

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Iesha Small, Ellie Mulcahy, Kate Bowen Viner and Loïc Merzies

lkm^{CO}

#placetocallhome



1 Ellie Mulcahy is a Senior Research Associate at LKMco and holds a PGCE with a specialism in the early years. She previously worked as a reception teacher in a school in Ramsgate, Kent, having joined the founding cohort of the Teach First Early Years programme. Ellie has worked alongside Teach First to develop the Early Years Programme and support programme participants and more recently as a freelance researcher for Teach First and the Behavioural Insights Team. During her time as a teacher, Ellie also worked with 'Limited Resource Teacher Training', to develop teacher training in rural Tanzania, widening her understanding of teaching and learning throughout the world.

2 Iesha Small combines her work as an associate at LKMco with a maths teaching role at Kings Langley School, Hertfordshire, where she was previously assistant head teacher. She has over 12 years' experience in UK schools in London and the East of England is also an experienced governor in the Early Years phase. Iesha has also been an effective independent consultant and coach where she has specialised in developing the expertise and capacity of Middle and Senior leaders. During her educational career, Iesha has been seconded to the Department of Education. She was part of the team responsible for the reforms to Initial Teacher Training which have led to the current variety of school-based routes into teaching.

3 Kate Bowen-Viner is an Associate at LKMco and has been working in education since she left university. She began her career in Liverpool and went on to teach English in West London and Bristol. She also has experience of policy delivery in central government through her role at the Office for the South West Regional Schools Commissioner (Department

for Education). Here, she worked with Local Authorities and education providers to deliver free schools. Kate has also supported Ambitious about Autism with their campaign 'When Will We Learn?' Kate is undertaking a MSc in Policy Research at the University of Bristol and is interested in the relationship between education policy and social mobility.

4 Loic Menzies is Director of LKMco and a Tutor for Canterbury Christ Church University's Faculty of Education. He was previously Associate Senior Manager and Head of History and Social Sciences at St. George's R.C. School in North West London. Before that he was a youth worker involved in youth participation and young person-led community projects. He now specialises in education policy, youth development, social enterprise and school-based teacher training. He holds a degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from Magdalen College, Oxford and is a trustee of the charity The Kite Trust.

5 Elaine McCulloch is a project associate at LKMco, working on the partnership and relationship management element of this research. She works with a variety of charities and small organisations across London, building their operational systems to better support their young people and the community. Elaine is a careers adviser by trade, having worked in a number of colleges, PRU's and schools for the Connexions service before moving into Apprenticeships. She has delivered an award winning employability project and worked with both small and national training providers and local authorities.

6 This report was written by the education and youth development 'think and action tank' LKMco. We believe society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

Visit: www.lkmco.org.uk

@LKMco | info@lkmco.org

7 This report was commissioned by Sage Foundation. Sage Foundation is committed to taking action to build sustainable social, economic and entrepreneurial opportunities in Sage's local communities around the world. For Sage this is the right way to do business. We invest our time, money, expertise and technology in non-profit partners that are helping people reach their true potential. We are focused on helping: Young People, Women and Military Veterans.

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Thanks to Grenfell Housing Association and Your Homes Newcastle we were able to work with 10 young people to develop this report. Aged between 17 to 23 they were trained in photography and interview skills, so that they could be in the driving seat in telling their unique, deeply personal and often traumatic stories. It is our privilege to introduce these remarkable young people through the photography in this report.

Foreword from Stephen Kelly, CEO Sage

**Enough is enough: no
young person should be
without a secure future**

“You don’t have a place really to just rest your head and be at peace.”

It is not unreasonable to want that, is it?

How does a young person end up without a place to be at peace? What twists and turns in a life not yet lived, can lead a young man or woman – full of the same ambitions, hopes and dreams as their peers – to end up without a place to call home?

The reasons, as this report shows, are as complex as they are varied. The reality of youth homelessness goes far beyond our basic understanding of sleeping on a street corner – indeed, it is a reality that is often hard to see at all.

Sage – and myself in particular – were keen to embark on this work with LKMco because we are passionate about the potential of all young people, and our philanthropic commitment through Sage Foundation, is to work towards a world where no young person is held back from reaching that potential.

It is my belief that businesses have a central role to play in the eradication of youth homelessness. We must use our resources to support and collaborate with; local authorities, policymakers, charity partners and educators in our communities, to strengthen, advocate for and build services that tackle youth homelessness and its root causes.

Before we got stuck into making a change, we saw the importance of commissioning independent research into youth homelessness in the UK, to better understand the scale of the challenge, what inspiring work is already happening and understand where we can best offer our help. We decided to focus on London and Newcastle – the latter is Sage’s birthplace. Sage was founded in Newcastle in 1981, and we are particularly passionate about fostering healthy communities in the North East.

The national story we found is startling. 16-24 year olds who are accepted as statutorily homeless, make up just **12% (16,000)** of the total number of young people that approach their local authority for support; nearly double that number will be turned away (**22%, 30,000**). These figures also fail to account for the ‘hidden homeless’; those who are living on the streets or just getting by on couch surfing with no guarantee of where they will sleep each night. On any one night, up to **255,000** young people are estimated to experience hidden homelessness. They are all at risk, they all need help. Yet, they remain invisible and are unlikely to be monitored or offered appropriate support.

That is why in this report, more than anything, we wanted to listen to and share some of these young people’s stories first-hand, rather than making assumptions about what their lives are like and what kind of help they want or need. Their voices deserve to be heard. So, I want to sincerely thank our 10-strong youth panel, Yasmin, Jerome, Felix, Ollie, Jess, Evan, Leila, Emily, Andrzej and Josh for being so open and honest with us. They have both moved and inspired me to do more as a leader.

We also wanted to look at a major influence on the lives of all young people; education. Often the educational experiences of young people who become homeless are sidelined. We thought it was critical to look at this because homelessness has such a lasting and detrimental impact on young people staying in and achieving in education, even when they want to work hard and take a step towards a better future. We must do more to keep homeless young people in education and support them to achieve well. This means being watchful for the warning signs and ensuring the right support is in place well before things reach crisis point. It also means that when things do go wrong, the full weight of our community, including businesses, schools and youth services should be thrown behind young people to ensure they can still access an education that is a haven from the chaos in the rest of their lives.

We all need to pay attention, because youth homelessness is a critical issue for our society – it has long-term consequences for individuals, communities and families. Ending youth homelessness and ensuring that young people have the support they need is not only possible, but it is also our duty as a fair and modern society. Tackling this now changes what our future looks like.

What I hope strikes you most on reading this is that despite the tragedies and setbacks that people like Jerome and Leila have been through in their lives, they have maintained a strong sense of hope, of ambition, of excitement about the future. That excitement shouldn’t be a privilege, but a right – afforded to every young person, with their whole lives ahead of them. It is up to those of us with resources and power to listen to these hopeful voices, and to do what we can to make sure aspiration isn’t wasted.

This report is just the beginning for Sage. This is a call for collaboration, as much as action. In early 2018, we will look to work with business, charity, education, community and government leaders to build on the recommendations from this report. We’ll continue working with and consulting young people. We’ll start in Sage’s hometown of Newcastle. And, we’ll be looking for innovative and practical support that will stop at risk young people ever experiencing homelessness.

I am indebted to the fantastic young people and both teams at LKMco and Sage Foundation – alongside all our expert collaborators and partners, who do so much and have helped in the journey so far.

Stephen Kelly, CEO, Sage

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Executive Summary

The homelessness that most people see and which official statistics tell us about is only the tip of the iceberg. Beneath that lies perhaps over a quarter of a million young people who have nowhere to call home. Their vulnerability should be everyone's concern. This research has given voice to their experiences and it is now time for society as a whole to respond to their calls.



2.1 - What does youth homelessness look like in the UK?

It is a mistake to equate homelessness simply with 'rough sleeping'. Being homeless is not always the same as being on the street.

Homelessness can include anyone lacking a physical, social, or legal domain. UK researchers tend to focus on three forms of homelessness:

- **Statutory homelessness:** where an individual approaches their local authority for support, and is accepted as being unintentionally homeless, having a local connection and being a 'priority need', and is therefore given support.
- **Non-statutory homelessness:** those who have approached their local authority but been turned away for support as they do not meet the criteria for statutory homelessness.
- **Hidden homelessness:** individuals who have not approached their local authority for support and therefore do not fit into either of the above categories. The hidden homeless are likely to be rough sleepers, sofa-surfers, hostel dwellers or those living in overcrowded accommodation.

2.1.1 - How many young people are homeless?

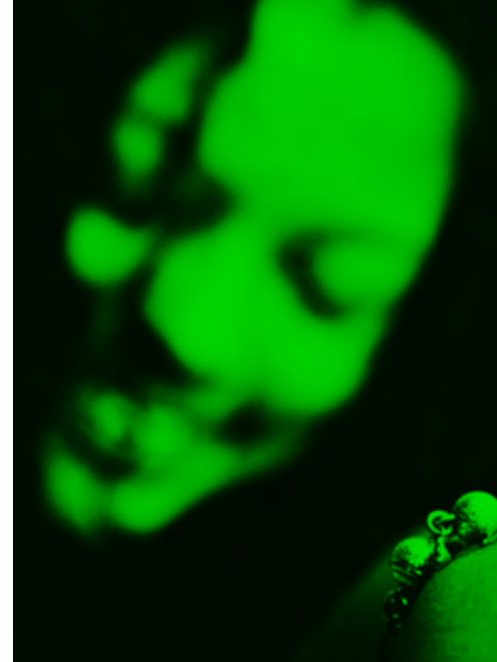
For the purpose of this report, we define 'youth' as young people between 16 and 24 years old. However, the upper and lower age limits of 'youth' are debated by practitioners working with young homeless people, with some suggesting that definitions should take maturity into account.



In 2016, young people aged 16-24 made up over one fifth (**22%**) of all nationwide acceptances for statutory homelessness.

In our two focus regions, London and the North East, we found that:

- Proportionally, more young people presented as homeless to their local authority in the North East (1.4%) than in London (0.8%) and figures show an increase since previous years (Youth Homelessness Databank, 2015-16). Although there are some questions over the accuracy of the available data sources, it is highly worrying that trends show that the number of young people seeking help for homelessness is increasing.



However, 16-24 year olds accepted as statutorily homeless are a small minority (**12%**) of the total number of young people that approach their local authority for support. The majority (**66%**) are offered 'prevention and support relief' and many (**22%**) are turned away.

- In London, young people presenting as homeless to their local authority were considerably more likely to undergo an assessment, be accepted as statutorily homeless or receive 'prevention and support' relief than young people in the North East.

2.1.2 - Who is young and homeless?

The poor quality of data on young homeless people makes it difficult to establish demographic trends, however:

- Most homeless young people are between 18 and 21 years old



On any one night, it is estimated that over **39,000** young people sleep rough and **215,000** sofa-surf (Clarke et al. 2015).

- There is no data on youth homelessness disaggregated by ethnicity. However, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) adults are over represented in the adult homeless population which may suggest BAME young people are also at greater risk of youth homelessness.
- Previously, more young men than young women were homeless, however, recently the gap has narrowed with the proportion of young homeless people who are female rising to 46%
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people are more likely to be homeless than their non-LGBT peers
- Young offenders and care leavers are at a greatly increased risk of becoming homeless

2.2 - Why do young people become homeless?

No single factor causes homelessness. Instead, various factors interact over an extended period, eventually resulting in homelessness. This is why building up trust and hearing from young people themselves as they unpicked their journeys was such an important part of this research.

Risk factors often kick in well before young people reach crisis point. This means that far too many opportunities to act early are missed.

The most common reasons why young people become homeless are that:

1 - Parents are no longer willing or able to accommodate young people:

Relationship breakdown is often the trigger for young people becoming homeless, but this does not happen without warning signs. A rapid and skilled response to these challenges could help reduce the risk that events culminate in homelessness.

Key antecedents to relationship breakdown include:

- abuse,
- difficult behaviour,
- breakdown of support networks,
- substance abuse,
- mental health problems, and;
- discrimination suffered by LGBT young people.

Responding to each of these presents an insufficiently tapped opportunity to nip problems in the bud.

2 - Poverty:

Poverty frequently leads to untenably overcrowded or unsuitable housing and this contributes to family breakdown. Changes to the welfare system and rising rents have therefore profoundly exacerbated youth homelessness and this poses serious questions for how our society ensures young people grow up in the right conditions for them to flourish. Meanwhile, the wider economic context and the shortcomings of social policy can result in a lack of support services and high youth unemployment rates. This increases the likelihood that young people will become homeless.

