hours support for young people who find themselves without a safe place to spend the night. It is open through the night and on weekends - times when there isn't any other help available and young people are likely to be most in need of help. The Helpline is run by a team of trained Llamau colleagues and volunteers, who aim to provide

211 Whalen, A. (2015) *Provision for Young Care Leavers at Risk of Homelessness*. Accessed at: <https://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/ppiw/files/2015/10/Report-Provision-for-young-care-leavers-at-risk-of-homelessness-FINAL.pdf>.

212 Stirling, T. (2018) *Youth homelessness and care leavers: Mapping interventions in Wales*. Accessed at: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Youth-homelessness-and-care-leavers-Mapping-interventions-in-Wales.pdf>.

callers with information on where to access safe temporary accommodation and offer advice and support. The Helpline is a free phone number, which has meant that it has been able to receive calls from people who have no credit on their phones, so were unable to contact their local homelessness department.

The calls coming into the helpline have significantly increased in recent months, due to the pandemic. People who perhaps wouldn't have called the Helpline before were left with no choice because friends and family members couldn't or didn't want to accommodate them any longer. The health concerns and fear caused by the virus meant sofa surfing was no longer an option.

Of 141 calls made to the helpline in 2020, 46% came in from those who would be considered to be in Priority Need, according to Welsh legislation. 62% of callers were male, 38% female and the average age of caller was 21. The youngest caller was aged just 13.²¹³

The Helpline has taken calls from a range of people since it first launched. They've taken calls directly from frightened young people facing a cold night on the streets to parents who are desperate to find alternative accommodation for their son or daughter because their relationship has become quite toxic.

Volunteers Experience: Youth Homelessness Helpline

I started my volunteer journey with Llamau last year but took my first call this March. Having worked for the Citizen's Advice Bureau, I felt like the role would suit me, taking calls and talking to a variety of people. I've also always had an interest in housing and the issues faced by young people today so the role makes me feel like I'm being useful and giving something back.

Every call is different in some way. Some are simpler than others but every call teaches me something new, which I really like. I've learnt so much through the role from how housing differs depending on individual circumstances to rules and regulations in force across different areas of Wales.

One call that I remember well was from a woman trying to help a friend of hers get off the streets. Her friend had been sleeping rough for about two weeks but that night we managed to agree a space in a B&B for him from the following morning. There are normally issues that prevent a caller's needs being resolved that same night, so this was a real moment for me. I felt like I'd really done something really helpful.

Sadly there are calls where I'm unable to help a person that quickly. I took a call from a woman sleeping on the streets with so many complications that no matter

213 Source: Llamau in-house helpline data

how hard I tried, I just couldn't get her that help she needed. The team were able to get in touch with her the next day and offer support. I did all I could on the night but of course it felt horrible leaving things like that.

Even when feelings like this occur, I continue my role taking calls because I believe being able to offer any sort of help to a caller is my main priority. I worry about people facing homelessness or sleeping rough or who're living in dangerous environments so I want to do my part and help however I can. If they didn't have the Helpline then they may not have anything or anyone to turn to.

Peer-to-Peer Outreach Workers: LGBTQ+ young people

Research on promising practice for LGBTQ+ youth in America recognises the important role of peers in complementing the role of professional staff.²¹⁴

Ferguson and Maccio (2015) found both young people and adult peers from the LGBTQ+ community worked as peer outreach workers they found in addition to providing direct services peers serve as positive role models.²¹⁵ These role models help young people counteract negative opinions that young people may have formed based on experiences of family rejection and abuse as well as victimisation and exploitation once homeless.²¹⁶ The research found peer outreach services were effective in engaging street homeless young people in services, improving self-esteem and self-efficacy so they can protect themselves from negative health outcomes such as HIV/AIDS, and in reducing high-risk sexual behaviours. Findings of, Ferguson and Maccio's (2015) study show how peer outreach work can be effective at supporting young homeless LGBTQ+ people and how the approach should be considered in policy and practice.²¹⁷ This chimes with findings from *Out on the Streets* and a concurrent report on trans people's experiences of homelessness in Wales, which both pointed to LGBTQ+ people (and particularly trans people) turning to their peers for support more readily than to authorities, with whom they had often had negative experiences.²¹⁸

214 Ferguson, K. M. & Maccio, E. M. (2015) *Promising Programs for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning Runaway and Homeless Youth*. *Journal of Social Service Research*. 41 (5). 659-683. Accessed at: DOI: 10.1080/01488376.2015.1058879.

215 As 215 Ferguson & Maccio (2015).

216 As 215 Ferguson & Maccio (2015).

217 As 215 Ferguson & Maccio (2015).

218 England, E. (2019) *Homelessness among trans people in Wales*. *Shelter Cymru*. Accessed at: https://sheltercymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Homelessness-among-trans-people-in-Wales_Website.pdf.

Direct Cash Transfer Programme (DCTP)

One solution for moving young people out of homelessness as quickly as possible is by offering them direct financial assistance (cash transfers) as well as support. The basic idea behind cash transfers is simple, by giving money directly to young people they are empowered to make decisions about their accommodation and futures for their own well-being. It has been suggested this intervention has the potential to empower and entrust young people to find and invest in their own solutions to housing stability.²¹⁹ [Research](#) with multiple stakeholders, including young people who have experienced homelessness, on a direct cash transfer program (DCTP) for young people experiencing homelessness in America suggests key conclusions for developing an effective DCTP programme:

1. **Centre on youth, equity, and trust** – Young people raised the importance of programmes focusing on youth needs, particularly for young people who can face discrimination and exclusion through existing systems including BAME, refugees and LGBTQ+ young people.
2. **Boost housing stability and empowerment** – Participants suggested that DCTP's need to be set up with clear and bold objectives: to help young people to sustainably move out of homelessness and follow their own path, whatever path they choose. These objectives should inform transfer amounts, duration and support.
3. **Adopt a flexible and simple approach** – Young people experiencing homelessness will have different needs, preferences and circumstances. Young people should be able to choose between different payment methods and support options as this provides better results for young people in varied situations. Together, with providing a simple integrated delivery system and support teams to make the programme easier to implement.
4. **Identify and manage barriers to success** – While there are concerns about giving money to people living in poverty they don't seem to happen, some design and support decisions can reduce the risk of adverse events and that cash transfers affect welfare benefits or have tax implications.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Morton, M. H. Chávez, R., Kull, M. A. Carreon, E. D, Bishop, J. Daferede, S. Wood, E. Cohen, L. & Barreyro, P. (2020). *Developing a direct cash transfer program for youth experiencing homelessness: Results of a mixed methods, multistakeholder design process*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

