

A PLACE TO CALL **HOME**

Preventing youth homelessness through whole-family, community-led working

*A summary toolkit for organisations aiming to start
or scale up youth homelessness prevention*

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1. Introduction

In 2016, Sage Foundation began the project A Place to Call Home, undertaking research with The Centre for Education and Youth to understand the causes of youth homelessness in the North East and how these interact with young people's experiences in education. Since then, Sage Foundation has worked with a range of organisations and experts to investigate how young people can best be supported. Our work over the last four years has shown that homelessness interventions need to move to a preventative approach, and that early intervention is key.

Sage Foundation's pilot programme has demonstrated that whole-family, community-led support can prevent young people from becoming homeless, protecting them from the devastating harm homelessness causes, and putting them and their families on a different path where they have the skills and support to thrive. This toolkit is aimed at professionals and organisations who want to take a whole-family and, or a community-led approach to preventing or addressing youth homelessness. A Place to Call Home demonstrated that these approaches are effective and our research with the wider charity sector illustrates that these ways of working can also tackle other issues, including preventing children from ending up in care and supporting prisoners and young offenders. Sage Foundation has therefore developed this toolkit to help more organisations who want to find out more about how a family-centred approach can transform the lives of young people and their families.

This toolkit, and the accompanying research reports, draw together our learning from the research, evaluation and collaboration we have undertaken in the last four years and we hope that they will support more organisations to ensure all young people have A Place to Call Home.

By Helen Devanny VP, Sage Foundation



2. A Place to Call Home

2.1. Research and background

In 2016, looking at the community around Sage's business home of Newcastle, Sage Foundation could see that the issue of youth homelessness was a severe problem, robbing young people of the opportunity to achieve their potential. Sage Foundation partnered with The Centre for Education and Youth to research the stories of young people who had experienced homelessness and to find out more about the support they needed. The research amplified ten young people's voices, it helped them to share their experiences and revealed the profound cost of society's failure to prevent their homelessness.

The research led us to reach three key conclusions:

1. Family breakdown is the leading cause of youth homelessness:

Research shows that family breakdown is the leading cause of homelessness for half (49%) of young people that become homeless. Even where it is not the leading cause, a breakdown in young people's relationship with their family is almost always a factor that contributes to them leaving the family home.

2. There is not enough preventative support to stop young people becoming homeless:

Each year, 150,000 young people ask for help from their Local Authority because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Nearly half do not receive any support. On top of this, by the time a young person approaches their local authority for support, they have often reached crisis point. This is why preventing youth homelessness through early intervention is so important. It reduces harm to the young person and carries a lower cost to the

public purse. However, while recent policies and initiatives have increased the focus on prevention, this has mainly focused on adults, not young people. This, along with a desperate lack of funding is why preventative work is not happening, and with large numbers of young people still becoming homeless each year, more preventative initiatives are desperately needed.

3. A whole-family approach is an effective way of preventing youth homelessness:

One of the best ways of preventing youth homelessness is to work with the whole family. If support is provided to the young person in isolation, if they then return home nothing has changed and they face the same family-based issues that led to their homelessness. Multi-agency working and positive relationships are crucial, and family mediation is an effective tool for rebuilding relationships on the cusp of breakdown.



2.2. Piloting a new approach

Sage Foundation based the next phase of A Place to Call Home on these crucial insights. Following discussions with experts, charities and practitioners across the youth homelessness sector and a review of available support for young people at risk of homelessness, Sage Foundation partnered with Family Gateway, a charity based in Tyneside that uses their “Barefoot Professional Model” to support families facing difficult circumstances.

The Barefoot Professional Model

Family Gateway developed a model for working with families in their community titled the ‘Barefoot Professional Model’. This involves hiring local parents who have experienced and overcome similar issues to those faced by families in need of support as ‘Family Entrepreneurs’.

Family Entrepreneurs receive in depth training about how to work with and support vulnerable people including training on how to facilitate family mediation, which is a key element of the support Family Gateway offers.