3 - Leaving care:

Young people in care - whether they are fostered or in homes, are some of the most vulnerable young people in our society. Yet despite their care being entrusted to the state, many are left vulnerable by a lack of transitional arrangements and options for moving on, coupled with a lack of support and insufficient skills for independent living. As a result, the system is letting these young people down and failing to ensure they have a fair chance of success.

2.3 - What role does education play in youth homelessness?

Many of the factors that contribute to young people becoming homeless also make it difficult for them to succeed in education. This is particularly the case where pupils are moving between schools frequently. Meanwhile, homelessness itself forces many young people out of education, even where they are keen to persist.

For this reason, keeping homeless young people in education and supporting them to achieve well is one of the most important forms of support that educational institutions can provide.

There are three levels of youth homelessness prevention, and schools and education settings are mainly involved at the primary level.

1. Primary prevention

Working with young people and their families to prevent new cases of homelessness well before the point of crisis.

2. Secondary prevention

Early identification and treatment of current cases of homelessness (e.g. supporting a young person at the point of family break-down).

3. Tertiary prevention

Working with young people who are already homeless to prevent long term, entrenched and repeated homelessness.

Several common themes characterised the educational experiences of young people we worked with. These played a role both before, and during, the time they spent homeless.

- Limited educational outcomes: Whilst levels of attainment at school varied, successful progression to further or higher education was uncommon.
- Negative experiences: Young people's experiences were frequently negative and difficult relationships with teachers were common.
- High mobility: Frequent school moves were followed by difficulties with transitions.
- Behaviour: Poor behaviour and exclusion were common.
- Special educational needs: Several young people had a history of unaddressed needs.
- High aspirations for both education and employment: Despite the above, young people often aspired towards continuing their education, gaining fulfilling employment and becoming financially independent.

2.4- What can we do?

Summary of our recommendations

Ending youth homelessness and ensuring that young people have the support they need is not only possible, but it is also our duty as a humane and modern society. It is a mission everyone has a role to play in.

Businesses and funders should:

- Provide funding for local family support services and encourage employees to train as volunteers in new and existing mediation services.
- Campaign to raise awareness of hidden youth homelessness.
- Ensure that wherever possible, initiatives to tackle homelessness target all homeless young people, not just those classified as statutorily homeless.
- Provide funding for new pilots of school-based bereavement services following a review of existing services.
- Ensure homeless young people are able to access apprenticeships by systematically reviewing processes for applying to them and targeting organisations that work with these young people.

Government and funders should:

- Provide funding to dramatically increase the availability of high-quality mediation and family counselling services for vulnerable young people and their families.
- Identify the most effective way of supporting young homeless people to gain life-skills by commissioning research to evaluate the impact of existing programmes.

Local authorities and social services should:

- Ensure that all vulnerable young people who are experiencing family conflict have access to family counselling or mediation when a young person is in need.
- It is important to note that family counselling should not take place between young people and family members who have committed abuse, in such cases young people should be prioritised for housing support and given intensive support once rehoused to help them deal with the traumatic after-effects of abuse.
- Offer counselling, parenting classes and/or parent groups to guardians who are struggling with a vulnerable young person's behaviour.
- Ensure all parents and young people can access specialist support where families are struggling to come to terms with a young person's sexuality or gender identity.

All local authorities should:

- Develop or deploy pathway plans (such as the Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework from Barnardo's and St Basil's) to assist young care leavers in finding and retaining accommodation.

The Department for Work and Pensions should:

- Adjust regulations to allow all young homeless people to retain housing benefit if they enter full-time Higher or Further Education and choose to remain in supported housing. In such circumstances, young people should receive housing benefit in place of a maintenance loan, but retain eligibility for Special Support Grants.

- Require all Job Centres to designate a 'Young Person Lead', who is trained to work with young people who are receiving welfare support and adjust benefit requirements to enable young people to continue in education.
- Collaborate with the Department for Education to create a database that tracks young homeless people through the system to ensure they are able to access to Further and Higher Education.
- Review procedures for recalculating benefits when young people begin apprenticeships to ensure homeless young people are not vulnerable to debt and a loss of wages.

The Department for Education should:

- Create a new targeted travel bursary for young homeless people living in temporary accommodation. This should be paid to schools and colleges where these young people are enrolled.

The Department for Communities and Local Government should:

- Commission research into:
- Potential improvements to data on the young homeless population's demographics, for example by including information on ethnicity, care leavers, offending history and gender identity and sexual orientation.
- How public services - including health, security and education - can collaborate to ensure all hidden homeless young people are identified and tracked.

Schools and educational settings should:

- Provide effective primary prevention by:
- Ensuring that staff with key responsibilities (such as pastoral and safeguarding leads, heads of year and SENDCOs) have expert training in recognising the warning signs and risk factors for youth homelessness;
- Helping all bereaved young people access specialist services. These services should form an integral part of schools' mental health policies.
- Signposting families and young people towards information and guidance – particularly family mediation;
- Provide or broker support for pupils and students who are experiencing homelessness to mitigate potential damage and help them to remain in education. This may include access to support with independent living skills and financial advice.

Statutory and non-statutory youth services should:

- Provide specialist bereavement support for young people. Such support should be administered by experts in response to referrals from educational institutions and social or homeless services.

3 Introduction





3.1 - The problem

Youth homelessness is a critical issue for society with long term consequences for individuals, communities and families.

Since the 2008 recession, homelessness has been on the rise and a falling away of previously established support systems has further exacerbated the issue.

Whilst there is a considerable body of research relating to the nature of youth homelessness and its causes, young people's voices and the stories of how their transition to homelessness unfolded are often missing.

Furthermore, education is an important component in the lives of all young people, but the educational experiences of young people who become homeless are often sidelined in the research, as many struggle to remain in - and achieve in, education.

3.2 - The project

This report has set out to redress these issues by foregrounding young people's stories and combining their accounts with an accessible distillation of the literature and expert views - both of academics and practitioners. We hope it will serve as a call to action across society and make it clear that we can and must act now.

Sage funded this project and research because they are passionate about the potential of all young people, and through their philanthropic commitment - Sage Foundation - they are working towards a world where no young person is held back from reaching that potential. They believe that they and the business sector have a duty to use their resources to support and collaborate with; local authorities, policymakers, charity partners and educators, to strengthen, advocate for and build services that tackle youth homelessness and its root causes.

3.3 - The Young People

We were fortunate to work with two organisations that provide crucial and much needed support for homeless young people in Newcastle and London: Grenfell Housing Association and Your Homes Newcastle. We are deeply grateful for their help and invaluable expertise. By collaborating with these organisations we were able to work with ten young people in the two cities.

The young people we worked with ranged in age from 17 to 23 and each took part in three days of participatory workshops. As part of the workshops, participants were trained in photography and interview skills so that they could be in the driving seat in telling their unique, deeply personal and often traumatic stories.

It is a privilege to introduce these remarkable young people to our readers:

Yasmin¹

Yasmin is a 19 year old from south London. Following a turbulent childhood in an unstable home in which she was bullied by an older sibling, her relationship with her mother deteriorated to the point that she was asked to leave the family home. She began 'sofa-surfing', staying with friends and family and moving each day until she approached her local authority for support and was given a place in a hostel. She found the chaos and disorder of the hostel difficult and feels this had a detrimental impact on her education. She now lives in a shared house in South London and hopes to rent her own flat. She is keen to use her experiences to help others and is currently looking into volunteering opportunities within youth work to gain some experience in this area alongside her part time job in a local super market.

Jerome

Jerome is also from South London and is 23 years old. Jerome found school difficult. He was severely bullied and felt let down by teachers' lack of support for his special needs. He values education highly but found it impossible to continue with college once he became homeless. Jerome's transition to homelessness began following the death of his grandparents who were his main guardians as a result of his mother's mental health difficulties. Both of his grandparents - for whom he had become a young carer during their old age, died within a few months of one another. Both deaths felt unexpected and devastated Jerome's support network. He soon found himself unable to maintain his grandparents' home following the loss of his job and became homeless soon after another relative sold his grandparents' house. He now lives in a shared house in South London and is keen to receive further support so one day he can live independently. Jerome is looking for a job that suits his skills and is open to anything that will give him new experiences.

Andrzej

Andrzej is 18 years old and has lived in North East England since he was a toddler. He describes himself as a "Polish Roma Gypsy". During his childhood Andrzej's father, who was often physically abusive, left the family home and became homeless. His mother also became abusive which later led to Andrzej rebelling. At the age of 16, two marriages were arranged for him but he refused these, causing serious friction in his family relationships. Over the next year, his relationship with his mother further deteriorated and resulted in his mother changing the locks while he was at college. It took Andrzej three days to secure a meeting with his local homelessness service during which time he 'sofa surfed'. Andrzej now lives in supported accommodation and is learning to take care of himself independently. He is hoping to start a new college course in the near future.

Josh

Josh is 17 and from Newcastle. Josh's mother has often been a single parent to Josh and his five younger siblings. He is extremely close to his family but his childhood was punctuated with severe abuse from his mother's boyfriends and his step-father. Twice, his mother fled violent domestic abuse to live in a refuge. This has had a considerable impact on Josh's education since the frequent moves and his disruptive behaviour resulted in numerous school moves. Josh became homeless the second time his mother moved to refuge because he, at 16, was classed as an adult male and therefore unable to accompany her. When he first became homeless he was accommodated in a hostel which he found difficult and lonely. Following a violent attack from another young person in the hostel, Josh was moved out of the hostel. Josh is beginning to build his skills for independent living and hopes to return to college in September 2017.

¹ Pseudonym's are used throughout

Ollie

Ollie is also from Newcastle and is 19 years old. As a child, Ollie lived with his mother and step-father where he suffered abuse. Ollie was bullied at Primary school and did not have a positive experience of education. Despite this, he developed a love for music and performing. At the age of 12, Ollie was kicked out of his mother's home and moved into a small house with his father. He began taking drugs shortly after the devastating loss of his grandfather and this substance abuse led to the breakdown of relationships with his support network, his ill-health and the loss of his job. When Ollie first became homeless, he sofa-surfed, moving between friends' houses. When no friend was able to offer him a place to stay for the night, Ollie was forced to sleep on the streets where he continued to abuse drugs. Ollie is now accommodated in a hostel and has made the decision to overcome his addiction. He continues to value music and enjoys performing his own songs, he also has high aspirations for his future and is now hoping to secure an apprenticeship.

Felix

Felix is a care leaver, he was nine years old when he entered foster care and remained there until he was 18 and became homeless as a result of leaving care. Felix enjoyed his time in foster care and shared good relationships with his foster carers and his friends. Before entering care, Felix changed schools many times, making it difficult for him to engage in education. However, once he started secondary school, Felix had a positive experience due to support from teaching assistants and teachers. After leaving foster care, Felix moved back to Newcastle and was placed in a hostel as he had no other place to live. However he does not see himself as homeless. Recently, Felix took up the opportunity to volunteer at an Autistic Unit where he thoroughly enjoyed working with children who had Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEN/D). Felix now aspires to support young people with SEN/D and is hoping to start a college course that will give him the necessary training.

Emily

Emily is a 19 year-old from Newcastle. Growing up, Emily had an unstable family home. She would often argue with her mother and would be asked to leave the house. This resulted in her frequently drifting between her mother's and her father's houses and staying in each one temporarily. She became homeless when her mother told her that she could no longer stay in the family home anymore. At this time, she did not want to live with her father because none of her siblings would join her. At the age of 11 Emily was devastated and deeply affected by the death of her cousin which had a serious impact on her education. Finding it difficult to deal with her emotions, Emily exhibited behaviour issues at school which eventually led to her exclusion from two schools and her becoming disengaged from education. Emily is currently living in a hostel and enjoys spending time with her niece.

Jess

18 year-old Jess is from Newcastle. Whilst living with her mother, Jess experienced violent abuse from her step-father. Jess' mother did not believe her when she described the physical abuse she had been suffering. She later moved in with her father and her relationship with her mother further deteriorated. Moving locations and transitioning between schools had a negative impact on Jess' experience of education. As a teenager, her disruptive behaviour caused tension in her relationship with her father, which eventually deteriorated to the point that she was asked to leave the family home at the age of 16. She then spent time sofa-surfing and lived on the streets, during which time she relied on support from other young homeless people. After making contact with a housing practitioner, Jess was given a place in the hostel where she currently lives. Jess has worked through some issues with her father and they still have a good relationship. Although she did not feel mature enough to sit GCSE exams during secondary school, Jess now recognises the importance of qualifications and aspires to become more independent.