²²⁰ Morton, M. H. Chávez, R., Kull, M. A. Carreon, E. D, Bishop, J. Daferede, S. Wood, E. Cohen, L. & Barreyro, P. (2020). *Developing a direct cash transfer program for youth experiencing homelessness: Results of a mixed methods, multistakeholder design process*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Personalised Budgets

There is evidence of the positive impact of the provision of personalised budgets to people sleeping rough in London.²²¹ This differs from the direct cash transfer model, set out above, in that rather than simply transferring funds, the people involved, in this instance, were told there was a budget available to them to help with whatever activity it was that they thought would help them to stay off the streets. They then worked with the Project Coordinator to plan a budget for how they would spend the money. In tandem with flexible, personalised support, this proved to be a highly successful approach.

221 Hough, J. & Rice, B. (2010), *Providing personalised support to rough sleepers*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Accessed at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/providing-personalised-support-rough-sleepers>.

Recovery Prevention

“I am 22 now and I have lived in that hostel four times because I have ended up being homeless again because I have never managed to be stable again”

– Carly, 22, Participant in Don’t Let Me Fall Through The Cracks (2020)

Recovery prevention in this context refers to the prevention of repeat youth homelessness, including sofa surfing and rough sleeping, through the provision of sustainable housing and appropriate support. Our aim is for youth homelessness to be rare, brief and non-recurrent; recovery prevention is intended to enable the achievement of that non-recurrence.

Recovery Prevention: What We Know

Although data is relatively limited on the recurrence of homelessness in Wales, since collection of information as to whether someone is a repeat presentee is not mandated, nor collected centrally, it is apparent from qualitative data, gathered during EYHC interviews with young people, that many young people experience repeated incidences of homelessness. Research carried out in 2014 for Crisis shows that in a sample of homeless people in Wales, 59% first became homeless before the age of 21. Further, 78% had been homeless more than three times, showing that once someone has become homeless once, it is likely to recur and enhancing the argument for strong recovery prevention initiatives.²²² Subsequent research carried out for ADR Wales (2020) has considered administrative data collected by local authority staff in Swansea to improve understanding of repeat homelessness.²²³ This work considered repeat homelessness through a series of different lenses (based on approaches in three countries, which count repeat homelessness differently). By the broadest measure (i.e. the Australian approach, which is to count repeat homelessness by counting whether the client has sought help with homelessness at any point since data collection began in 2011-12) the Swansea data showed that over 3 years 24% of clients returned for further help after a repeated experience of homelessness, a number which might be anticipated to increase over a longer data collection period.

222 Mackie, P. & Thomas I. (2014) *Nations apart? Experiences of single homeless people across Great Britain*. Crisis. Accessed at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20608/crisis_nations_apart_2014.pdf.

223 Thomas, I. and Mackie, P. (2020) *Data Insight: Measuring Repeat Homelessness*. ADR Wales. Accessed at: <https://www.adruk.org/fileadmin/uploads/adruk/Documents/Data-Insights-Measuring-Repeat-Homelessness.pdf>.

Recovery Prevention: What we Should do

The key approaches to Recovery Prevention, successfully ensuring that young people do not become homeless again, focus on quickly supporting them into appropriate housing, working with them to minimise potential for tenancy failure. Principally, these approaches fall under Rapid Rehousing or Housing First. As with all the interventions discussed in this paper, these need to be designed to address young people's specific needs – we know that pushing young people through systems designed for adults results in poor outcomes. Housing First for Youth offers a good example of this, formalising youth-focussed principles within the framework of an extremely successful and well understood intervention.

Housing first for Youth

Housing First is one of the most well understood and demonstrably effective approaches to homelessness prevention, with the Centre for Homelessness Impact's evidence review of the approach stating that:

*"Housing First programmes produce positive effects relating to housing stability, crime, and employment. These findings are consistent across the included studies and durable over time."*²²⁴

Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) Case Study

Theo had a difficult upbringing. During his childhood, he witnessed his mum being domestically abused by her ex-partner. This understandably caused Theo a great deal of trauma and meant that he struggled to understand his emotions and behaviours. Theo's mum was a single parent and struggled with his behaviour. Theo went to live with his dad, but he also struggled to cope with his verbally abusive outbursts. Neither parent was prepared to have Theo live with them full time. Theo found being rejected by both his parents hard to accept and this led to disagreements within his family.

Theo's accommodation options were limited because of his challenging behaviour this included shouting, swearing and making threats. Theo also had a history of criminal behaviour and he had recently spent time in custody. Theo had lived in various supported housing projects in his local area and different areas in Wales. These had all proven unsuccessful mainly because Theo found it difficult to manage his emotions when he felt his needs were not being met. Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) was chosen as the most appropriate form of housing and support to meet Theo's needs.

224 Centre for Homelessness Impact (2021) Housing First. Accessed at: <https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/intervention/housing-first#highlight>

Positive Changes since Moving to HF4Y

Theo's HF4Y support worker told us that he has matured a great deal since moving into HF4Y and he is starting to regulate his emotions and behaviours. Theo's HF4Y support worker is working with him to be more aware of why he becomes angry and help him understand that his behaviour can mean people feel scared or threatened by him.

Theo was working with lots of different agencies and that could be confusing for him. His HF4Y worker built relationships with each agency and Theo's parents and shared weekly updates with them. This has meant communication has improved, Theo is attending all his appointments and agencies are working together rather than duplicating work.

One of the key features of HF4Y is the relationship-building aspect, which is not time limited or tied to where the young person lives. Theo is increasingly opening up to his HF4Y support worker and reflecting on his behaviour. He is also starting to enhance his independent living skills and successfully sustain a tenancy. He is also working with support workers to address his harmful substance use issues.

This is the longest time Theo has lived in one place since leaving his parent's home. He is working hard to sustain his tenancy and build relationships with his neighbours.