Family Entrepreneurs work with families in their own communities and offer a bespoke package of support to the whole family. Family Gateway have used this way of working to support families facing a variety of challenges such as receiving a cancer diagnosis, or families in which the child has been put on a Child in Need plan. In their project with Sage Foundation they designed a programme of support using this model to support young people at risk of homelessness and their families.

Sage Foundation funded Family Gateway to pilot a programme that aimed to prevent youth homelessness through a whole-family, community-led approach. [For more information, click here.](#)

Whole-family approaches are used across different sectors; however, such approaches are particularly relevant to preventing youth homelessness given that our research shows family relationship breakdown is the leading cause of youth homelessness. Family Gateway supported eleven young people at risk of homelessness in 2018-2019. Sage Foundation chose Family Gateway to pilot this new approach as the programme exemplified best practice by providing a single hub and point of access to multiple services, building positive relationships with families and taking a whole family approach including early family mediation¹.

The Centre for Education and Youth evaluated the pilot's impact. The evaluation found that:

- Young people reported a positive impact on their relationships with their family. In particular, most young people felt that after working with Family Gateway they and their families expressed their feelings more, their parents encouraged them more and they felt there were rules and boundaries in place in their home.
- Parents' reported a positive impact on relationships within the family. Parents were more likely to feel that family members were expressing affection and love and they were more able to deal with conflict, after working with Family Gateway.

At the end of the programme, eight young people had remained in the family home, their homelessness having been prevented. The other three young people became homeless but were supported to access safe accommodation and in two cases returned home. The young person that did not return to their family home continued to receive support from Family Gateway and moved into independent accommodation.

Young people reported



A positive impact on their relationships with their family



Their families expressed their feelings more



Their parents encouraged them more



Their family followed agreed rules in the home

Parents reported



A positive impact on their relationships with their child



Their families expressed warmth and affection more



They could deal with conflict in the family

¹<https://cfey.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Evaluation-of-Family-Gateway-pilot-programme-A-Place-to-Call-Home-Full-report.pdf>

2.3. Whole-family, community-led practice

The evaluation also looked at what made the programme successful. We found that the following elements were crucial:

- **Early intervention:** If families received support early, before their relationship had fully broken down, they were more able to rebuild their relationships and the support was more likely to prevent the young person becoming homeless.
- **Whole-family involvement:** Relationship tensions or breakdown were often linked to complex difficulties experienced by different family members or the whole family. It was vital to support both the parents and the young person, and sometimes other siblings. This allowed Family Gateway to understand and address their complex issues while also supporting families to rebuild relationships.
- **Community-led support:** Families valued receiving support from the Barefoot Professionals as they felt members of their own community could better understand their situation and the challenges they faced, than a social worker or a professional from “the system”.

The learning from this pilot programme demonstrated that youth homelessness can be prevented and that supporting the whole-family is a valuable way of doing so. It also showed us that community-led support can increase engagement from families and young people that would be considered, by some, to be ‘hard-to-reach’.

Following the pilot programme, Sage Foundation wants to spread their learning and help more organisations prevent young people from becoming homeless. This toolkit, and the accompanying detailed research report, brings together the learning from the collaboration, research and evaluation undertaken in the last four years. First, it outlines some key features of effective whole-family and community-led working and how to implement these. It then considers some of the main challenges the sector is facing, and how organisations wishing to start or expand a programme might respond.

The toolkit can be used to support organisations to adapt, improve or expand programmes that use a whole-family or community-led approach to prevent youth homelessness. By doing so, Sage Foundation hopes it will help more organisations who want to explore this approach or expand their work to ensure that all young people have A Place to Call Home.

3. Key features of whole-family and community-led approaches

The evaluation of the Family Gateway Pilot programme highlighted three essential ingredients to an effective community-led approach to working with the whole family:

1. **Trusting relationships**
2. **Tailored support built around core activities**
3. **Highly trained community members with personal experience of the issue.**

In the next three sections we guide you through how to get these three ingredients right.