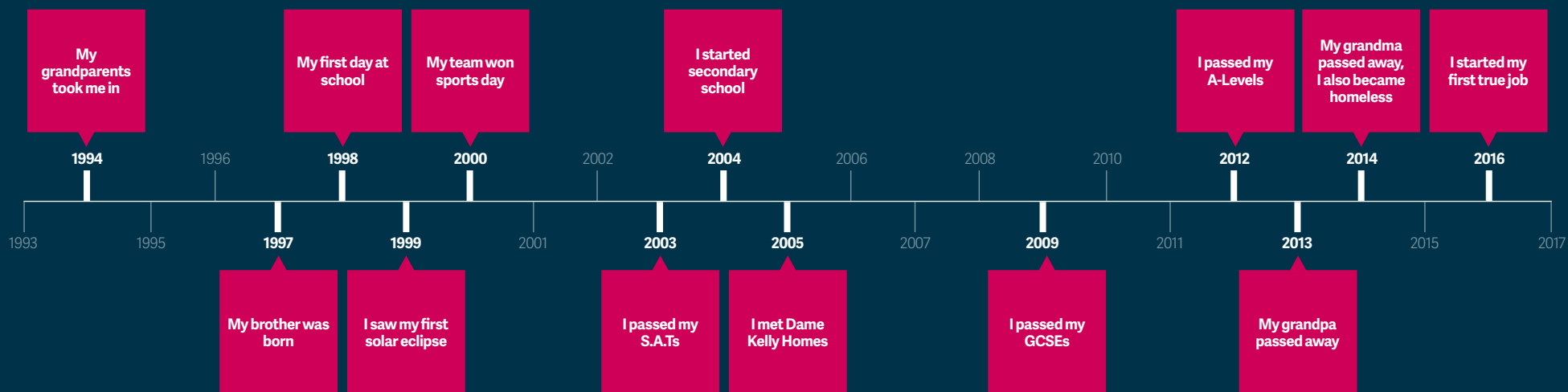
Leila

Leila is from Newcastle and is of Pakistani heritage, she is 18 years old. She values education and is proud of her academic achievements at GCSE. Before becoming homeless, Leila's grandmother died. Her experience of bereavement exacerbated the stress caused by the abuse she suffered in the family home. Whilst Leila did have support from her school and her friends, these experiences made it difficult for her to focus on her studies and resulted in her leaving school without sitting her A-level exams. She was then given a place in the hostel where she currently lives. Leila has a strong relationship with her little sister and enjoys working with young children. She enjoyed her work experience in a nursery and aspires to pursue a career in childcare.

Evan

At the age of 13, Evan, a young person from Newcastle, began taking drugs. This had wide ranging and detrimental impacts on his education and his relationship with his mother. When Evan failed his GCSEs, conflict in the family home worsened. He went on to start an apprenticeship in plumbing and achieved his Level 1 certificate, but left the course as he did not enjoy it. As he was more interested in cooking, Evan then began working as a Prep Chef. However, he lost his job as a result of his abuse of alcohol and drugs. A combination of substance abuse issue and intensifying conflict with his mother led to Evan becoming homeless and entering supported accommodation where he has received support for substance abuse and is no longer taking drugs. Evan wants to build skills so that he can live independently. He is keen to re-enter the job market and aspires to be a Head Chef in an Italian restaurant. Evan maintains a positive relationship with his mother and wants to be a good role model for his younger sister.

Figure 1:
Jerome's timeline



4

Methodology

This report explores the experiences of young homeless people and particularly focuses their educational experiences during their transitions to and experiences of homelessness.

LOOK RIGHT

4.1 - Research questions

The report explores five key questions:

- 1 Definition: How is “youth homelessness” defined?
- 2 Demographics: What is the prevalence of youth homelessness in the UK?
- 3 Causes: What are the main causes of youth homelessness?
- 4 Education: How do experiences of youth homelessness play out in education?
- 5 Support: How can educational institutions, businesses and the government address the causes of youth homelessness and support young people who become homeless?

4.2 - Research tools

The report brings together findings from three strands of research:

- 1 a literature review;
- 2 a series of interviews with sector experts and practitioners; and,
- 3 detailed participatory research with ten young people.

The literature review and the interviews explore all five research questions, allowing us to triangulate between previous research findings and on-the-ground practice. Workshops focused on research questions three, four and five.

4.2.1 - Literature Review

The literature review examined the existing evidence on the nature and causes of youth homelessness and the limited research on the educational experiences of homeless young people. The review brings together findings from 101 items of literature published primarily within the last fifteen years, though in places where research was sparse, older literature has been used.

4.4.2 - Expert Interviews

Interviews took place after the literature review to fill gaps in the existing research base and in order to interrogate the literature review findings.

1 - Experts

We conducted thirteen semi structured interviews with the following sector experts, practitioners and academics.

- Sharon Brown: Director of Youth Homeless North East
- Barbara Dann: Training Manager at Grenfell Housing and Training
- Lorraine Dixon: NEET co-ordinator at Sutton Council

- Kiri Grant: Young person’s development manager at Cardboard Citizens
- Christine Henwood: Co-founder of Foundation Futures
- Sarah Jones: Ex-Deputy Head of an FE college in London
- Liz Kelly: Educational practitioner, Youth offending team at Merton Youth Justice
- Andrew Lorimer: Head of Housing and Support at Grenfell Housing and Training
- Kim McMaster: Young people service manager at Your Homes Newcastle
- Henderson ‘H’ Murray: Inner 1 Education consultancy
- Michael Nastari: Director of services at Stonewall Housing
- Joshua Talbot: Violence and restorative justice worker, Merton Youth Justice Service
- Beth Watts: Senior Research Fellow at Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh

Semi structured interviews were based on the five research questions but particularly focused on:

- young homeless people’s experiences of education
- how transitions to homelessness played out in and affected young people’s education
- the role of educational institutions in recognising and supporting young people both at risk of and experiencing homelessness

In addition to the thirteen semi-structured interviews we held nine informal discussions to verify and test our approach, emerging findings, and to provide additional context. Informal discussions took place with:

- Dith Banbary: Assistant Principal Student services at London South East Colleges
- Anna Clarke: Senior Research Associate at Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research
- Kiran Gill: Founder of The Difference
- Deborah Quilgars: Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Housing Policy
- Lisa Pollitt: Director at Cambridge Safeguarding Consultants and ex-head of safeguarding at a large FE college
- Daniel Stone: Senior Major Donor Executive at Shelter, UK
- Jean Templeton: Chief Executive of St Basil’s
- Jenny Tough: Key Stage 3 co-ordinator at Linhope Pupil Referral Unit, Newcastle
- Malcom Trobe: Deputy General Secretary at ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders)

2 - Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analysed over the course of two rounds of coding. The main codes were structured around the five research questions. The second set of codes were based on common themes that emerged within the five questions (see table 1). Quotations that exemplified key findings were extracted and findings from coding were used to complement the existing literature and fill gaps where possible.

Table 1

Main codes						
	Definition	Demographics	Causes	Education		Support
				Educational experiences	Impact of homelessness on education	
Sub-codes	Youth	Available data	Family breakdown	Negative experiences	Drop out	Warning signs
	Homelessness	Data collection	Poverty and overcrowding	Behaviour and exclusion	School support	Available services
	Rough sleeping	Trends	Economic and social context	Motivation and engagement	Attendance	Accessibility of support
	Sofa surfing	Data on hidden homelessness	Mental health	Qualification level	Behaviour	Funding and austerity
			Bereavement	Peer relationships	Attainment	
			Care leavers	Being NEET		
			Abuse	Transitions		
			Substance abuse	SEND		

4.2.3 - Participatory research

1 - The workshops

Traditional interviews and focus groups can result in young homeless people becoming passive subjects in research. Such approaches can mean that young people are not fully equipped to tell their stories and that trust between researchers and participants is insufficiently developed or research is too rigidly bound by researchers own agendas. To avoid this, and to ensure that there was 'something in it for them', we designed our participatory methods around upskilling young people and building their confidence so that they were empowered to tell their stories on their own terms.

We therefore conducted three workshops, each over three days, with a total of ten young people. During the workshops, researchers - who were qualified teachers, worked with young people to develop the following skills:

- Storytelling
- Interview skills
- Visual arts skills
- Photography skills
- Audio-production skills

Using these skills each young person developed a 'photofilm': a selection of their own photos accompanying their voice describing their experience of homelessness and their educational experiences.

Table 2

	Morning workshop content	Afternoon workshop content	Skills gained	Research output
Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Structuring a 'good story' • Developing a timeline of your life • 'Zooming in' on key events and people 	Photography workshop including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic principles and impact of different ways of taking photos • How to illustrate a story with photos The young people were supplied with a camera to use in their own time between day 1 and day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling • Photography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A timeline • Detailed analysis of 1-3 events • Detailed analysis of 1-2 important people in the young people's lives
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of young people's photos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview skills • Young people designed their interview questions • Young people carried out recorded interviews with one another 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photography skills • Storytelling • Interviewing skills • Designing interview questions • Using audio equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photographs representing the young people's stories • A recorded interview
Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editing audio using 'Audacity' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editing audio and photographs to produce a photofilm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio editing skills • Production skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edited two-minute audio • Photofilms

2-Recruiting the young people

In order to build on established expertise in the sector, the research co-ordinator established and developed relationships with organisations in our focus areas for a number of months before the research began. We then worked with staff from Grenfell housing and training in London and Your Homes Newcastle in Newcastle to recruit young people to take part in the workshops. The young people were approached by their youth workers or other individuals who work with them regularly to establish whether they would be interested in taking part in the research.

Grenfell housing and training recruited two young people who took part in a three day workshop together. Your Homes Newcastle recruited eight young people, one group of six and one group of two.

3 - Attrition

It was anticipated that three young people would attend the London based workshop but only two did so. Similarly, in the third workshop, based in Newcastle, three young people had expressed their intention to attend but only two did so. However, once the groups began, the rate of attrition was zero with all the young people that attended the first day completing all three workshops.

4 - Ethics

Informed written consent was sought from all young people taking part in the research and recordings, transcripts, photos and timelines were stored securely. Particular efforts were made to explain the implications of consent, both at the start and end of the project.

In the report, each young person is given an alias however, we acknowledged the risk that due to the immensely detailed information about each young person's life included in the report, there was some risk that they could be identified and their quotes, timelines or photos traced back to them. This was discussed with the young people as part of their informed consent and they were given the opportunity to examine each piece of data used in the report to decide whether they were happy with the risk that they might be identified despite their alias. They were then given the opportunity to request for the provenance of a quote or photo to be further disguised.

One young person requested that their data should be definitively non-attributable. We therefore removed any specific details from his story in the report and did not use any quotes, photos or their timeline where these included identifiable detail.

5 - Analysis

All young people recorded an interview about their lives and their experiences of homelessness, these interview recordings were on average 30 minutes long. Additionally, four young people, two in London and two in Newcastle were recorded describing the photos they had taken. All fourteen recordings were fully transcribed and analysed.

Again, the primary set of codes were structured around the five main research questions and the secondary set of codes were based around common themes which emerged within the five main codes (see table 3). However, none of the young people spoke about the wider demographics of youth homelessness or the extent of the issue, so no codes were created here. Many of the emerging themes within the remaining four primary codes mirrored those in the expert interviews.

Table 3

	Definition	Causes	Education		Support
			Educational experiences	Impact of homelessness on education	
Sub-codes	Hidden homelessness	Family relationships	Negative experiences	Drop out	Youth workers
	Care leavers experience and perception	Domestic abuse	Behaviour and exclusion	School support	Council
	Lack of stability	Overcrowding and poverty	Motivation and engagement	Attendance and absence	Social services
		Mental health	Academic achievement	Behaviour	College and school
		Bereavement	Peer relationships	Attainment	Delays in support
		Behaviour	Being NEET	Travel costs	Family support networks
		Substance abuse	Frequent school moves and difficult transitions	Aspirations	Relationships with other young homeless people
		Access to support services	SEND	Mental health in school	
			A lack of independent living skills		
			Bullying		

5

A Place to Call Home - An undefined problem

Different agencies and academics use varying definitions of homelessness. Meanwhile, young people themselves understand the term in very different and personal ways. Challenges result both from defining the relevant age group and what 'counts' as a home.

5.1 - How young is young?

In the context of 'youth homelessness', 'youth' can refer to various different age groups. For the purposes of this report we define 'youth homelessness' as affecting young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are experiencing any form of homelessness. This is partly because the years between 16-24 are commonly understood to be a time when a young person can live independently of their parents (Quilgars, 2011) and partly opportunistic, given that national statistics on homelessness include some figures for this demographic (DCLG, 2016). Nonetheless, there are some problems with using this age bracket.