The Housing First model works to a set of key principles, fundamental to its effectiveness, most notably a reversal of traditional 'staircase' models, whereby a person has to continually prove their readiness to move on to the next form of accommodation, until eventually found to be 'housing ready'. Instead, housing is treated as a human right, offered with minimal preconditions, maximum client choice as to location, housing type and support services. These support services are distinct from the housing, so if a person loses their tenancy, the support remains, providing a level of consistency for as long as that individual requires it.

Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) applies similar principles but takes a youth-specific approach. In Wales, a [set of ten principles was agreed by the Housing First for Youth](#) Subgroup of the Welsh Housing First Network. These have been co-designed to address the key points of the original Housing First principles but with specific youth-focussed emphasis, stating for instance that support offered should be delivered "by specialised experts in the field of supporting young people, who recognise their specific needs and the challenges that young people face".

Funded by Welsh Government's Youth Homelessness Innovation Grant and mostly established during the pandemic in 2020, HF4Y is being delivered in a number of local authorities in Wales by voluntary sector organisations including Goleudy, the Care Society and Llamau and in Powys by the local authority directly. It

involves close partnership working with key stakeholders (Coastal Housing are working with Llamau to provide appropriate accommodation for young people using the service in Swansea, for instance) and a dedicated focus on delivering support tailored to the needs of each individual young person on the scheme. Despite the difficulties of operating during the pandemic, practitioners have reported to the initial success with the model at the network, which is designed to provide a supportive community of practice. Evidence as to the model's effectiveness in Wales, therefore is limited, but recent evaluation (2020) of a more established model, delivered in Scotland by the Rock Trust, gives cause for optimism as to its impact.²²⁵

This evaluation examined the experience of twelve young people, aged between 17 and 20, supported by HF4Y. All were care experienced, had experienced childhood trauma and most had experienced domestic abuse. Most also had current or past issues with harmful substance use and over half had a mental health issue. Eleven of the twelve young people who were supported by the HF4Y programme over the pilot period successfully sustained a tenancy. Housing First is a relationship based model and young people who took part in the pilot said the relationship with their worker had led to positive change in their lives and they valued the 'stickability' of this relationship that wasn't time-limited or tied to where they lived. The evaluation report found the separation of housing and support meant the relationship with the HF4Y worker could start before the tenancy and continue if the tenancy ended. This meant the support provider could concentrate on building relationships and keeping young people in suitable housing. Project workers spoke of individualised and 'person-led, not system-led' support. This meant they could deliver the support young people needed, rather than just following processes. As they had small caseloads, the support could be more holistic and this helped them develop supportive relationships.

Rapid Rehousing

It will not always be possible to prevent a young person from experiencing homelessness. However if youth homelessness cannot be avoided it should be rare, brief and not repeated. Part of Crisis's definition of ending homelessness is that no one should be "Living in emergency accommodation such as shelters and hostels without a plan for rapid rehousing into affordable, secure and decent accommodation".²²⁶

225 Blood, I. Alden, S & Quilgars, D. (2020) *Rock Trust Housing First for Youth Evaluation Report*. Accessed at: <https://www.rocktrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HF4Y-Evaluation-Report-July-2020-Final.pdf>.

226 Downie, M, Gousy, H, Basran, J, Jacob, R, Rowe, S, Hancock, C, Albanese, F, Pritchard, R, Nightingale, K, and Davies, T. (2018) *Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain*. London: Crisis. Accessed at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/international-plans-to-end-homelessness/everybody-in-how-to-end-homelessness-in-great-britain-2018>.

Emergency accommodation, including night shelters and hostels, has been typically offered as the first step on a staircase model, where residents move to increasingly more mainstream forms of transitional housing until they are considered 'housing ready' and able to manage mainstream housing.²²⁷ This process demeans homeless young people, who might need some help to learn how to manage their tenancies, but are as 'housing ready' as any one of us.

The young people experiencing homelessness that we have interviewed have spoken about the need to follow procedure to 'stick it out' in order to secure accommodation. They spoke of a process of going from floor space, to a pod to a temporary hostel and the need to 'behave', in order to eventually secure permanent housing:

"There is not as much to choose from when you first become homeless there is just one place that you can stay but if you do follow procedure you get to move onto a hostel or whatever. The services are really good and you do get an opportunity to get whatever you want. Rented accommodation or go into a council property. But the services are good if you really want to do it, stick it out. When you first present as homeless you go onto floor space. After a few weeks, it depends on the situation, you usually get moved into your own room. Then they look at what they can do for you. Then depending on your circumstances, they help you find accommodation. Suitable accommodation for you. I think if you behave and go down the right route and show them you want it for yourself, then they do help you"

– Tom, 24

"What would I want. To be honest I would want a permanent accommodation instead of moving from temporary to temporary. That's what's been happening to me. I mean, it's ridiculous... from floor space you then go into a pod which is in the same place, which is fair enough, they are trying to make room for everybody else. There are loads of homeless people and they are trying to make room but then getting moved on from the night shelter into another like temporary hostel... I don't know, I think it's more of a reason for you to fail. What if you don't get along with the people that are in that hostel?"

– Harry, 25

227 Mackie, P. Johnsen, S. & Wood, J. (2017) *Ending rough sleeping: What works? An international evidence review*. Crisis. Accessed at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sarah_Johnsen3/publication/322357283_Ending_rough_sleeping_what_works/links/5a55e66f45851547b1bde820/Ending-rough-sleeping-what-works.pdf.

We clearly need to provide rapid rehousing to our existing homeless young people. A fundamental goal of rapid rehousing is to reduce the time a young person is homeless and to reduce the traumatic experiences of homelessness and, as Harry mentioned, decrease the opportunities to fail.²²⁸

Crisis's excellent Everybody In report explains that we will still need emergency housing for people in crisis but we need to move people out of it as quickly as possible:

"No one living in emergency accommodation such as shelters and hostels without a plan for rapid rehousing into affordable, secure and decent accommodation. - The definition does not mean emergency temporary accommodation is not needed. It simply states the best outcomes (for the person and the public purse) are achieved when people can access affordable, secure and decent accommodation quickly and with the right support".²²⁹

Welsh Government has accepted in principle the Homelessness Action Group's recommendation to deliver a 'right to adequate housing' as part of which, the HAG recommend a rapid rehousing approach to make sure homelessness is brief and non-repeated.²³⁰ We would ask that young people are able to rapidly access accommodation and support that meets their needs and circumstances. That young people are rapidly moved out of inappropriate and even harmful emergency accommodation into the best model of housing and support for them, to include models such as specialist supported accommodation for young people, Community Hosting, independent accommodation or Housing First for Youth.