3.1. Engaging the whole-family: Building trust and co-creating aims

If families do not want to engage with support or do not understand a programme's aims, it is difficult or impossible to support them. But many families have already had contact with multiple services, and feel they have been let down in the past. This unsurprisingly creates barriers to engagement. Families may find it easier to trust someone from their community who has experienced similar issues, so a community-led approach can open doors and help build trust (see section 3.3). Combining this approach with persistence and careful goal setting can lay the foundations for meaningful engagement built around positive, trusting relationships.



3.1.1. Take a persistent approach

The initial approach to a family is the first opportunity to begin building trust, but it might not be successful the first time. Organisations therefore have to take a persistent approach by:

- **Making repeated attempts to contact the family and offer support**, even if this continues over a period of months. 'Not giving up' proves to families who feel mistrustful that you are committed to helping them.
- **Do not rely on phone calls**, knock on doors and speak to families on their doorsteps. If families do not answer their door leave some simple, clear information about the service with a contact number and a promise to visit again.
- **Make the offer of your support clear** when you first speak, and tell families that they can have an initial conversation without committing to the programme and that the support will be flexible, on their terms not just 9-5, Monday to Friday.

Safe Families, a national children's charity that supports vulnerable families, demonstrate how this approach can work. They find that a persistent approach and arranging informal meetings can help overcome families' fear or reluctance during the first stages of engagement

Building trust with families: Safe Families

Safe Families works with vulnerable families, many of whom have been in touch with multiple services and have lost trust in the system. This means it can be difficult for families to feel they can trust another organisation.

"We often find families that are sceptical of services say, 'Well, here is another one that isn't going to work, 'And almost have that fatigue from past experiences before they start... They can take a little longer to engage, get the family to buy in, really understand that this is something that they control and something that can make a real difference for them."

To overcome this challenge, Safe Families takes a persistent approach, contacting families regularly, continuing to make contact even when they do not respond and arranging coffees as informal initial meetings. They also tell families that the support they can receive can be planned in collaboration with the whole family. This helps families to feel like they have control over the process and their journeys going forward.

If families agree to a first meeting so they can hear more about the programme, consider the place of meeting and how you will start to gain their trust:

- **Meet families on their terms:** when families are willing to meet support workers these initial meetings should take place somewhere the family feels comfortable, perhaps at their home or in a neutral place in the community. However, safeguarding staff is a priority and initial meetings can be conducted in pairs.
- **Recognise families' previous experiences:** ask families about their previous experiences with support. Acknowledge any past negative experiences with other services and explain to families how you will ensure that the same mistakes are not repeated.
- **Explain your support:** Tell families about the type of support you can provide and what your aims are. Also emphasise that the organisation is separate from social services as some parents who are struggling with their relationships with their children are very worried about being involved with social services.

3.1.2. Setting goals together

Your programme will have aims and a plan for how to support families. However, the aims also need to take into account the unique perspective and circumstances of each family. To build trust, young people and families have to see that support is going to address their needs rather than making assumptions about them.

Involve families and young people in the process of setting goals to show families and young people that they are in control of the process. This helps consolidate families' engagement with the programme but also, crucially, makes sure the support addresses their needs.

The 'Signs of Safety' tool, used by both Family Gateway and Safe Families, can be used to support the process of setting goals with young people and families.



Signs of safety

Signs of safety is a strength-based approach to child protection that you can use as way of assessing families' current strengths, challenges and support needs.

Although it is primarily a tool for safeguarding children and young people, it can help in getting to know a family and empowering them to set their own aims, whilst allowing professionals to assess whether it is safe for young people to stay in the family home.

It is based on a set of key principles including:

- **Constructive working relationships** between support services and families, and between professionals.
- **A stance of 'critical inquiry'** and an acceptance that you might be wrong about a family.

Other key elements to the approach include:

- A distinction between past harm, possible future dangers and complicating factors which consider the general circumstances of the family.
- A distinction between strengths of the family, e.g. love for each other, and protective action: things that are actually being done to ensure the family is safe and secure for young people.
- Using plain language in all communication.
- 'Skilful use of authority' which means using official support services where necessary to keep young people safe but giving families choices about the support they need and how to access it.