"You tend to expect that for children, statutory services are there and will step in and identify that person, but there are people who either through their own wishes not to be seen as part of that system, or just because they have no idea where to go, are young people slipping through the net... and I've seen it go much younger than 16." Barbara Dann, Grenfell Housing and Training

The lower age limit of 16 is generally used because although those under 16 may be homeless, these individuals are classed as children and thus social services are responsible for placing them into foster care or other accommodation. However, sector professionals suggest that many homeless people under the age of 16 are not known to social care professionals and support can therefore fail to kick in. This leaves many children and younger teenagers in situations comparable to that of young adults. Several practitioners therefore argue that intervention and prevention of 'youth homelessness' should be extended to younger groups.

"One of our strategic objectives is around prevention and quite often when we come into contact with young people at 16, it's too late. So, in reality prevention is about them not getting to that stage...we are now going to be working with 14 up to 25." Sharon Brown, Youth Homelessness North East

At the other end of the age range, the growing trend for young people to continue living with their parents for longer than the age of legal majority has further complicated definitional problems since many young people now expect to be able to live with their parents or guardians for longer (Smith, 2009; Quilgars, 2011). Where they are not able to do so, this can leave them in a situation similar to that faced by those who are younger. Given that many individuals continue to require support despite not fitting fixed definitions of "youth", many professionals working with homeless young people argue that maturity needs to be taken into account.

"How do I define youth? I think somebody who hasn't necessarily got all the tools they need to become an adult and that to me doesn't necessarily mean age. Youth normally, for us particularly, would be 16 to 25, but you also experience, especially within this work, 25-plus who don't have the tools or the right equipment or knowledge to come out of their youth and be adults... it's not just about the age, it's about the tools that they have to be able to develop into adults." Kiri Grant, Cardboard Citizens

5.2 - When is a home not a home?

Homelessness is often equated with rough sleeping, however this is only one dimension of homelessness.

There are a range of technical definitions of homelessness which go beyond 'sleeping rough.' Meanwhile, for young people themselves it is often the lack of security and a stable support network that resonates most strongly. As one young person in London explained:

"You don't have anyone that cares about you, friend or family, and it's not like you have to be sleeping on the streets, but you don't have a place to really just rest your head and be at peace. If you're living in a place where there's violence and there's things that you don't condone or you shouldn't even endure as a human, then you're homeless..." Yasmin, London.

5.3 - The three domains of a home

One way to unpick different forms of homelessness is to focus on the different aspects of a home and to consider whether one or more of these is lacking.

The ETHOS typology (the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) is considered by many to be the most robust definition of homelessness (Edgar et al., 2004; Quilgars et al, 2011). ETHOS defines a home as comprising of three domains:

The physical domain: "having a decent dwelling (or space) adequate to meet the needs of the person and his/her family."

The social domain: "being able to maintain privacy and enjoy social relations".

The legal domain: "having exclusive possession, security of occupation and legal title." (Edgar: 2009, p15)

If a person does not have access to one or more of these domains, they may be considered homeless or experiencing housing exclusion (Edgar et al, 2003).

² An individual will qualify as a priority need if they fulfil one of the following criteria: aged 16 and 17 years old; aged 18 to 21 years old following being in local authority care aged 16 to 17 years old; aged 21 and over who are vulnerable as a result of leaving local authority care; pregnant; those with dependent children; those vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness, learning disability, physical disability or other special reason; those that are homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster; and, those that are vulnerable as a result of leaving the armed forces, leaving prison or fleeing domestic violence.

5.4 - The problems of 'official' definitions

Inconsistent definitions of youth homelessness can prove problematic when trying to provide young people with support.

Legally, a household or person will be defined as homeless if they do not have accessible and available accommodation that they are legally entitled to occupy, or if it is not reasonable for them to continue occupying their accommodation (Fitzpatrick, 2016; Kenway and Palmer, 2003). Meanwhile the most commonly agreed categories of homelessness amongst experts are statutory, non-statutory and hidden homelessness (Quilgars, 2011; Crisis, 2005).

5.4.1 - Statutory homelessness

When young people ask for and qualify for homelessness support from their local authority, they are 'statutorily homeless'.

As part of assessment for statutory homelessness, local authorities must apply three tests:

- Are they unintentionally homeless? Has a person or household done anything, or neglected to do something, that would result in them losing their home?
- Do they have a local connection? Has a person or household been living in the local authority? Do they have local employment connections? Do they have family links or a connection due to special circumstances?
- Do they have a priority need? Does the person have a priority need² under the Housing Act (1996) or the 2002 Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order?

Sector professionals argue that once young people turn 18 and therefore no longer qualify as a priority need through their age, it can be particularly difficult for them to demonstrate or communicate other vulnerabilities in order to continue being considered 'statutorily homeless':

"Once you turn 18 you're unlikely to be able to demonstrate that you're in any form of priority need unless I think the definition is you are substantially disadvantaged compared to the normal 18 year old. You have to demonstrate vulnerability and you have to have quite a significant insight into yourself to communicate your vulnerability to someone, certainly, to do so to a professional in a suit sat behind a desk in the local authority if you even get that far." Andrew Lorimer, Grenfell Housing and Training

5.4.2 - Non-statutory homelessness

The term 'non-statutory homeless' refers to those who have presented as homeless to their local authority but do not qualify for assistance either because they do not meet the legal definition of homelessness or, where they do meet this definition, where they are not a priority need or are deemed intentionally homeless.

The term is primarily used by the government and academics in data collections and literature, whereas experts working in the sector did not tend to use this term in our interviews. Instead, practitioners tended to define homeless solely in terms of whether a young person had a fit for purpose abode.

"It's having somewhere to call your own that you have the same bed every night. Somewhere that you can go to college or school from, that you can come home and make your tea. So if you don't have that, you know, you don't have a secure base - that's homelessness." Kim McMaster, Your Homes Newcastle

5.4.3 - Hidden homelessness

Hidden homelessness arises from the fact that in order to be categorised as homeless and to access support, young homeless people must present themselves to the authorities and fit within the tight parameters. As one expert explained:

"People have a perception of homelessness as being rough sleeping. Whilst there are a growing number of homeless people rough sleeping (typically in London), the majority of homelessness [experienced by] young people isn't visible. So, a young person could be homeless because they're living in a house with extended family and they have to put you up in the front room... you can have three generations or in fact four, living in a small house. That could be considered as homelessness, as is sofa-surfing and moving from friends to friends." Andrew Lorimer, Grenfell Housing and Training.

Even within these categories, young people's experiences can vary widely. For example, an individual who is sofa-surfing (temporarily staying with friends or family), sleeping rough or living in temporary accommodation could fall into the 'hidden homeless' category or the statutorily homeless or non-statutorily homeless categories, depending on whether or not they have made contact with their local authority and the subsequent response (see table 4).

Table 4

	Definition	Who qualifies for this status?	Accessible Support	Quality of data						
UK Statutory Homelessness	People who both ask for and qualify for assistance from their Local Authority under the main homelessness duty (Housing Act 1977; Housing Act 1996; Homelessness Act 1992).	Those who: are legally homeless and have asked their LA for assistance and have a local connection and are unintentionally homeless and qualify as a “priority need.”	A homeless person who has been given housing support by their Local Authority (access to council housing/hostel/private rented sector offer).	DCLG publish data collected from Local Authorities on the number of people who have been classified as “statutory homeless.”						
UK Non-Statutory Homelessness	People who ask for, but do not qualify for, assistance from their Local Authority under the main homelessness duty (Housing Act 1977; Housing Act 1996; Homelessness Act 1992).	Those who: have asked their LA for housing support and are either intentionally homeless or do not qualify as a priority need or are not considered homeless within the LA’s definition of homelessness.	<p>Individuals may be considered non-statutorily homeless because they do not meet the criteria for statutory homelessness. However, the support they receive depends on which criteria they do or do not fulfil:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Intentionally homeless and a priority need</td> <td>Intentionally homeless and not a priority need</td> <td>Not considered homeless</td> </tr> <tr> <td>May be able to access LA “prevention and support” relief: They may be entitled to short-term temporary accommodation from LA.</td> <td>May be able to access LA “prevention and support” relief: The LA has a duty to provide a person with housing advice and assistance, but no duty to provide housing support.</td> <td>No housing support provided by LA, but may be entitled to other forms of social support e.g. welfare support.</td> </tr> </table>	Intentionally homeless and a priority need	Intentionally homeless and not a priority need	Not considered homeless	May be able to access LA “prevention and support” relief: They may be entitled to short-term temporary accommodation from LA.	May be able to access LA “prevention and support” relief: The LA has a duty to provide a person with housing advice and assistance, but no duty to provide housing support.	No housing support provided by LA, but may be entitled to other forms of social support e.g. welfare support.	DCLG publish data collected from Local Authorities on the numbers of people who asked a Local Authority for assistance and were not deemed to be statutorily homeless. This is not always broken down by age.
Intentionally homeless and a priority need	Intentionally homeless and not a priority need	Not considered homeless								
May be able to access LA “prevention and support” relief: They may be entitled to short-term temporary accommodation from LA.	May be able to access LA “prevention and support” relief: The LA has a duty to provide a person with housing advice and assistance, but no duty to provide housing support.	No housing support provided by LA, but may be entitled to other forms of social support e.g. welfare support.								
Hidden Homelessness³	Those who experience homelessness, but have not approached their Local Authority for assistance. Therefore, the hidden homeless do not appear in government statistics.	All people who have not presented as homeless to their Local Authority, but who meet the ETHOS definition of homeless (see above).	<p>Homeless people who do not appear in government statistics. These homeless people may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rough sleepers - Sofa surfers (temporarily staying with friends or family) - Hostel dwellers/living in emergency accommodation - Households living in overcrowded conditions. <p>They will not receive any assistance or support unless they present to their local authority at which point they will be classed as either statutory or non-statutory homeless.</p>	There is a lack of government data on hidden homelessness. Statistics released by DCLG on rough sleeper counts are unreliable as rough sleepers need to have had some form of contact with LA and there is a considerable risk of double counting.						

³ An individual will qualify as a priority need if they fulfil one of the following criteria: aged 16 and 17 years old; aged 18 to 21 years old following being in local authority care aged 16 to 17 years old; aged 21 and over who are vulnerable as a result of leaving local authority care; pregnant; those with dependent children; those vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness, learning disability, physical disability or other special reason; those that are homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster; and, those that are vulnerable as a result of leaving the armed forces, leaving prison or fleeing domestic violence.

In Summary

Defining 'youth homelessness' is complex. As a result, legal definitions and definitions used by practitioners vary widely and often diverge.

- For the purpose of this report, we define 'youth' as young people between 16 and 24 years old. However, the upper and lower age limits of 'youth' are debated by practitioners working with young homeless people, with some suggesting that definitions should take maturity into account.
- Homelessness goes beyond the popular conception of 'sleeping rough' and includes all those lacking a 'physical', 'social' or 'legal' domain.
- The most commonly-agreed categories of homelessness include:
 - Statutory homelessness: where an individual approaches their local authority for support and is accepted as being: unintentionally homeless; having a local connection; and being a 'priority need', and is therefore given support.
 - Non-statutory homelessness: refers to those who have approached their local authority but been turned away for support as they do not meet the criteria for statutory homelessness.
 - Hidden homelessness: where an individual has not approached their local authority for support and therefore does not fit into either of the above categories. The hidden homeless are likely to be rough sleepers, sofa surfers, hostel dwellers or those living in overcrowded accommodation.





6

What does youth homelessness look like in the UK?



6.1 - How many young people are homeless?

The lack of agreed definition highlighted in section 4 makes it difficult to gauge the scale of the UK's youth homelessness problem.

13,020 16-24 year olds were accepted as statutorily homeless in 2016

But..

30,000 16-24 year olds turned away for support

And..

215,000 young people sofa-surf ...

39,000 sleep rough ...

Every night.

National figures only include statutory homelessness, and by excluding non-statutory and hidden homelessness, they fail to expose the full extent of the problem (Fitzpatrick et al, 2017). Meanwhile, reductions in services for young homeless people have made tracking ever more difficult.

"...we're finding [this year] that youth homelessness [in our data] has declined in Newcastle...So it's gone down from 300 to 200. We're mindful that this could be that youth services have diminished so we're maybe not getting the young people who are referred into the service because there's not as many other professionals out there working with young people. So we're not saying that youth homelessness is declining, but the number of referrals into the service has certainly dropped..."
Kim McMaster, Your Homes Newcastle

The lack of an "absolute measure of all instances" (Reynolds and Robinson, 2005, p.7) creates difficulties when tracking services' impact. One sector expert suggested that the gap between the number of young people seeking support and the number who are accepted as statutorily homeless is increasing.