Specialist Supported Housing Projects for Young People

Specialist supported housing projects will be the most appropriate model of accommodation of housing and support for some young people to help them exit homelessness and never experience it again.²³¹ Young people who have been homeless may need support and help before they can take on a tenancy. Research indicates that young people appreciate the company of other residents

228 Homelessness Action Group (2020) *Preventing, tackling and ending homelessness through rapid rehousing and local, regional and national partnerships: Report to Welsh Ministers from the Homelessness Action Group*. Welsh Government. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/homelessness-action-group-report-july-2020.pdf>.

229 Downie, M, Gousy, H, Basran, J, Jacob, R, Rowe, S, Hancock, C, Albanese, F, Pritchard, R, Nightingale, K, and Davies, T. (2018) *Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain*. London: Crisis. Accessed at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/international-plans-to-end-homelessness/everybody-in-how-to-end-homelessness-in-great-britain-2018>.

230 Homelessness Action Group (2020) *Preventing, tackling and ending homelessness through rapid rehousing and local, regional and national partnerships: Report to Welsh Ministers from the Homelessness Action Group*. Welsh Government. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/homelessness-action-group-report-july-2020.pdf>.

231 Stirling, T. (2018) *Youth homelessness and care leavers: Mapping interventions in Wales*. Accessed at: <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Youth-homelessness-and-care-leavers-Mapping-interventions-in-Wales.pdf>.

and value the support provided by key workers and there is excess demand for accommodation available.²³² High-quality supported housing settings have a positive role in providing young people with transitional accommodation where they can acquire life skills. Some young people may need to live in a supportive environment before they can successfully live independently.²³³ One young person, Ellie, told us she had lost her tenancy because she was lonely; she thought the solution to ending youth homelessness was more supported housing projects:

"I wouldn't say to change that much: I love the (supported housing) projects; I love all the little projects"

– Ellie, 22

The comment below is from a street homeless young person who was thinking back to time he spent in a supported housing project.

"The (supported housing project) was like actually helpful, surprisingly. All the staff did was wicked. They helped me out with going to the gym; they would even buy me food on some days"

– Nick, 20, Participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks (2020)

The next comment is from a young person who was living in a supported housing project at the time of interview and described how beneficial she found the support she receives. In the excerpt below she describes the distinction between staying in youth-specific supported housing and a non-specialised homelessness hostel:

"If you don't live in supported housing (but) in the hostel, and you don't have those key workers there giving you these support sessions...basically you don't get anything"

– Carly, 19, Participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks (2020)

LGBTQ+ Youth Supported Housing

Funded by the Welsh Government Innovation Fund, Ty Pride, Wales' first LGBTQ+-specific youth supported housing project, is the first of its kind, developed in response to recommendations in Out on the Streets, after young LGBTQ+ people

232 Quilgars, D. Johnsen, S. and Pleace, N. (2008) *Youth homelessness in the UK A decade of progress? An evaluation of the progress being made to address youth homelessness in the UK*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

233 As 233 Quilgars et al (2008).

expressed a desire for environments in which they could share housing with other young LGBTQ+ people. Ty Pride, a joint initiative between Denbighshire Council, Viva and Llamau, offers a key mix of housing-related support, counselling, support to engage with the wider LGBTQ+ community and individualised budgets. After less than a year of service delivery, Ty Pride has already received ten times more referrals than it has capacity to house, demonstrating the demand for LGBTQ+-specific youth homelessness accommodation in Wales. Similar models have achieved success elsewhere – see Le Refuge in France²³⁴, or YMCA Sprott House, which opened in Toronto, Canada, in 2016.²³⁵

Ayla's Story

Ayla²³⁶ became homeless after splitting up with her ex-girlfriend. She sofa-surfed at her friend's house but her friend's mum was ill and they were worried she would bring germs back from college. One night, when she had nowhere else to go, she slept rough, behind an old building. It was January and very cold. Ayla commented "I felt frightened and like I didn't have anyone in the world on my side. It was really tough but I managed to get through the night". Returning to her parents wasn't an option; her dad struggled accepting her sexual orientation and she constantly argued with her mum.

When Ayla first presented to the local authority for help with her homelessness they told her there was nothing they could do. Despite being homeless Ayla still attended college every day her tutor noticed she was struggling and told her she needed to go back to the local authority and ask for help. Ayla told them she was homeless and had autism and difficulties communicating, after which she was offered a place in a B&B. Ayla didn't feel safe in the B&B she was placed in and there were mice in her room. Her college helped her successfully apply for a place at Ty Pride, she commented:

"Living at Ty Pride has taught me a lot. I've learnt how to use a washing machine properly and I'm regularly baking and looking after myself. Things have been hard during lockdown. I've missed my friends and family but I get on well with everyone here and the staff have tried so hard to create fun times, so lockdown feels easier. We recently held our first Pride event. I've never been to Pride before so it was lovely to have so much fun, dressing up, singing and dancing".²³⁷

234 Le Refuge Foundation (2021) *The Vocation of the Refuge: Protecting LGBTQ+ Youth*. Accessed at: <https://www.le-refuge.org/>.

235 Miller, K. YMCA Sprott House: Creating A Better Space For LGBTQ2S Youth In Toronto. From Abramovich, A. and Shelton, J. (2017) *Where Am I Going to Go? Intersectional Approaches to Ending LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada & the U.S.* Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Accessed at: https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/5.3_YMCA_Sprott_House.pdf.