Signs of safety also provides a range of tools that you can use with families and young people to assess their family relationships. While these are most relevant to addressing safeguarding concerns, which is very important when working with young people at risk of homelessness, they can also be used to build family focused aims and involve the family in planning the support activities they will be involved in.



Signsofsafety.net provides free resources that give an overview of this approach. A summary of the approach and tools to use with children can also be found [here](#).

3.2. Tailored support and core activities

Each family is different and therefore needs different support. If support is not flexible and tailored it will not address different young people's and families' needs. However, a programme should also have a core offer or activity which is based on evidence to directly tackle the issue in question.

The Family Gateway pilot programme showed that combining family mediation, as a core offer, with flexible tailored support can prevent an at-risk young person from becoming homeless because this addresses both the cause of the relationship breakdown and the relationship breakdown itself.

Family Gateway: Family mediation and tailored support

The combination of family mediation and tailored family support addressed the root causes of tension in the family home while also providing mediation to rebuild relationships.

The challenges faced by the ten families varied widely and could not be addressed by family mediation or relationship support alone, but had nonetheless placed considerable strain on the relationship. These issues included:

- Alcohol and substance addiction issues in either the parent or the young person.
- Problematic debt.
- The threat of homelessness facing the whole family.
- Overcrowded accommodation.
- Bereavement following the loss of other family members such as grandparents.



3.3. Professionals with lived experience

In community-led or grassroots approaches, members of the community who have experienced similar issues to the programme's intended beneficiaries are employed as support workers or in designing, developing and managing the programme.

The young people we spoke with, throughout A Place to Call Home, told us that the main support they wanted when they were homeless or at-risk of homelessness was someone who would listen in a non-judgemental way. Meanwhile families involved in the Family Gateway pilot said that working with someone who had experienced the same issues as them increased trust and helped to build strong relationships. This shared experience also meant that parents were less likely to feel 'judged,' - something that might otherwise stop them seeking support.

"She kind of told us it had happened to her. Her daughter went on exactly the same. I kind of felt... I was going to get judged as a parent, like a crap parent... And she wasn't like that, total opposite. She lived on my estate and she followed through with the things she said she was going to do which doesn't happen very often."

Parent, Family Gateway's homelessness prevention pilot programme

As staff are at the heart of a community-led programme, high-quality support for families depends on well trained staff. Organisations should therefore invest in initial and ongoing training. When setting up a programme and hiring community members with lived experience, follow the steps below to plan how you will train all staff to the highest standard.



Four steps to a high-quality training model

1. Dedicate time to initial training:

Arrange for initial training to take place in multiple sessions over a period of weeks or months to help community members build learning and develop skills steadily.

2. Offer community members meaningful qualifications:

Arranging for community members to study and achieve a qualification as part of their training means they are well qualified to deliver the programme and also prepares them for future careers in the charity and support services sectors.

3. Give community members professional supervision during initial trials or placements:

Community members' training should involve practical elements where they work with service users. Managers should supervise community members and provide them with developmental feedback.

4. Provide on-going training and support:

Staff should have access to constant professional development through mentoring, coaching, peer support and other training. They should also receive support for their wellbeing as working with families and young people at risk can be extremely challenging.

Training staff is also a sustainable investment in the community and the sector: in the longer term, staff might move elsewhere taking their understanding of a whole-family, preventative approach with them, driving cross-pollination between organisations and communities.

The detailed research report that informs this toolkit provides greater detail on how to hire, train and support staff.



4. Challenges in the youth homelessness sector

Throughout A Place to Call Home practitioners and sector experts consistently highlighted significant challenges in the homelessness sector. These challenges can make it difficult for organisations wishing to set up new programmes to prevent youth homelessness.