"My concern is that across the board, the number of young people who turn up to local authorities for advice and information relating to housing and homelessness, compared to the number that are then accepted, there's a huge disparity and that disparity has grown over time." Sharon Brown, Youth Homelessness North East

6.1.1 - Statutory youth homelessness

In 2016, acceptances for statutory homelessness where the main applicant is aged 16-24 made up over one fifth of all acceptances (22%, 13,020). The large proportion of acceptances from this age group could be due to the fact that many people in this age group qualify as a 'priority need', either because they are aged 16 or 17, or because they are care leavers aged 18-21.

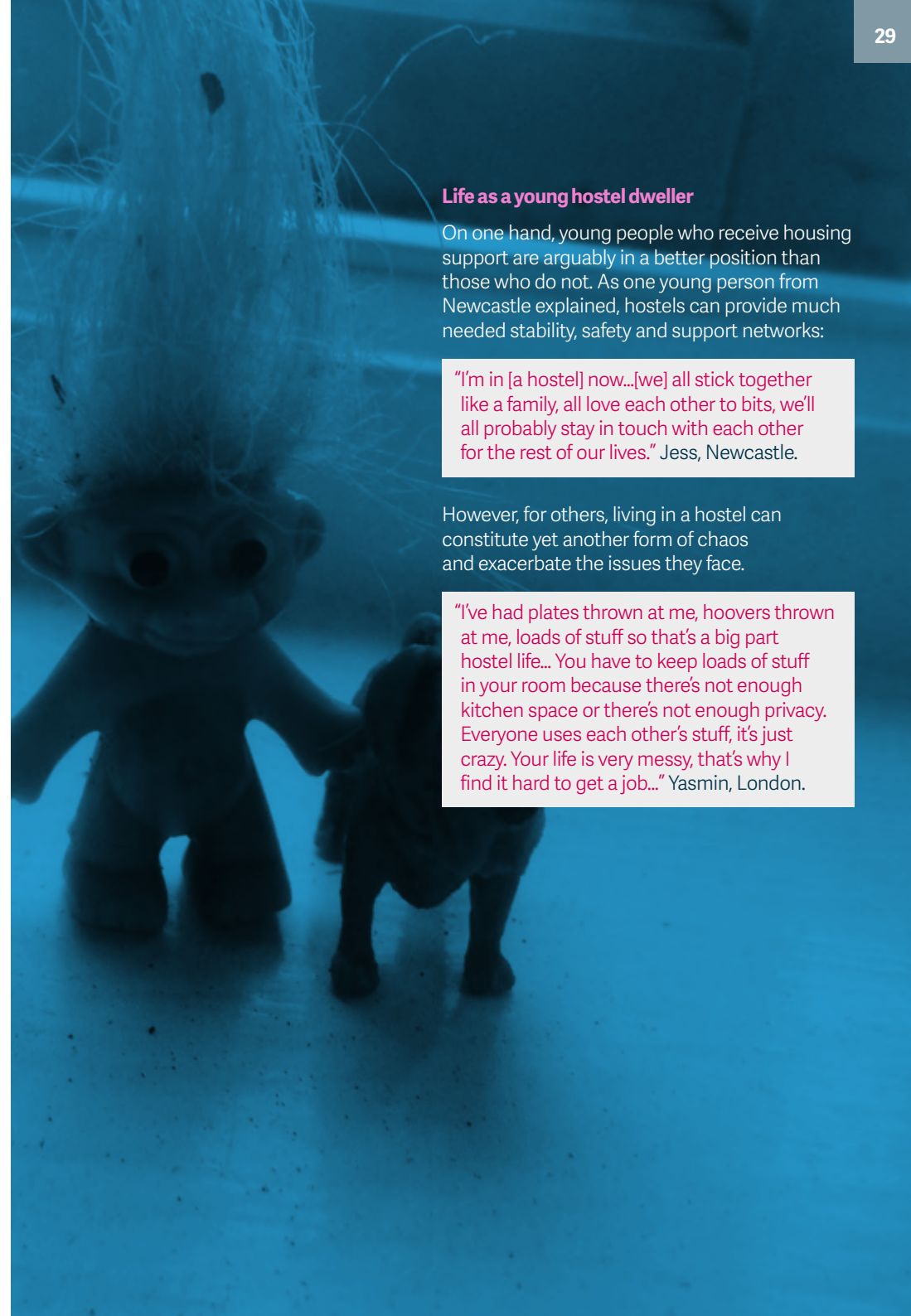
Life as a young hostel dweller

On one hand, young people who receive housing support are arguably in a better position than those who do not. As one young person from Newcastle explained, hostels can provide much needed stability, safety and support networks:

"I'm in [a hostel] now...[we] all stick together like a family, all love each other to bits, we'll all probably stay in touch with each other for the rest of our lives." Jess, Newcastle.

However, for others, living in a hostel can constitute yet another form of chaos and exacerbate the issues they face.

"I've had plates thrown at me, hoovers thrown at me, loads of stuff so that's a big part hostel life... You have to keep loads of stuff in your room because there's not enough kitchen space or there's not enough privacy. Everyone uses each other's stuff, it's just crazy. Your life is very messy, that's why I find it hard to get a job..." Yasmin, London.



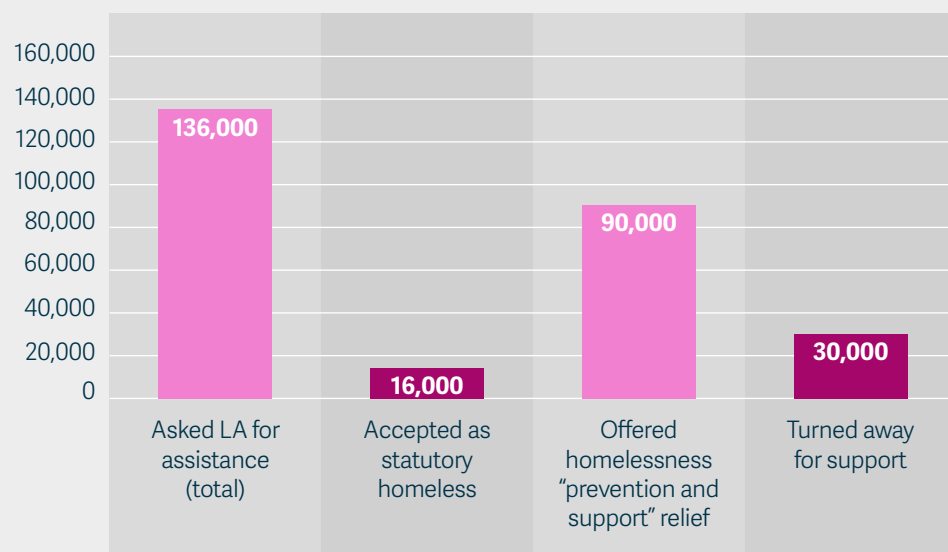
6.1.2 - Non-statutory youth homelessness

Most data on non-statutory homelessness does not disaggregate figures by age group, making it difficult to compile a complete and reliable picture of non-statutory youth homelessness (Youth Homelessness Databank, 2015). However, analysis by the Youth Homelessness Databank reveals that only a tiny proportion of those presenting as homeless are counted in statutory homeless figures. Only 12% (16,000) of those that

asked their local authority for assistance were classed and counted as statutorily homeless and nearly double that number were turned away (22%, 30,000). This suggests that many more homeless young people may not be counted due to their being deemed non-statutorily homeless (see figure 2).

Figure 2

Estimated number of 16-24 year olds in one year who present as homeless to a local authority by outcome (YHDB, 2015)



These figures are particularly concerning in light of sector experts' view that young people only tend to present to the local authority once they have 'exhausted' all other options.

"So, what we're finding, not surprisingly, is that young people don't live independently unless there's a need to. So they're not leaving home just on a whim... they've exhausted everything else, so they've maybe fallen out with their parents, have gone to live with grandparents... They've maybe been staying at one friend's one night and another friend's... they don't actually hit services until they've exhausted everything else." Kim McMaster, Your Homes Newcastle

Meanwhile, 66% of young people presenting as homeless were classed as non-statutorily homeless but received a form of "prevention and support" relief (Youth Homeless Databank, 2015). Forms of prevention and support relief include assistance to enter the private rental sector; clearance of rent arrears to avoid eviction; advice and assistance to stay with friends and family or a direct housing offer. However, many young people who receive such support still struggle to secure appropriate private rentals due to a shortage of affordable homes (Homeless Link, 2015). One practitioner we interviewed argued that this was particularly problematic in London.

"I have a particular concern for London... for anybody needing accommodation... there's such, such a crazy housing market now. Not only do people have very little chance of buying, but significant numbers have very little chance of renting of course for incomes that they're likely to achieve with their own skill set and qualifications and whatever the term is for local housing cut-rate. So even if they can get a property, and rent would only be helped up to a certain amount, so increasingly people are going to end up being further and further away from family and roots and all the support that brings with it." Barbara Dann, Grenfell Housing and Training

6.1.3 - Hidden homelessness: sofa-surfing and rough sleeping

1 - Rough sleeping

Rough sleepers are defined as “people about to bed down... or actually bedded down in the open air... or people in buildings not designed for habitation” (DCLG, 2013). Buildings not designed for habitation include places such as stairwells, cars and carparks.

According to DCLG figures, only 7% (288) of rough sleepers counted by local authorities in Autumn 2016 were under 25 years old. However, this appears to be a considerable underestimate of the true scale of the problem since research by Clarke et al. (2015) has estimated that in 2013/14, over 39,000 young people were sleeping rough on any one night. Underestimates are perhaps unsurprising given the difficulty of accurately counting rough sleepers and the inconsistency between how counts are carried out in different local authorities (Quilgars, 2011; Clarke et al, 2015).

One sector expert emphasised the particular importance of identifying rough sleepers given these young people’s extreme vulnerability and the risk that sleeping rough will exacerbate other issues such as substance abuse:

“Those who are street homeless are obviously very frequently victims of assault, they’re at risk of exploitation, they’re most likely to have comorbidity⁴ and mental ill health, and substance misuse, alcohol misuse.” Andrew Lorimer, Grenfell Housing and Training.

⁴The presence of one or more disorders occurring concurrently with a primary disease or disorder. For example, an individual suffering from depression also experiencing anxiety, substance addiction and/or obsessive-compulsive disorder.



Life as a young rough-sleeper

Despite being the most visible form of homelessness to the general public, rough sleepers are ‘hidden’ from local authorities and official data collections.

Roughly a quarter of the young people we interviewed told us that they had slept rough. Many young people who sleep rough do not receive appropriate welfare or housing support. One young person described how when they initially became homeless they slept on the streets and were unaware of the support available for them.

“I ended up going homeless for three months... when I had to go on the street and there was things... I’m not going to lie, there was things I’ve

done which I’m not proud of for making money... and after I’d gone through all that, someone recommended me to the homeless shelter and then they put me in to the hostel, and I’ve been there for a year now.” Ollie, Newcastle

Another described how, with no other care available, they depended on the support offered by another homeless person:

“Basically my dad just kicked me out and then if I didn’t have [my friend] I wouldn’t be probably here now, because he supported me and he was on the streets while I was on the streets. So he supported me a lot, he wouldn’t leave me or anything.” Jess, Newcastle.

Life as a young sofa-surfer

Almost all of the young people we worked with had sofa-surfed before entering supported housing. Given that there are currently no official statistics on the number of homeless people sofa-surfing (DCLG, 2016), these young people will often be unmonitored by local authorities and unlikely to be offered appropriate support (Reeve and Batty, 2011). Young people in Newcastle explained that sofa-surfing intensifies the chaotic nature of homelessness as it does not provide stability and can lead to rough sleeping.

“Luckily with me being in a band and stuff I made quite a lot of friends like when it came to gigs and having a big social circle I did have places where I could sofa-surf, but there wasn’t always guaranteed nights, so there actually was times when I had to go on the street, and I had to beg” Ollie, Newcastle.

Sofa-surfing can occur where young people move fluidly between parents’ homes without a fixed abode. Emily, another young person in Newcastle described sofa-surfing whilst maintaining a turbulent relationship with their familial home. She explained that a lack of stability made keeping track of personal belongings difficult:

“Because it was just like I was in two different houses, I would have to move on and I would always be carrying stuff, so it would be like my clothes and that. Sometimes I would leave most of my stuff at my mum’s and I wouldn’t be able to find it when I went back. So I would lose a lot of stuff just moving on.” Emily, Newcastle.