236 Ayla's name has been changed to protect her identity.

237 Llamau (2020) *Impact Report. Ayla's Story*. Accessed at: <https://llamau-impact.org.uk/aylas-story-7/>

Psychologically Informed Environments

A psychologically informed environment “is one that takes into account the psychological makeup – the thinking, emotions, personalities and past experience – of its participants in the way that it operates”.²³⁸ It is an approach that supports people out of homelessness particularly those who have experienced complex trauma. Housing support services do more than provide basic food and shelter to young people. The majority of the young people receiving housing support services will have experienced some level of emotional trauma, have a history of abuse, neglect and have experienced other adverse childhood experiences (ACE’s).²³⁹ For 16-25 year olds living in supported housing homelessness happens at a critical point in their neurological, physical, social and emotional development, which goes some way to explaining why homeless young people find it difficult to form trusting relationships, report a lack of independent living skills and have negative self-perceptions.²⁴⁰

In EYHC’s research on care experience and youth homelessness we asked young people if they trusted the adults who worked with them. Comments included:

“I don’t trust anyone. I don’t trust people I just don’t trust anyone around me. Literally, I can’t trust no one”

– Alys, 22

“I wouldn’t trust them, they are just workers. I have always felt insecure, always looking over my shoulder”

– Ben, 23

We also asked young people about their independent living skills. Comments include:

“They give you very, very brief examples on how to do certain things like life skills cooking and that and they will take you to courses where you go and do cooking and like life skills in general. But after you turn 18 it’s like you do it all on your own”

– Carly, 22

238 Westminster City Council (2015) *No One Left Out*. Accessed at: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Creating%20a%20Psychologically%20Informed%20Environment%20-%202015.pdf>.

239 Cumming, J. Skeate, A and Anderson, G. (2017) *St Basils Psychologically Informed Environments – meeting the emotional and psychological needs of young homeless people*. Housing Learning and Improvement Network. Accessed at: https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1_PIEHLIN_CaseStudy_130_StBasilsPIE_v01.pdf.

240 As 243 Cumming et al. (2017).

Ideally, housing support services should support young people to move out of homelessness and not just meet their basic needs for survival. St Basil's suggest housing support services are well-positioned to help young people to change their lives by 'developing interpersonal skills (e.g., building trust, seeking social support, communicating thoughts and feelings) and intrapersonal skills (e.g., goal setting, planning) using psychologically minded approaches'.²⁴¹ These skills can help prevent the revolving door of homelessness by promoting social inclusion and support young people to be independent and engage in employment, education or training.

Welsh Government's planning guidance for homelessness and housing support services in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic states the importance of taking into account psychologically informed environments (PIE).²⁴² When young people experience homelessness it is at a key stage of their emotional, physical and neurological development. There is a cogent argument for the use of a PIE approach in all youth homelessness services in Wales.

Good Practice: PIE Training at Llamau

All staff at Llamau receive mandatory psychologically informed environment(PIE) training. PIE training also considers the psychological needs of staff to support them to continue to develop skills and knowledge, increase motivation, job satisfaction and resilience.²⁴³ Following PIE training Llamau's in house clinical psychologists hold reflective practice sessions to further help and support staff.

Recruiting and Training the Right Staff

Housing First is ultimately a relationship based tool for change with personalised support that meets people's needs. One of the key elements of the PIE approach is relationships where relationships are recognised as the principle tool for change and people with complex issues are not excluded.²⁴⁴ Respondents working in the sector fed back to the Homelessness Action Group (HAG) that it could be difficult to support people in a trauma-informed and compassionate way because of high staff turnover (due to funding/ commissioning arrangements), high workloads and the pressure to deliver against short-term contracts.²⁴⁵

241 Cumming, J. Skeate, A and Anderson, G. (2017) *St Basils Psychologically Informed Environments – meeting the emotional and psychological needs of young homeless people*. Housing Learning and Improvement Network. Accessed at: https://stbasils.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1_PIEHLIN_CaseStudy_130_StBasilsPIE_v01.pdf.

242 Welsh Government (2020) *Phase 2 – Planning Guidance for Homelessness and Housing Related Support Services*. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-06/planning-guidance-for-homelessness-and-housing-support-services-coronavirus.pdf>.

243 Westminster City Council (2015) *No One Left Out*. Accessed at: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Creating%20a%20Psychologically%20Informed%20Environment%20-%202015.pdf>.

244 Westminster City Council (2015) *No One Left Out*. Accessed at: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Creating%20a%20Psychologically%20Informed%20Environment%20-%202015.pdf>.

245 The Homelessness Action Group (2020) *The framework of policies, approaches and plans needed to end homelessness in Wales (What ending homelessness in Wales looks like): Report from the Homelessness Action Group for the Welsh Government*. Welsh Government. Accessed at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-03/homelessness-action-group-report-march-2020_0.pdf

Below are some comments from young people EYHC spoke to about the people who work with them in homelessness services.

“There is always one person who is always like caring and always likes to sort out these problems and actually tries to help people and I think every single staff member needs to be like that. In the (mixed-age temporary accommodation) half of the (young people) are suicidal and people are like crying in the corner both metaphorically and like literally and they just watch them cry in the corner and do nothing about it. I think there needs to be more testing for the staff and it shouldn't just be paperwork they should have trial places even if they got paid for that they should map it out more 100%

– Nick, 20, Participant in Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks

Mike aged 20 told EYHC he felt judged when he asked for support:

“I have a lot of challenges accessing support sometimes. Because of my past people just come over to me and judge me and I think that was just like random...what...what just happened?”

– Mike, 20, Participant in Don't Let Me fall Through the Cracks

The HAG have suggested recommendations to ensure the workforce is supported to prevent homelessness.²⁴⁶ Academic research suggests there is a continuum of risk where those with greater adversity and more risk factors are less likely to adapt successfully than other young people.²⁴⁷ Moreover, homeless young people will be at the extreme end of this continuum because they will have had multiple adverse experiences as well as experiencing the stress of homelessness itself.²⁴⁸ Relationship based practices such as Housing First and PIE need a suitably skilled and supported workforce to help young people recover from trauma and move out of homelessness.