The main challenges are linked to funding pressures which often mean that:

- Organisations struggle to work in partnership. This creates duplication of services and inefficiencies in referrals.
- New programmes are set up or programmes expand in a way that is not sustainable once short-term funding ends.

There are no easy answers to these issues, and system-wide change is needed to address them at their root. However, individual organisations can take steps to avoid common pitfalls and contribute to addressing these challenges.



4.1. Working in partnership

Funding pressures have, in recent years, meant that organisations struggle for the capacity needed to build and nurture partnerships, particularly where they are in competition with one another.

It is also important to consider whether you work with a youth, early intervention organisation or a homeless/housing charity as often funding from local authorities goes on emergency housing rather than prevention through family support.

If organisations are not working in partnership this leads to 'silo working' which in turn, means services are duplicated and organisations do not work together effectively on referrals and signposting.

Ultimately, this can stop young people getting access to the support they need.

Working in partnership with other organisations is vitally important during both planning/set-up and delivery:

- **During set-up:** partnership working helps an organisation decide if there is a gap in existing provision and a need for the new programme.
- **When delivering a programme:** working in partnership supports referrals and signposting between organisations, ensuring young people and families access the most relevant support.

4.1.1 Is there a 'gap' in provision?

When Sage Foundation developed the Family Gateway pilot programme, they reviewed the existing support that was available to young people. This showed that in Newcastle there was a lack of youth homelessness prevention-work using a whole-family approach. The pilot aimed to plug this gap in provision. Working in partnership with other organisations was key to identifying this gap and deciding how it could be filled. Therefore, when planning and designing similar programmes using a community-led, whole-family approach, organisations should speak to others in the sector to identify how they can best fill a gap.



4.1.2. Two-way referral pathways

Early identification is vital in prevention. Working with a network of youth services means young people are more likely to be referred at an early stage. Once delivering a programme, especially where support needs to be tailored to young people, organisations should work together to identify young people at risk at an early stage and to refer them to the most relevant support service.

Relying solely on referrals from police and social services can risk missing the opportunity for early intervention as the threshold for intervention from social services, or police, is high, and relatively minor tensions in family relationships can escalate rapidly. Prevention programmes also need to partner with schools and other organisations.

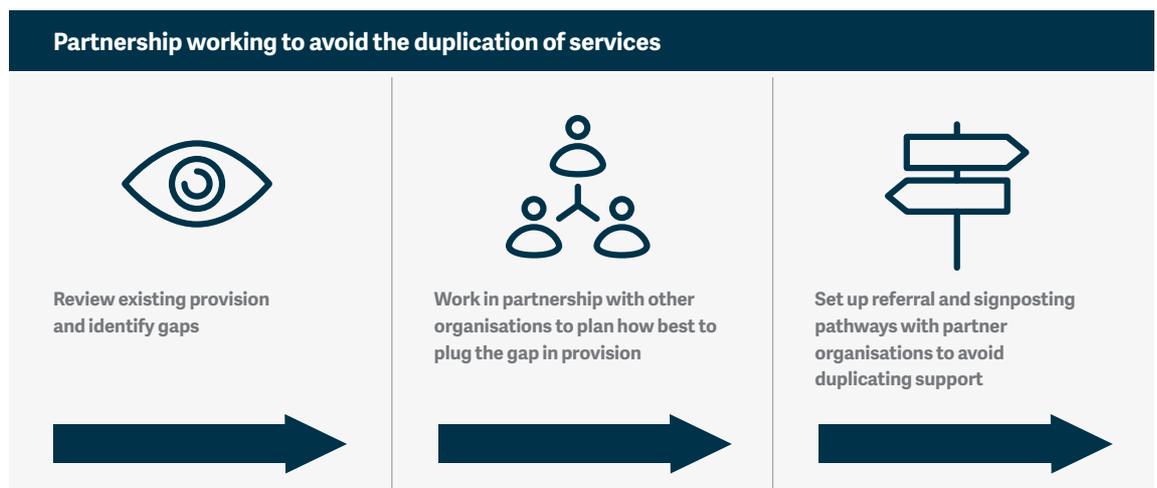
- **Partnering with schools:** early warning signs of problems in the family home are often first identified by schools. While schools do, and should, report this to social services, these referrals take time to translate into support, missing the window for early intervention. Building relationships with local schools and ensuring that pastoral staff are aware they can refer pupils to your organisation will result in earlier identification of young people at risk.
- **Networks with other local charities:** build partnerships with other services, including those addressing different issues and create two-way referral pathways in which both organisations agree to direct young people and families to the most appropriate support. The local authority may also be a source of support.