Experts explained that the instability of sofa-surfing creates practical and logistical issues that make it difficult for young people to access support and benefits.

“If you don’t have a regular place to call your own, not only do you not have a sense of belonging but where do you claim your benefits to? Where do people contact you at? So if they need housing benefit, or job seekers’, somebody needs to write to you, where does that go to? Your bank statement, your identity documents, where does it go? [Sofa-surfing] is homelessness too and that is as deleterious to the individual as street homelessness in many respects.” Andrew Lorimer, Grenfell Housing and Training

2 - Sofa-surfing

Sofa-surfing is common among the young hidden homeless and occurs where “young people move between different friends’ and family members’ sofas because they have nowhere else to go” (Clarke et al., 2015, p.1).

Recent studies of hidden youth homelessness across the nation have suggested that each night over 215,000 young people are sofa-surfing. Combined with the estimated figures on rough sleeping (see section 7.1.3.i) this amounts to 255,000 young people experiencing hidden homelessness every night (Clarke et al., 2015). This estimate is roughly 20 times larger than government figures for statutorily homeless young people (DCLG, 2016).

6.2 Who is young and homeless in the UK?

The paucity of official statistics on different forms of homelessness means that it is difficult to establish an accurate picture of the demographics of the young homeless population. However, recent research has pointed towards some important trends.

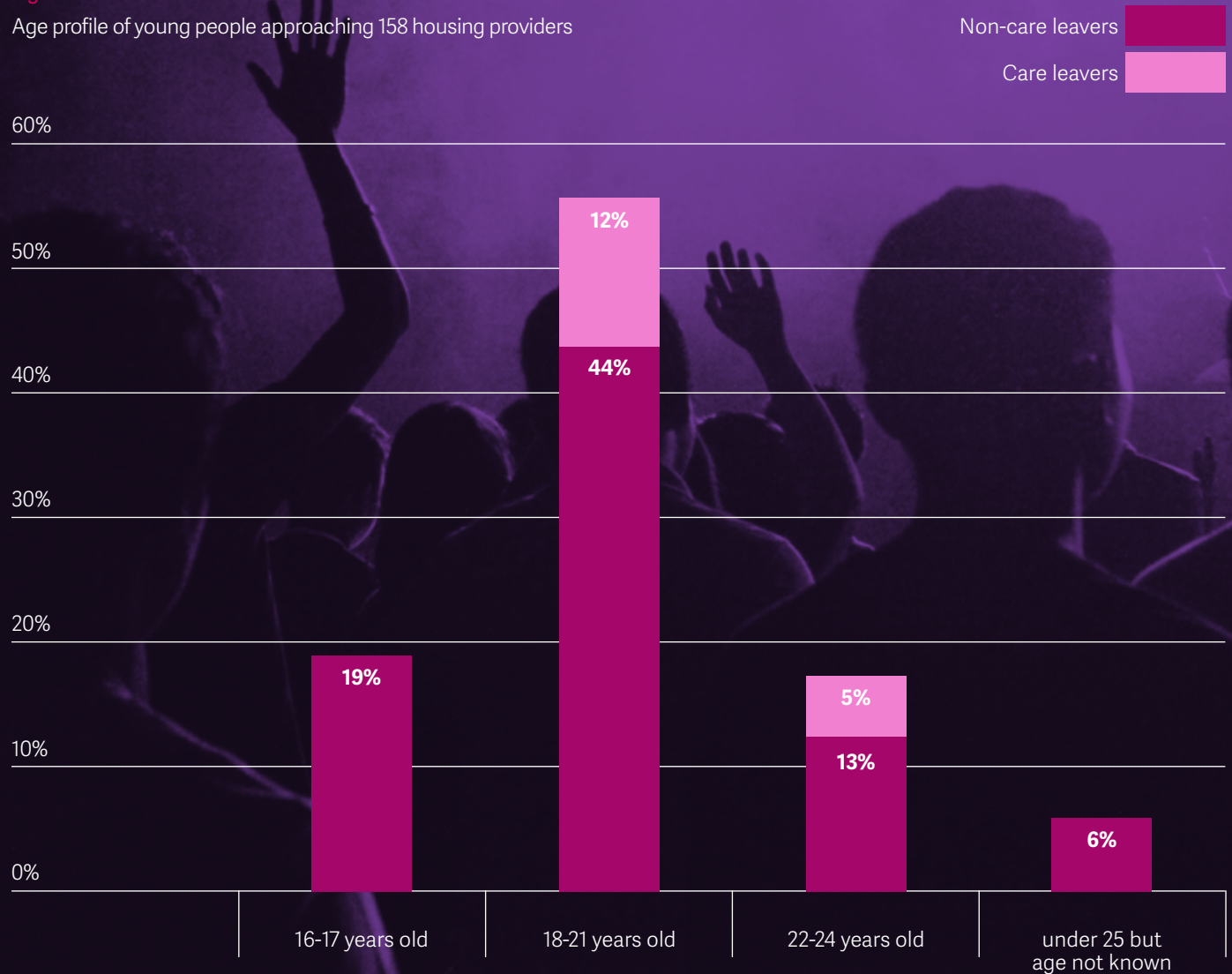
6.2.1 - Age

Local authority data on individuals accepted as statutorily homeless does not provide a detailed breakdown of homeless young people's ages within the 16-24 bracket. However, 158 housing providers across England provided Homeless Link with data on the ages of the young people using their services in 2015.

Most young homeless people are aged between 18 and 21 (56%) and nearly a fifth (19%) of young people using housing providers' services are under 18 (see figure 3). 17% of homeless young people are care leavers, with most aged between 18 and 21.

Figure 2

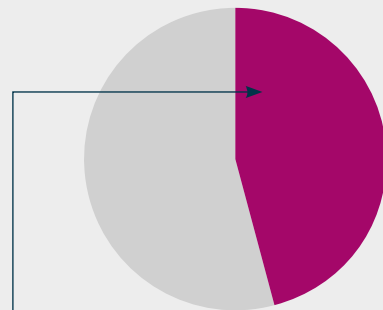
Age profile of young people approaching 158 housing providers



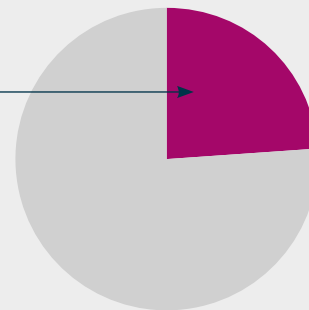
6.2.2 - At risk groups

Certain characteristics place young people at increased risk of experiencing homelessness. At-risk groups include:

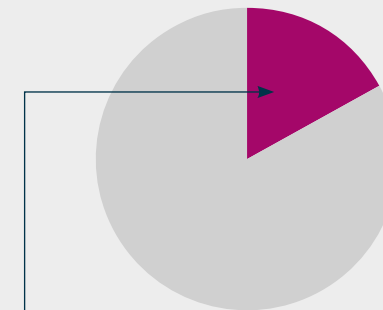
- Certain ethnic groups
- Males, though females make up a larger proportion of the young homeless population than of the overall homeless population.
- LGBT young people
- Young people with a history of youth offending
- Care leavers



46% of homeless young people are female



24% of young homeless people identify as LGBT, compared to 3-4% of young people nationally.



17% of young homeless people are care leavers compared to only 0.6% of young people nationally

1 - Ethnicity

Official statistics on youth homelessness are not broken down by ethnicity (DCLG, 2016). However, DCLG data on homeless people of all ages indicates that whilst ethnic minorities make up only 15% of the national population, 40% of the homeless population are from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (DCLG, 2016). Furthermore, research suggests that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups are more likely to experience overcrowding and be homeless (Reynolds and Robinson, 2005; Netto, 2006).

2 - Gender

In 2015, just under half (46%) of homeless young people were female. This proportion was estimated to have increased since the previous year when 40% of young homeless people were female. This proportion is also higher than that of the adult homeless population in which approximately 30% are female (Homeless Link, 2015).

3 - Sexuality and gender identity

Young people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) are more likely to be homeless than their non-LGBT peers. It was recently estimated that 24% of the young homeless community are LGBT compared to between 3% and 4% of young people nationally (Albert Kennedy Trust, 2015; Cull et al, 2006; Office of National Statistics (ONS), 2015). Unfortunately, this trend is invisible in government statistics (DCLG, 2016). It is therefore likely that many LGBT young people are not receiving appropriate and effective government support and that preventive policies are not being developed. The over-representation of LGBT young people in the homeless population is largely due to parental rejection, abuse from family members and the presence of aggression and violence in the home (Albert Kennedy Trust, 2015). We explore these factors in further detail in section 7.1.2.

4 - Youth Offending

In 2015, Homeless Link estimated that 14% of young homeless people had a history of offending. This compares to 22% of adult homeless people who have an offending record.

Experts explained that young people leaving prison or youth offending institutions were at increased risk of homelessness and highlighted a vicious cycle of incarceration followed by problems on release.

"A lot of young people will leave prison and just be like, "Okay, what do I do now, where do I go?" and will end up going back into the same cycle. So whether that's going to be homeless again or going through the gang route or going through the drugs route or what got them there in the first place. What we're trying to do is prevent rather than put a plaster over." Kiri Grant, Cardboard Citizens

5 - Care Leavers

Many care leavers struggle to transition into independent living, particularly where they lack a stable support network to advise them and to fall back on. As a result, care leavers are at considerable risk of homelessness (Whalen, 2015; Centrepoint, 2011).

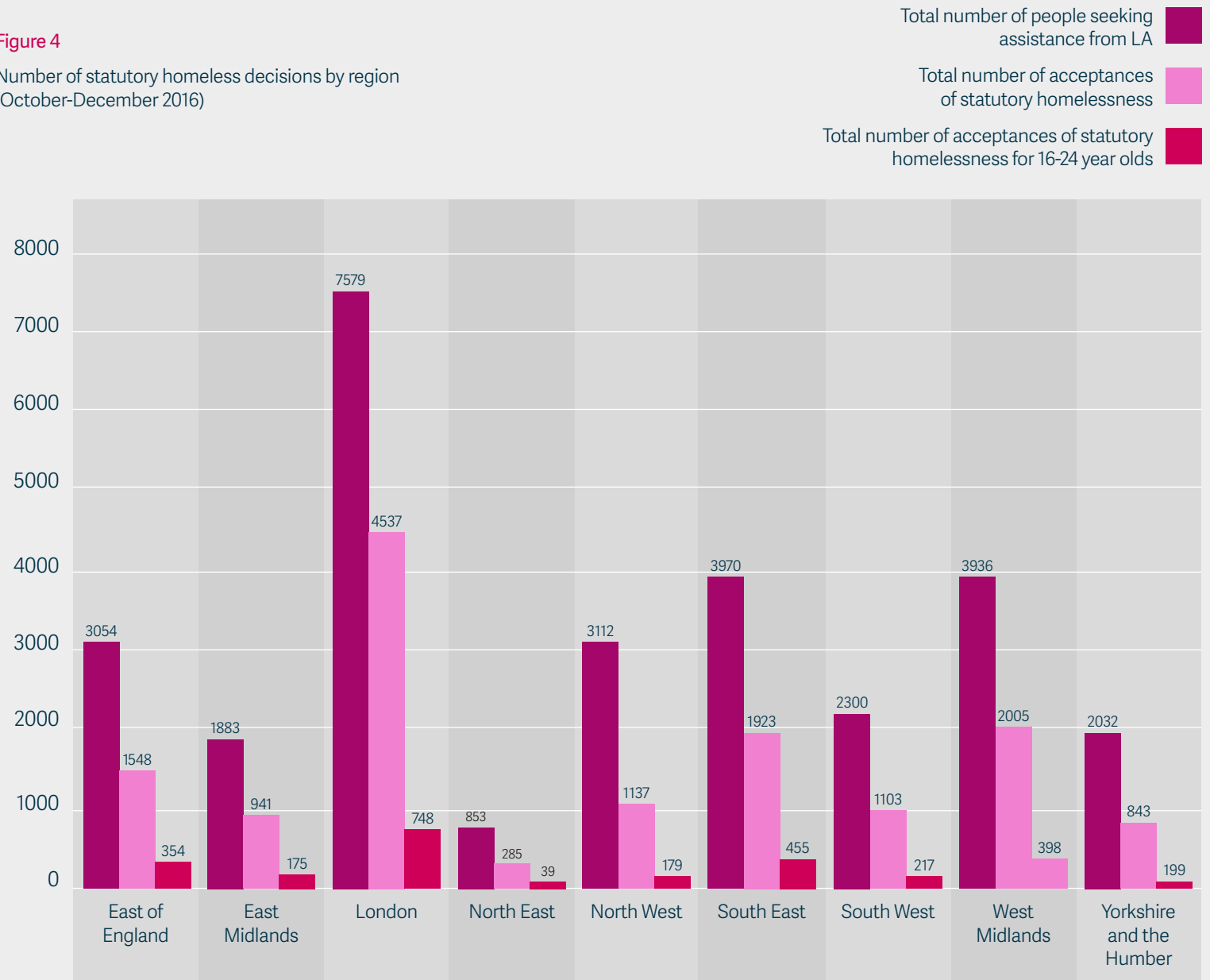
Estimates suggest that in 2015 care leavers formed 17% of the young and homeless population (Homeless Link, 2015) but only 0.6% of the national population aged under 18 (Zayed and Harker, 2015). In 2010, roughly 25% of the homeless population had been in care at some point of their lives (Department for Education, 2015).