Sustainability of Funding for the Youth Homelessness Sector in Wales

One of the principles of Housing First is that support is not time limited. The problem with this, and most homelessness services, is funding is time limited. How can we as a sector promise services will be there for young people if we do not have sustainable funding. Research in England found the typical two-year

246 For example see page 15 of HAG (2020) *The framework of policies, approaches and plans needed to end homelessness in Wales*. Accessed at: <https://gov.wales/homelessness-action-group-report-march-2020>

247 Fry, C. E. Langley, K. & H. Shelton, K. H. (2017) *A systematic review of cognitive functioning among young people who have experienced homelessness, foster care, or poverty*, *Child Neuropsychology*, 23:8, 907-934, DOI: 10.1080/09297049.2016.1207758

248 As 248 Fry, et al. (2017).

funding periods of most projects did not achieve as much as they could have by the time they had set up a new service and recruited new staff.²⁴⁹ Respondents fed back that even a year longer would make a real difference to what could be delivered.²⁵⁰

The Homelessness Action Group also recently reported on a survey of people working to end homelessness in Wales.²⁵¹ Respondents fed back that the way funding and commissioning worked led to increased staff turnover because of shorter-term contract periods meaning the sector could lose people's experience and expertise.²⁵²

The need for more sustainably funded homelessness services is relevant to every part of this Roadmap. This Roadmap demonstrates the need to fund preventative as well as emergency services. However, recovery prevention is a good example of how a lack of preventative and early intervention services can lead to young people having complex problems. The evidence suggests young homeless people are falling through the cracks of the health and housing services meaning they are increasingly presenting with complex needs.²⁵³ Moreover, it is particularly important to support young people with complex needs and prevent them from ever experiencing homelessness again. The recent evaluation of HF4Y briefly looked at the potential cost savings of the HF4Y model explaining if the young people in the pilot had even just remained in their placements under continuing care, costs would range from £685 for a foster placement to £4899 for a residential children's home per week.²⁵⁴

Supported Housing Projects: Support after Funding Ended

Partners of EYHC have fed back that funding and commissioning does not always reflect the values of organisations, nor how effective support has to be delivered. Llamau colleagues continue to support young people long after formal support and funding has ended. Below are just some examples from just one of Llamau's supported housing projects:

249 Thunder, J. and Bovill Rose, C. (2020) *Local authority spending on homelessness: Understanding recent trends and their impact*. A WPI Economics Report for St Mungo's and Homelessness Link. Accessed at: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/Local%20authority%20spending%20on%20homelessness%20--%20FULL%20FINAL.pdf>.

250 As 250 Thunder and Bovill Rose (2020).

251 The Homelessness Action Group (2020) *The framework of policies, approaches and plans needed to end homelessness in Wales (What ending homelessness in Wales looks like): Report from the Homelessness Action Group for the Welsh Government*. Welsh Government. Accessed at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-03/homelessness-action-group-report-march-2020_0.pdf

252 The Homelessness Action Group (2020) *The framework of policies, approaches and plans needed to end homelessness in Wales (What ending homelessness in Wales looks like): Report from the Homelessness Action Group for the Welsh Government*. Welsh Government. Accessed at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-03/homelessness-action-group-report-march-2020_0.pdf.

253 For example see [Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks](#).

254 Blood, I. Alden, S & Quilgars, D. (2000) *Rock Trust Housing First for Youth Evaluation Report*. Accessed at: <https://www.rocktrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HF4Y-Evaluation-Report-July-2020-Final.pdf>.

- Rhyley lost some hours in work Llamau colleagues supported him with a payment plan for his gas, electric and rent. They also supported him to cancel a Council Tax bill, as he was a care leaver. They have also supported him to apply for grants for furniture to help him to sustain his tenancy.
- Conner was supported to visit his GP and request a mental health assessment and change his medication. He is being supported to apply for a house move. Llamau colleagues continue to provide him with emotional support.
- Sophia has been supported while she was pregnant and following the birth of her child. She was supported to apply for new housing and to defer her move in date as it was offered on her due date. She has also been supported to apply for benefits.

Other examples included help with TV licencing, support completing ESA forms, advice on contacting housing officers, emotional support and dealing with safety concerns. All these examples demonstrate how young people have continued to be supported, to sustain their tenancies, by workers when they have moved out of their supported housing project.

Community Hosting: Recovery Prevention

EYHC research on the use of Community Hosting A Better Way Home – Community Hosting to Prevent Youth Homelessness, already covered in emergency prevention, also looked at Supported Lodgings and Enhanced Supported Lodgings, these schemes belong in recovery prevention. Supported Lodgings is where a young person stays with a host for an extended period normally between six months and two years. Enhanced Supported Lodgings is where young people with more complex support needs stay in the homes of hosts experienced in such provision.

Supported Lodgings

Supported Lodgings schemes provide young people with a safe place to stay, in a room of their own, in the home of a vetted and trained host in a private house, where both the host and the young person receive support from a specialist organisation. In our research, we found the unique structure of the support offered where professional and specialist support is combined with more informal support within a family environment offered by the host was an effective model of housing and support. Young people spoke of having a great 'support bubble' of feeling safe, loved and living somewhere that felt like home. This combined and tailored support enabled young people to achieve positive outcomes including emotional wellbeing and confidence, independent living skills and progression into and success in employment, education and training.

Enhanced Supported Lodgings

Enhanced Supported Lodgings schemes can accommodate young people with a variety of support needs including those with multiple and complex needs with some schemes being specifically designed for young people with multiple or complex needs. Enhanced Supported Lodgings, a less common model, which aims to house young people considered to have more complex support needs in the homes of hosts who are experienced in such provision. Research suggests that there is the potential to explore how schemes can be adapted for young people with complex needs through specialist host training and premium payments much like they have done in intensive fostering.²⁵⁵ Watts and Blenkinsopp (2018) suggests some groups of young people will just be too high risk for Supported Lodgings placements for example those with a history of violence, sexual offences and/ or arson.²⁵⁶ The enhanced model, where hosts have significant experience of dealing with young people who might be considered to present a higher risk, has been developed and used on a small scale basis in Wales. Although the enhanced model was only operating in one local authority, they reported positive outcomes for the young people who lived in this model of housing and support.

Recommendation 12

Welsh Government should facilitate the establishment of a national Community Hosting network for local authorities and the third sector.

We recognise that there have been sporadic meetings of some local authority and third sector partners to this end, but this should be formalised and supported by Welsh Government to ensure that Community Hosting is recognised, and accessible, across the country as a valuable element of the overall strategy to end youth homelessness.

This report suggests that this network should consider reviewing and sharing practice on:

- ways of ensuring hosts feel valued (including pay-levels)
- the production of a universal set of quality standards for Community Hosting
- training resources for hosts, co-designed with young people. Young people were particularly keen that hosts receive training in mental health issues.

²⁵⁵ Littlewood, M. Bramley, G. Fitzpatrick, S. Wood, J. (2017) *Eradicating Homelessness in Scotland's Four Largest Cities: Providing an Evidence Base and Guiding a Funding Framework*.

²⁵⁶ Watts, B. and Blenkinsopp, J. (2018) *Supported Lodgings Exploring the feasibility of long-term community hosting as a response to youth homelessness in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Shelter Scotland.