4.1.3 Signposting

A single organisation cannot provide all the support a young person and their family might need, especially as families face complex circumstances. A strong network of partnerships means that organisations can collaborate to get families the support they need. This also avoids one service working to provide a particular type of support that is already available elsewhere.

Build networks to support effective signposting by:

- **Finding out about other services in the local area:** map out the needs that families might have and look at which organisation could support them.
- **Contact other organisations:** tell them about the support you provide and set up a signposting system where young people and/or families involved in one another's programmes can access elements of support from the other organisation.



Funders also have an important role to play in ensuring that services are not duplicated and run 'in silo'. The research report 'Building Better Funding Partnerships' by CfEY and Sage Foundation provides recommendations for how funders can support partnership working.

4.2. Developing new programmes and growing sustainably

4.2.1. Deciding whether to go ahead

A programme's sustainability is a crucial consideration when making decisions about developing a new programme or growing an existing service. Use these eight essential questions to evaluate whether the new programme or expansion is needed and is sustainable. The discussion should involve management, trustees and delivery staff.

If the answers suggest the work would not be sustainable or would duplicate existing services, you will need to rethink your planning. If you are able to answer the questions and identify the need for the programme and how it will be sustainable beyond the short term, you should proceed with the next stage of your planning.

Eight essential questions:

Deciding if new programmes or growth is sustainable

- 1. The duration of the funding:** Is it long enough to develop and embed new practice?
- 2. The sustainability of the project past initial funding:** What will happen when the funding ends?
- 3. Risk appetite:** What is our current appetite for risk, based on our reserves?
- 4. Compatibility with existing activities:** What is the impact on our existing service? Will growing or taking on a new project duplicate something we already do?
- 5. Capacity:** Have we got the capacity to do it properly and to do it well?
- 6. Contribution to the goal:** What's the contribution to our overall purpose as a charity?
- 7. Duplication of services:** Is there another charity already carrying out this work or covering this area? Will we displace another charity by taking on this work rather than working in partnership? If so, how can we support existing organisations?
- 8. Public benefit and value for money:** Is the support something that the state should provide? Does it pass a public benefit test? Does it offer good value for money?

4.2.2. Funding and planning a new programme

If the answers to the Eight Essential Questions suggest that setting up a new programme or expanding an existing programme is sustainable, the next step is to consider funding and the time you need to plan the new programme.

Often, funding is short-term - perhaps a year or two years and this can mean charities feel pressured to start delivery of new or expanded programmes right at the start of the funding period. However, planning is key to successful delivery, especially when moving to a new area or setting up a new programme. Include funding for a six-month 'runway' of set-up time in funding applications and speak to funders about the importance of this.

When growing or setting up a new programme, organisations should also look at whether they can diversify their funding sources. They can do this in the following ways.



1. Review your existing funding and seek new sources:

For example, if you largely rely on government funding, explore options for applying to grants from foundations and doing fundraising.

2. Consider which funders are more likely to fund something new and innovative or tried and tested:

In general, government funding is directed at tried and tested interventions. Foundations are more likely to fund innovation, especially if they have a dedicated 'pilot' or innovation fund. Though foundations are willing to fund existing programmes too. Get to know the funders that operate in your area and the type of funding they give out so you can tailor your applications depending on where your programme sits between new and innovative, and, tried and tested.

3. Consistently review funding strategies for efficiency:

Is the time and money you put into securing funding from a source proportionate to the financial return? If not, you should either reduce such activities or adapt them so that they require less resources.