6.3 - What does youth homelessness look like in different regions of England?

London has the highest recorded number of homeless young people (DCLG, 2016; Homeless Link, 2015; YHDB, 2016) but this is partly a consequence of its high overall population (see figure 4). Furthermore, other regions in England with smaller populations have seen recent rises in the number of young homeless people (Homeless Link, 2015).

Figure 4

Number of statutory homeless decisions by region (October-December 2016)



6.3.1 - Comparing Statutory and Non-Statutory Homelessness in London and the North East

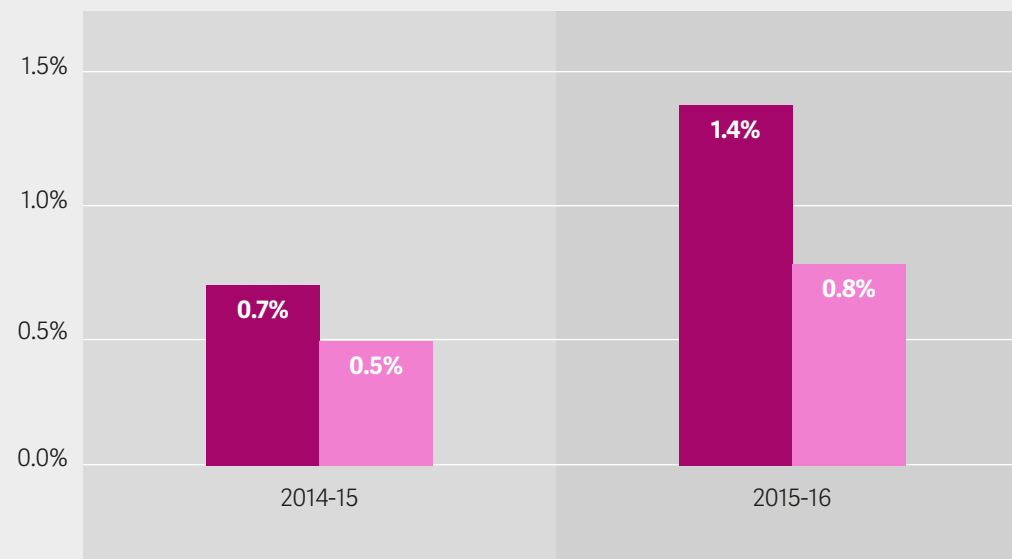
London has the highest number of young people who present as homeless to their local authority (7224 in 2015-16), considerably more than the number of young people who present as homeless in the North East (4302 in 2015-16). However, London's population is nearly three times greater than the population of the North East. Therefore, a greater proportion of the 16-24-year-old population in the North East present as homeless (1.4% compared to 0.8% in London, in 2015-16).

This trend has been apparent for a number of years and overall trends show an increase in the proportion of young people presenting as homeless in both regions as well as a growing gap between London and the North East. In the North East, the proportion of young people presenting to their local authority as homeless doubled between 2014-15 and 2015-16 (from 0.7% to 1.4%, see figure 5).

What happens to young people once they present as homeless also varies between regions. In London, nearly half (42.5%) of 16-24 year olds presenting to their local authority as homeless underwent a statutory homelessness assessment, compared to a quarter (25.5%) of those presenting in the North East (see figure 6). Subsequently, in the North East, very few of those who presented as homeless (3.5%) were accepted as statutorily homeless, compared to a quarter in London (see figure 6). This may suggest that a substantial proportion of homeless young people in the North East are not receiving the necessary assistance.

Figure 5

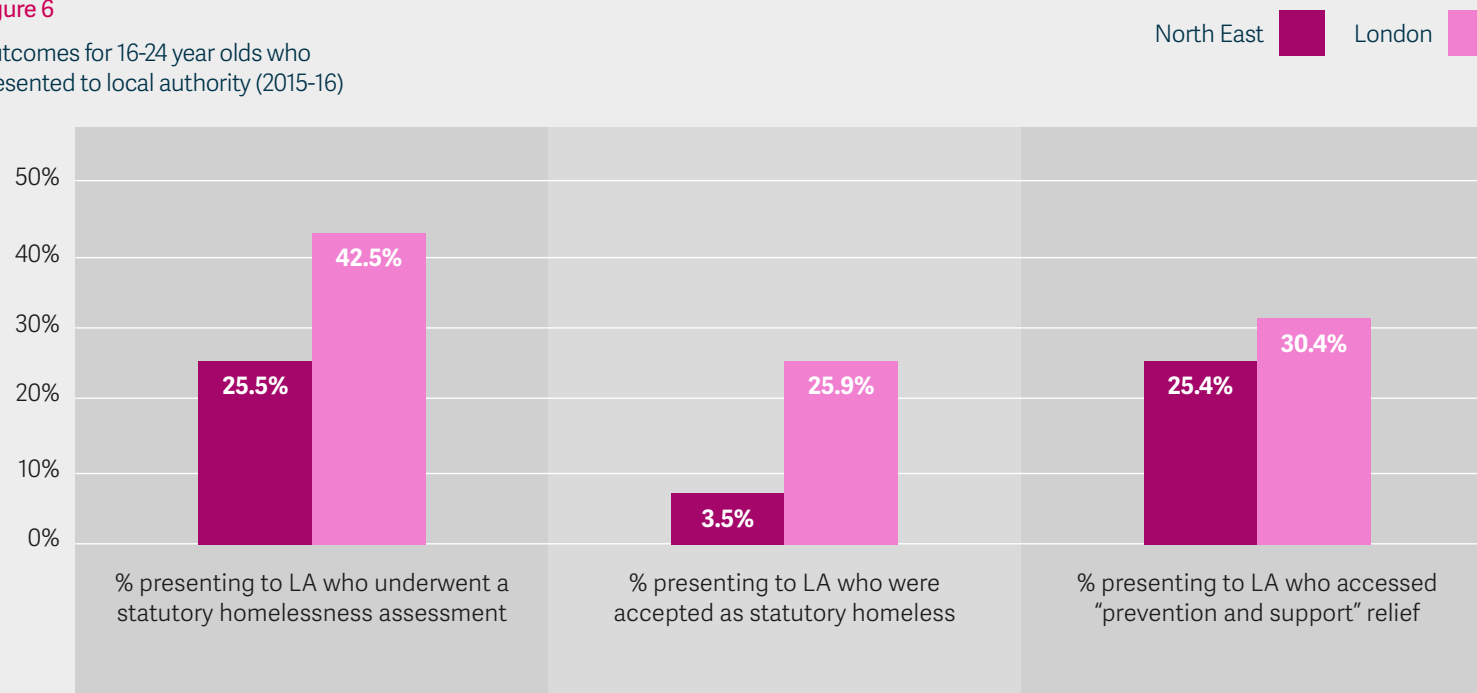
% of 16-24 population presenting to the local authority as homeless



Source: Youth Homelessness Databank, 2014-15, 2015-16.

Figure 6

Outcomes for 16-24 year olds who presented to local authority (2015-16)



Source: Youth Homelessness Databank, 2015-16.

In Summary

National figures only include statutory homelessness and data on other forms of homelessness is unreliable. Official data therefore fails to expose the true extent of youth homelessness in the UK. However, the data available and previous research shows that:

- In 2016 young people aged 16-24 made up nearly a fifth (22%) of acceptances for statutory homelessness.
- However, 16-24 year olds accepted as statutorily homeless are only a small minority (12%) of the total number of young people that approach their local authority for support. The majority are offered 'prevention and support relief' and many are turned away (22%).
- On any one night, up to 39,000 young people sleep rough and 215,000 sofa surf (Clarke et al. 2015).

There are striking contrasts between the situations in London and the North East:

- Proportionally, more young people presented as homeless to their local authority in the North East (14%) than in London (0.8%), (Youth Homelessness Databank, 2015-16)
- In London, young people presenting as homeless to their local authority were considerably more likely to undergo an assessment, be accepted as statutorily homeless or receive 'prevention and support' relief, than young people in the North East.

The poor quality of data on young homeless people makes it difficult to establish demographic trends, however, it suggests that:

- Most homeless young people are aged 18-21
- Black and ethnic minority young people may be more at risk of youth homelessness as they are overrepresented in the adult homeless population
- Previously more young men than young women were homeless, however, recently the gap has narrowed with the proportion of young homeless women rising to 46%
- LGBT young people are more likely to be homeless than their non-LGBT peers
- Young offenders and care leavers are at a greatly increased risk of becoming homeless

7

What does youth homelessness look like in the UK?



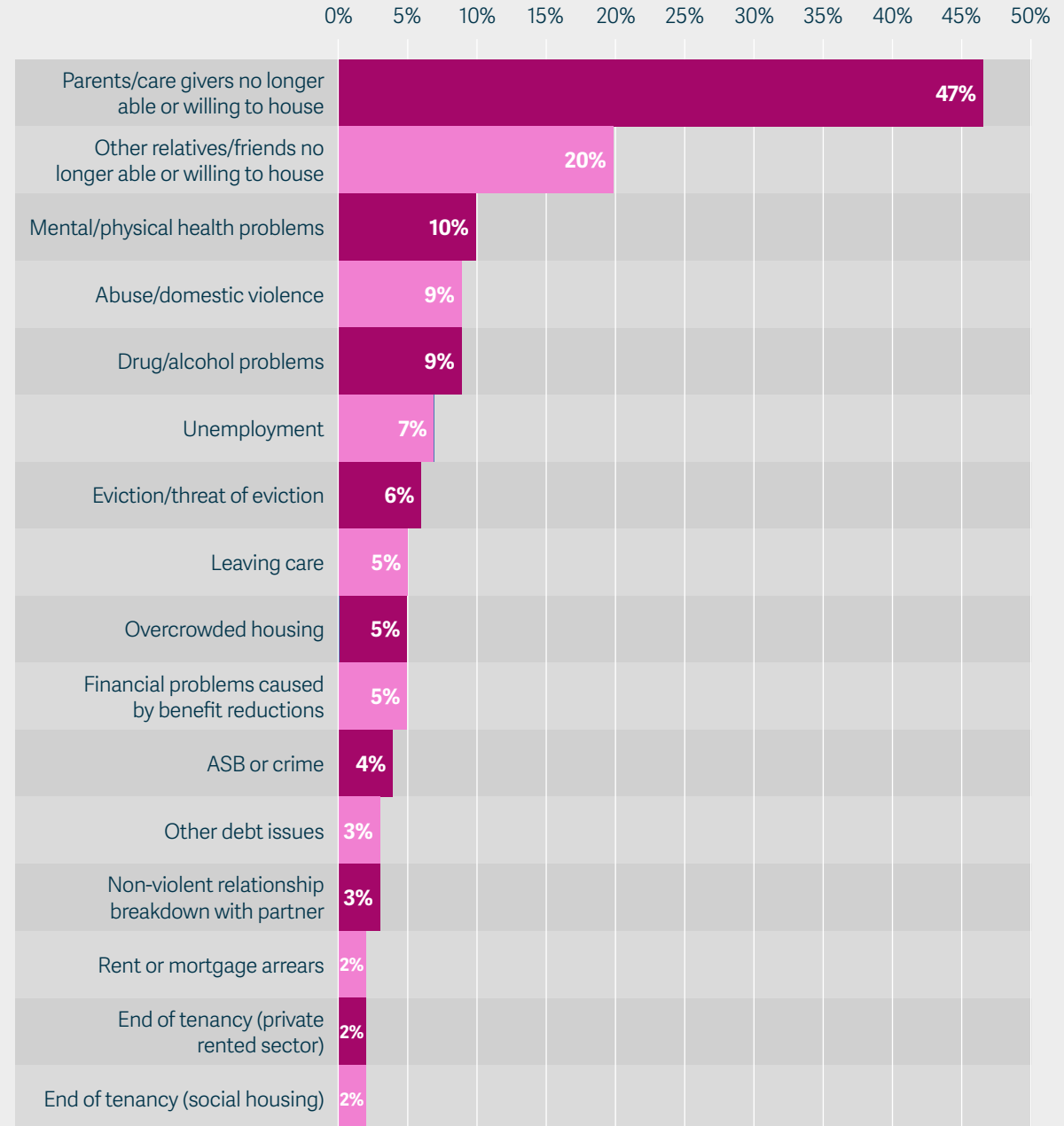
The main causes of homelessness that are consistently highlighted in the literature include:

- Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate young people: This is often due to familial relationship breakdown which in turn is linked to a variety of other factors including: abuse, difficult behaviour, breakdown of support networks, substance abuse, mental health and discrimination suffered by LGBT young people.
- Poverty: This can involve problems of overcrowding and unsuitable housing.
- Leaving care: This frequently involves a lack of support and insufficient skills for independent living.
- Economic and policy factors: Particularly important factors include a lack of support services and unemployment.