Collective Impact

The homelessness sector is never going to end a complex problem like youth homelessness by working alone. Collective impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors having a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.²⁵⁷ Collective impact means moving away from siloed departments to a centralised infrastructure with dedicated staff, structured processes that lead to a common agenda, shared outcome measurement, communication and mutually reinforcing activities amongst all participants.²⁵⁸

In EYHC's recent report 'Don't Let Me Fall Through the Cracks' Eryn aged 20 described how the inability of social services and housing to work together effectively could lead to care experienced young people experiencing homelessness:

"Obviously you have got the people who are homeless sleeping on sofas, you've got other young ones sleeping in B&Bs, or the others who are in the middle of the system - 17 turning 18. You've got social services saying: 'they are not my (responsibility), I don't look after them anymore - they are 18, that's housing.' Then housing go 'well they are 17 they are not ours yet'. So you've got the battle (within) the council of who looks after (that young person). Then you've got a PA who has disappeared to get a new job and you are skint and you have no other support".

Research suggests collective impact is a new form of collaboration aimed at putting an end to isolated impact and short-term solutions.²⁵⁹ The HAG suggest a culture change is needed suggesting: "A Collaborative/no wrong door approach: organisations working effectively together, taking mutual responsibility and ensuring people facing homelessness or housing problems are helped as early as possible and not 'passed' between services".²⁶⁰ EYHC would ask that a collaborative/ no wrong door approach is used with young people facing housing insecurity and homelessness.

257 MacKenzie, D. Hand, T. Zufferey, C. McNelis, S., Spinney, A. and Tedmanson, D. (2020) *Redesign of a homelessness service system for young people, AHURI Final Report 327*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/327>, doi: 10.18408/ahuri-5119101.

258 MacKenzie, D. Hand, T. Zufferey, C. McNelis, S., Spinney, A. and Tedmanson, D. (2020) *Redesign of a homelessness service system for young people, AHURI Final Report 327*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/327>, doi: 10.18408/ahuri-5119101.

259 Prange, K. Allen, J. A. and Reiter-Palmon, Roni, *Collective Impact versus Collaboration: Sides of the Same Coin OR Different Phenomenon?* (2016). Psychology Faculty Publications. 166. Accessed at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/psychfacpub/166>.

260 The Homelessness Action Group (2020) *The framework of policies, approaches and plans needed to end homelessness in Wales (What ending homelessness in Wales looks like): Report from the Homelessness Action Group for the Welsh Government*. Welsh Government. Accessed at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-03/homelessness-action-group-report-march-2020_0.pdf

Flipping a Tenancy from a Temporary one to a Settled One

In Scotland, a mechanism is employed whereby a tenancy can be moved from a temporary one to a settled one, known as ‘flipping’ a tenancy.²⁶¹ This means the tenancy can change without the household moving. This can be a good option if the tenant chooses it and they have access to active and ongoing information and advice about the local area.²⁶² Flipping tenancies has been used infrequently because of the cost as the property will need to be replaced with another temporary location and there can be a lack of demand as often properties are not in right location for tenants.²⁶³ However, it has been used in some LAs when it is in best interests of the tenant e.g. it can be used to re-house an ex-offender if the current temporary accommodation is assessed to be the best place for them to resettle.²⁶⁴ Flipping tenancies has also been used in the private rented sector: the ‘Positive Steps’ project in Dundee supports households and when support tails off they ‘flip’ the tenancy to the individual’s name.²⁶⁵ One Scottish LA has used flipping tenancies as a method of periodically rotating properties, as stigma could build around temporary accommodation in small rural communities.²⁶⁶

“I had no life skills I was just thrown into the world. I was 17 and on my first day I was just dropped there and left there. Then it was daunting, like. I was terrified”

– Steve, 25

261 Scottish Government (2018) *Transforming the use of Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: An interim report on the activity of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group*.

262 Scottish Government (2018) *Transforming the use of Temporary Accommodation in Scotland: An interim report on the activity of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group*.

263 Scottish Government’s Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) (2018) *Scotland’s transition to rapid rehousing: Market area analysis, legislative and culture review*. Accessed at: <https://social-bite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/RRTP-Analysis-and-Review-JUNE-2018-pubv1.pdf>

264 As 264 Scottish Government’s Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) (2018).

265 As 264 Scottish Government’s Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) (2018).

266 As 264 Scottish Government’s Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) (2018).

Conclusion

EYHC's goal is to make youth homelessness rare, brief and non-recurrent, but in order to do that we needed to understand how we could prevent youth homelessness. This Roadmap provides the evidence of the action we need to take to end youth homelessness in Wales. The EYHC collaboration has been working on preventative approaches for over three years and through our research and hundreds of conversations with colleagues from different sectors across Wales; international colleagues and most importantly conversations with hundreds of young people who had been homeless, or were experiencing homelessness this gave us a firm foundation to build the Roadmap on. The Roadmap was drawn up in collaboration with the EYHC's steering group, as well as young people who have experienced homelessness and represents a collaborative approach to ending youth homelessness.

In this Roadmap, we have used the same prevention framework as the Homelessness Action Group (HAG) and everything we have developed as a collective reflects the HAG recommendations so people don't have to deal with numerous different frameworks. While the HAG did look at youth homelessness, their remit was so wide they did not have the capacity to look at youth homelessness in-depth. The HAG homelessness prevention framework covers Universal Prevention, Targeted Prevention, Crisis Prevention, Emergency Prevention and Recovery Prevention.

The **Universal Prevention** part of the framework involves preventing or minimising the risk of homelessness across the population at large. These are the broad society-wide initiatives, to preventing the issues that undermine young people's ability to access secure, stable and sustainable accommodation. We know there is no bigger driver of homelessness than poverty. In order to achieve Universal Prevention one of our recommendations was that Welsh Government should deliver a comprehensive child poverty strategy, with clear, measurable and ambitious milestones. Providing sufficient affordable housing for young people also falls under Universal Prevention and we recommended that Local Authorities proactively seek the views of young people when determining housing need for local development plans.