4.2.3. Planning to work in a new area or context

Moving to a new area to deliver something you have delivered before can throw up new unexpected issues as each context is different. If setting up or growing a programme involves working in a new area for the first time, use the following questions as an initial stress-test for your plan.

1. Is the service needed?

Organisations should only move into a new area when they have clear evidence that their programme is needed and that there are gaps in existing service provision. This ensures they do not duplicate services or set up a service that ends up underused.

2. Can we recruit and train the necessary staff?

Finding the right delivery staff is the most important component of community-led approaches. Organisations need to allocate planning time so they can find and train staff to the highest standards.

Partnerships with other services and local community groups can support recruitment.

3. Can we generate enough referrals?

Even when there is widespread need for a programme, generating referrals can be a problem for organisations when they move into a new area. Building partnerships with schools, youth services and other charities and sharing details of referral criteria with them is an important first step to generating referrals (see section 4.1). You should also explore with partners how they will generate referrals.



Planning for sustainable development or growth



Establish if development or growth is necessary and sustainable



Plan and fund a planning period or 'set up time' of at least 6 months



Diversify funding income



If working in a new context consider evidence of need and plan recruitment, training, and, referral pathways



5. How to implement whole-family, community-led practice to prevent youth homelessness



This toolkit has examined features of good practice in a whole-family, community-led approach as well as key challenges in the sector. The how-to guide below sets out five key staging posts along the way to supporting a family, all of which can sometimes prove challenging. Organisations aiming to set up whole family, community-led programmes to prevent youth homelessness should plan for these five stages thoroughly using this toolkit and the detailed research report.

Stage 1: Referrals

How to identify young people at risk at an early stage

Why is this important? Ensuring that at-risk young people access support early reduces the likelihood of family relationships reaching crisis point and thus, reduces the risk of homelessness.

What should be done? A community-led approach coupled with strong local networks (including schools and other organisations) means young people can be identified and referrals made as early as possible.

How to?

- Take referrals from police and social services but do not rely on these referrals which likely will not reach you until a young person is at crisis point.
- Build partnerships with local schools and other charities and support services (see section 4.1 for details).
- Staff living in the community can identify families and young people at risk through personal networks. Families may approach them for support, this is a key strength of a community-led and community-based approach.
- Base staff in a hub which is open to the local community. If your organisations' office is elsewhere, arrange for staff to run drop-ins a few days a week in schools, youth centres or other community buildings.



Stage 2: Engagement and building relationships

How to engage families that might be mistrustful of services

Why is this important? Young people and families can only benefit from support if they engage, but some families may have been let down by other services and will therefore find it difficult to trust another service.

What should be done? Again, a community-led approach contributes to overcoming this barrier. Additionally, staff should use a persistent approach to gain initial engagement and then focus on building trusting relationships.

How to?

- Use a persistent approach by knocking-on doors, making continued offers of support and repeated attempts to engage them in a range of ways (see section 3.1.1).
- Meet families on their terms somewhere they feel comfortable such as in their home or at a neutral place in the community.
- Recognise families' previous experiences, explain how this support will be different and demonstrate that you will give families the support they need by involving them in goal setting (see section 3.1.2 for details)
- Differentiate your organisation from social services as some families are particularly fearful of social services.



Stage 3: Working with other organisations

How to partner with other organisations to secure support for young people and families

Why is this important? One organisation cannot provide the full complex, diverse range of support families and young people need, but they may be able to develop the trust and skills needed to access such support from different services.

What should be done? Building strong links with other support services as well as acting as an advocate for young people and families helps them secure the support they need.

How to?

- When developing the programme contact other local support services and explain the programme to them so you are known to them and so they expect you to refer families and young people to them. Meet with them to explain how your programme works and what it aims to achieve. You can then make arrangements to work together when supporting families (see section 4.1).
- Show families where to find the right support and help families to contact support services.
- Advocate for the family and the young person to ensure they receive the support they need. Many services are overstretched so this may also require a persistent approach.
- Broker direct relationships with other services and families while providing ongoing support to the family so that you can help rebuild trust in other services.