The **Targeted Prevention** part of the framework is focussed on high-risk groups, such as vulnerable young people, and young people going through risky transitions such as leaving care, prison or mental-health inpatient treatment. We know that some young people are at greater risk and the point of transition can be a point of danger. An example of Targeted Prevention to help prevent youth homelessness is Upstream Cymru. Upstream Cymru is a collaborative,

targeted intervention that works with schools to identify young people at risk of homelessness. It is based on an Australian initiative that saw a 40% reduction in youth homelessness and a 20% reduction in school disengagement. It consists of a universal screening tool followed by mediation and youth focussed educational re-engagement support for young people at risk of homelessness.

The **Crisis Prevention** part of the framework looks at the prevention of homelessness likely to occur within a specified period of time. In Wales this can refer to legislation (Housing Act (Wales) 2014) which empowers local authorities to intervene when a household alerts them to the fact that they are threatened with homelessness. For young people family breakdown is a key cause of young people presenting as homeless at this stage. It is important that services are available at this point (and if possible before crisis point) that can directly address family breakdown to help overcome communication difficulties and, where safe and appropriate, help a young person stay at home. Even if it is not possible for a young person to stay at home, support to maintain family links can help lessen feelings of loneliness in young people. Young people have told us repeatedly that their feelings of loneliness have contributed to them experiencing homelessness. There is evidence that Family Mediation Services can be most effective when implemented early but they are also crucial at the Crisis Prevention stage of preventing homelessness.

The **Emergency Prevention** part of the framework involves providing emergency support for those at immediate risk of homelessness, especially those sleeping rough. We know we need youth specific models of emergency accommodation and get young people out of inappropriate and even harmful options. Community Hosting can take the form of short, emergency stays. This model can provide young people and their families with a break for family reconciliation work to take place and if that is not possible more permanent accommodation can be put into place. This includes Depaul UK's Nightstop model as well as Emergency Supported Lodgings offered by organisations such as Llamau.

Finally, the **Recovery Prevention** part of the framework is about preventing repeat youth homelessness, including sofa surfing and rough sleeping, by providing young people with sustainable housing and appropriate support. EYHC's aim is for youth homelessness to be rare, brief and non-recurrent and recovery prevention helps us to ensure that any experiences of youth homelessness are not repeated. The Housing First model where housing is treated as a human right, offered with minimal preconditions and maximum client choice has been adapted for young people. Housing First for Youth (HF4Y) in Wales, has been set up mostly during the pandemic, has reported initial success. A recent evaluation of HF4Y by the Rock Trust in Scotland showed the model was promising in

helping young people with complex support needs sustainably move out of homelessness.

We know there will probably always be a need for Crisis, Emergency and Recovery Prevention. When young people do become homeless Local Authorities need to have a different range of options to meet young people's needs. Some young people who need a more nurturing environment would benefit from living in Community Hosting such as Supported Lodgings. Other young people would feel stifled in Community Hosting and would benefit from a specialist supported housing project for young people. Others with more complex support needs will benefit from the Housing First for Youth model. We need young people to have a range of different housing options that meets their needs and helps them to move out of homelessness and for them to never experience it again. However, in order to prevent youth homelessness we need to move resources upstream and concentrate on Universal and Targeted Prevention in order to prevent as many young people as possible going through the traumatic experience of homelessness.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Welsh Government should deliver a comprehensive child poverty strategy, with clear, measurable and ambitious milestones.

Recommendation 2

Welsh Government should build on work undertaken by the Bevan Foundation and addressed in detail in the second Homelessness Action Group report, to improve the welfare system so that young people in Wales are able to access and sustain tenancies.

Recommendation 3

Local Authorities should proactively seek the views of young people when determining housing need for local development plans. Consultation mechanisms should be reviewed to ensure that, in particular, the views of those young people for whom affordable housing is least accessible are heard. This should result in a better mix of properties being developed, with more delivered in areas, and at prices, accessible to young people.

Recommendation 4

Registered Social Landlords should specifically consider young people when determining rent affordability across their housing stock. If additional grant is required to develop housing which is both suitable and affordable for young people, then Welsh Government should work with the sector to determine how this could be most effectively delivered.

Recommendation 5

Welsh Government should continue to support Tai Ffres, a uniquely youth-focussed route into stable, secure housing, as it develops. At an appropriate point, this support should include funding for a comprehensive evaluation of its potential to reduce youth homelessness with further expansion.

Recommendation 6

Welsh Government should introduce a Right to Adequate Housing to increase accountability on this most fundamental of needs.

Recommendation 7

Local authorities, third sector providers and health practitioners working with young people should commission training from LGBTQ+ organisations to ensure that their staff feel fully confident when working with young LGBTQ+ people and know where to refer for specialist interventions. Improved understanding across Wales would reduce intolerance and ensure problems were picked up earlier, reducing the numbers of young people entering crisis.

Recommendation 8

“No care-experienced young person should be excluded from school. They must be considered a protected group for whom alternative provision should be offered, perhaps via a regional approach” – This is one of the priorities of the EYHC working group on ‘Reducing the Links between Care Experience and Youth Homelessness’.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that research be undertaken to examine if there is a need for a distinct housing pathway for young people aged 18 – 25 leaving the secure estate. These young people will face difficulties finding housing and there needs to be a specific pathway that takes into account young people’s needs.

Recommendation 10

We recommend young people at risk of youth homelessness – including those with care experience, those not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those known to the criminal justice sector or those at risk of becoming known to the criminal justice system – are included in Welsh Government and Local Authority social procurement policies. Based on the findings of EYHC’s work on [Preventing Youth Homelessness through Social Procurement](#) we know that supported employment can help prevent the homelessness of at risk young people in Wales. As in Manchester, we suggest that suppliers provide ‘Social Value In Kind’ opportunities such as work experience, apprenticeships and job opportunities for young people at risk of homelessness. Alternatively, they should contribute to a ‘Social Value Fund’ to fund education and training opportunities for young people at risk of homelessness.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that PRS landlords in Wales are compelled to tell LAs when their tenants have rent arrears so appropriate support can be put in place. This could be one of the requirements to register with Rent Smart Wales. We recognise that this type of support is already in place in the social housing sector. However, young people are much less likely to be allocated social housing. In light of this, we need to adapt support services to work in the PRS in order to prevent the homelessness of young people.

Recommendation 12

Welsh Government should facilitate the establishment of a national Community Hosting network for local authorities and the third sector.



End Youth Homelessness Cymru presents:

A Roadmap to Ending Youth Homelessness in Wales