Stage 4: When prevention is not successful

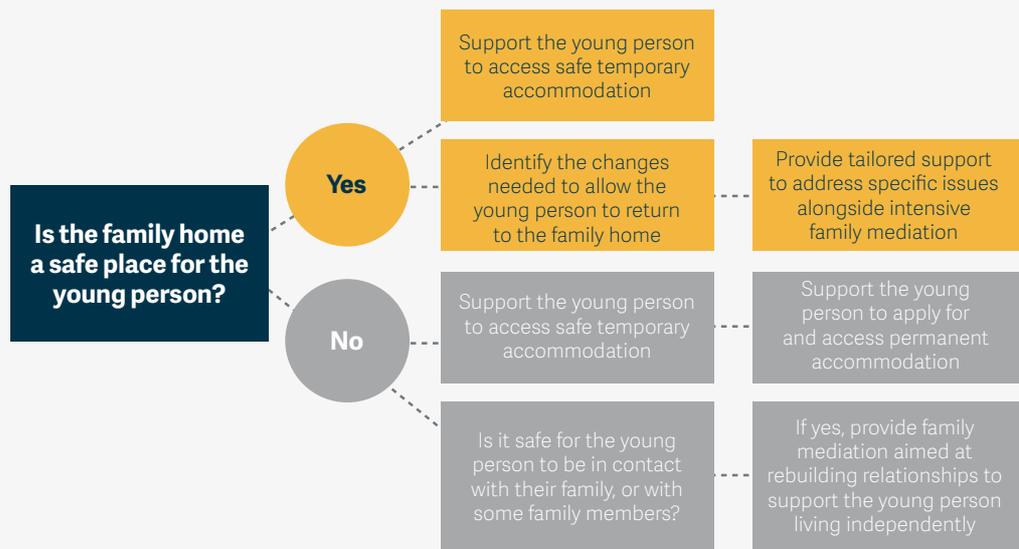
How to support a young person if they become homeless

Why is it important? When doing prevention work, in some cases, a young person will become homeless despite the support provided. Therefore, planning how you will support homeless young people is a crucial stage of setting up a programme, despite the main aim being prevention.

What should be done? Consider if it is safe for the young person to be in the family home. If so, use family mediation and support to work towards getting them back home. If not, and there is nothing that can be done to make it safe, focus on supporting them to access accommodation and maintain healthy relationships.

How to?

Follow the steps in the diagram to establish how to provide the best support for young people if they become homeless.



Stage 5: Ending the support with a family

How to complete the programme and ensure families are still supported

Why is this important? It is not feasible for intensive support to continue indefinitely. Where families become dependent on an organisations' support, this can prevent them from flourishing independently, however, the removal of support should not result in families reaching crisis point again and if they do, early intervention is once again crucial.

What should be done? Whole-family support should aim to help families develop skills that will help them to overcome challenges independently, making them more resilient in the long-run. When intensive support ends, staff should keep in touch with young people and families.

How-to?

- During the programme use family mediation to give families the tools to manage challenges and tensions in their relationships, without escalation. When the intensive support ends, maintain links with families by:
- Keeping in touch using their preferred method (phone, home visits, WhatsApp etc).
- Making them aware of any drop-in services.
- Giving staff the time and capacity to maintain relationships with families they previously supported.



We hope that this toolkit, and the detailed research report that informs it, will support organisations aiming to prevent young people becoming homeless. We know that experiencing homelessness is traumatic and has a significant negative impact on young people's long-term life outcomes. But it can be prevented. Over the past four years, A Place to Call Home has demonstrated that whole-family, community-led approaches can prevent youth homelessness and can also support families facing a range of other challenges. At Sage Foundation, we hope you will use this toolkit to set up or grow programmes aimed at preventing youth homelessness. We would welcome any feedback you and your organisation have and we are always keen to hear about how you are supporting young people and their families.

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