It is clear however that no single factor causes homelessness, instead numerous factors interact over an extended period, eventually resulting in homelessness (Homeless Link, 2015).

Figure 7

Reasons young people making contact with third sector homelessness organisations became homeless (2015)



Source: Homeless Link Youth Homelessness Survey 2015: Providers: N-149

Similarly, as part of our research, young people explained how a multitude of events and experiences over extended periods came together to result in their homelessness. For example, Ollie explained how the abuse he had experienced and the unexpected death of his grandfather had led to him 'resorting to' drugs and self-harm. Ultimately this behaviour meant that he was thrown out of his father's home and he became homeless. Similarly, for Andrzej,

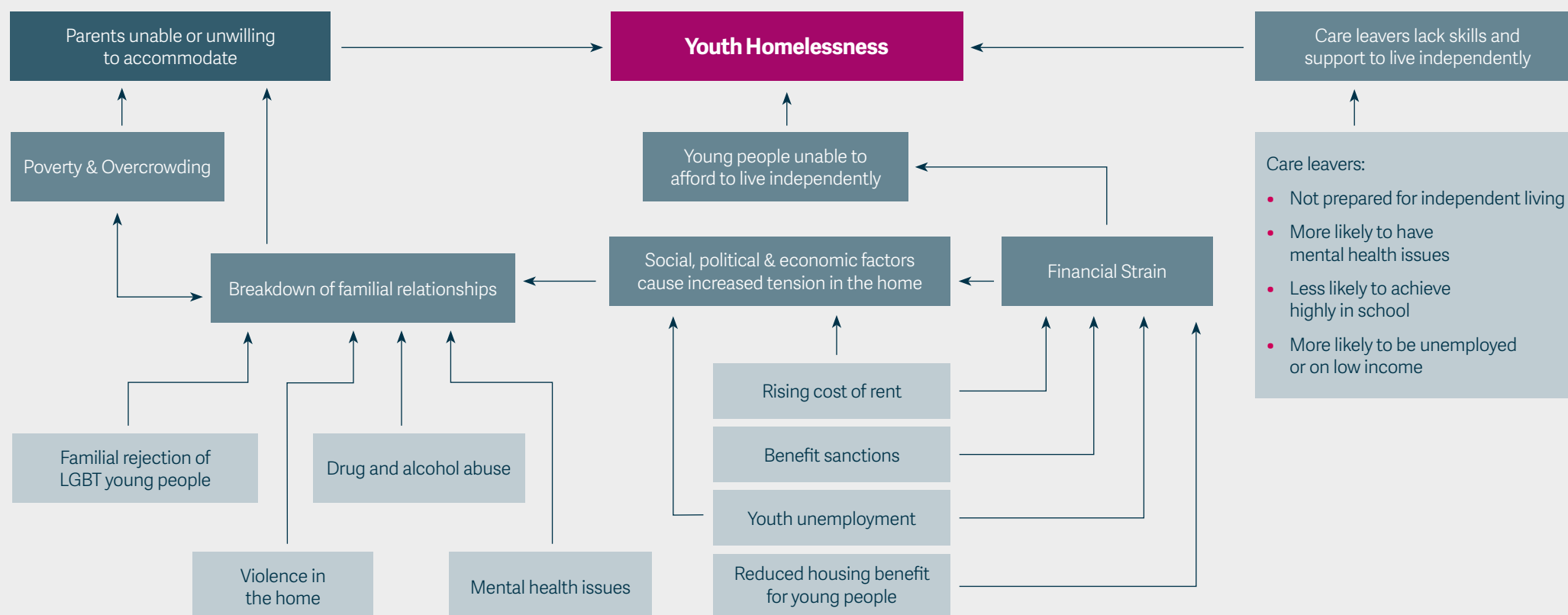
a number of factors over the course of his childhood and adolescence, including abuse, his father becoming homeless and his rejection of his mother's strict rules eventually culminated in the complete breakdown of his relationship with his mother and him becoming homeless.

As Centrepont (2016, p6) suggest, the interconnected nature of both macro and micro level causal factors can make effective prevention particularly difficult. Given the

personal and familial nature of many of the contributing factors, there are also limits to how much the government or systems can intervene in the traditionally private sphere.

"[Effective prevention] would require sustainable solutions to a range of systemic social problems that affect the most disadvantaged young people in society, including long-term unemployment, family breakdown, substance abuse and the UK's housing crisis."

Figure 8
Factors affecting youth homelessness



7.1 - Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate

Homeless Link (2015) suggests that the most commonly-stated reason why young people seek housing support is that their parents or care givers are no longer able or willing to provide a home. Our interviews with young people demonstrated that this in turn could be due to a range of factors including:

- Poverty
- Relationship breakdown
- Bereavement

We now explore each of these three factors in more detail.

7.1.1 - Poverty

Poverty can result in poor housing or overcrowded housing, overly scarce resources and heightened risk of family breakdown. Each of these can contribute to a heightened risk of homelessness and as we explore below, these issues have numerous links to and implications for education.

In 2014/15, 21% of the UK's population were living in relative income poverty, after housing costs (McGuinness, 2016). Many young people therefore experience problems with accommodation associated with poverty and these young people are at greater risk of becoming homeless. Young people are particularly likely to experience poverty and according to Watts et al. (2015), it is "the disproportionate experience of poverty among young people, rather than their youth, per se" that explains the relatively high proportion of young people who experience homelessness.

1 - Poor or overcrowded housing

Overcrowding of homes is symptomatic of poverty (Field, 2010). It is estimated that 5% of young homeless people leave home due to this issue (Clarke et al, 2015; Homeless Link, 2015).

"An example of somebody that I'm working with... She is living in a bedroom which has had just a partition put down the middle so that she and another sister can share it. In what was the family living room, an older sibling has moved in with her partner and I think it's two or three young children. So, you've got different generations...there's an awful lot of tension in that home because the older sibling is very bullying towards the other siblings...she would very likely be a candidate who'll be pushed out because of the friction that is going on." Barbara Dann, Grenfell Housing Association

Poverty and overcrowding can make young people feel forced out of their familial home because it is not tenable for them to live there. It can also lead to young people being unable to lean on members of their support network once relationships have broken down.

"So I went to live with my nanna...But she also got sick of me after a while and she then just called a hostel and sent me to a hostel. She said, 'Look, you can't live here forever because it's a house with three other people living, well, five altogether.'" Josh, Newcastle

2 - Scarce resources

Where carers only have limited resources, sharing these can be difficult to sustain over time.

"I lived with my step-dad for a little bit but he kind of got sick of me. Because obviously he's on benefits and that and you've got to survive on the food that you've got, don't you? When you've got two adult men eating on one portion of food he got annoyed about me eating his food." Josh, Newcastle

Meanwhile, some young people who - for a time - live independently, may go on to become homeless due to financial instability and the consequent poverty. Jerome, one of the young people we worked with, had lived independently in his grandparents' house following their deaths but was eventually unable to support himself financially and maintain the house, leading to him becoming homeless.

"...it was really bad, the kind of disrepair, there was fungus, foxes, rats, asbestos, it wasn't a good situation. I was living on £5 a week. It was so bad that sometimes it was actually more comfortable to sleep on the streets than in that place because there was hardly any heating." Jerome, London

3 - Family friction

Overcrowding and scarce resources like that experienced by Josh and his father can heighten family frictions. Indeed, previous research has demonstrated a tendency for poverty to damage interpersonal relationships between family members and thus to increase stresses in the family home (Conger et al, 2000; Katz et al, 2007).

Similarly, Tunstall et al. suggest that overcrowding exacerbates the breakdown of relationships with parents and care givers (Tunstall et al, 2013) and in one survey, 77% of families living in overcrowded homes felt that overcrowding negatively affected family relationships (Reynolds and Robinson, 2005). Youth homelessness is therefore frequently a consequence of the stress of poverty itself combined with the strain on personal relationships it creates (Homeless Link, 2015).

Poverty and Education

Poverty, homelessness and educational challenge or upheaval are deeply interlinked.

There are well documented links between poverty and poor educational attainment (Shaw et al. 2017). Practitioners working with young homeless people explain how poverty and other interlinked issues can cause young people to disengage from education at an early age.

“[The] link to education I think is really key because the young people that we see are, 99% I would say, have disengaged with education at a much earlier stage. And that’s because of the circumstances that they’re living in, whether it’s difficulties within their family, whether it’s poverty, whether it’s broken homes...they’ve all had that chaotic background with some serious issues there and school has not been a priority.” Sharon Brown, Youth Homelessness North East

Overcrowding presents practical problems for engagement in education. For example, young people living in overcrowded homes lack privacy to do schoolwork, and disruption to sleep patterns can affect concentration. Shelter’s study of families in overcrowded homes found that:

- 82% of families felt overcrowding caused harm to children’s education, and
- 79% felt reading and homework were more difficult.

Meanwhile, sector experts explained that poverty, education and homelessness can become a vicious cycle since poor attainment means that young people who are at risk of homelessness due to poverty are less likely to secure the qualifications they need to be successful in the labour market. They may also subsequently struggle to re-engage in education if they have attained poorly since options like apprenticeships can sometimes exacerbate poverty.

“Young people who are more likely to become homeless have a lower educational achievement because they often come from families with poverty... so when you look at young people coming from troubled backgrounds, their educational achievement is low and then to try and engage again, is difficult. So we’re trying to find suitable courses, apprenticeships are obviously being really driven at the moment, but the actual success rate of apprenticeships is quite low because young people aren’t really getting paid very well for it.” Michael Nastari, Stonewall Housing

These challenges can make it hard for young people to escape homelessness and live independently in the future.

Though a hardship allowance to support vulnerable young people is included in apprenticeship funding, many young people do not know about it, training providers lack knowledge on how to support these young people and funds are often absorbed by training providers. Furthermore, when young people gain an apprenticeship, the recalculation of benefits is frequently subject to long delays, which, when money is recalled, can result in debt, a reduction in wages and further hardship for young people.

7.1.2 - Relationship breakdown

Amongst the young people we interviewed, the most common reason for parents being unwilling or unable to continue to house young people was a breakdown in family relationships. This was in turn often “a consequence of long-term conflict within the home” (Quilgars et al, 2008, p.7). Yasmin, a young person in London currently living in supported housing, had long struggled to maintain positive interactions with her mother which had a damaging impact on all her family's relationships. Argument became increasingly tense and aggressive until one day, during a fight, her mother asked her to leave. For Yasmin, like many other young people, the breakdown of relationships was gradual but the situation eventually became untenable.

“Even though this was the house I was born in and raised in, I just felt like I had never been really welcome here. So I just wiped my feet and thought you know what I'm not looking back. I still love you, but just from a distance, and that's what it was.” Yasmin, London

The most commonly-cited factors leading to relationship breakdown in interviews with young people, experts and a review of literature were:

- Abuse in the family home
- Poor behaviour in the family home
- Breakdown of support networks due to bereavement
- Substance abuse
- Mental health issues
- Familial rejection of LGBT young people (Homeless Link, 2015; Watts, 2015; Centrepint, 2016).

We explore each of these briefly below.

1 - Abuse

Experiences of domestic violence are common amongst both homeless men and women, however, domestic violence plays a particularly important role in women's transitions to homelessness. Homeless women of any age are more likely to have experienced domestic violence than their male counterparts with 54% of homeless women having experienced violent abuse from a partner compared to 16% of men. Meanwhile 43% of homeless women have experienced violence from a family member compared to 22% of men (Reeve and Batty, 2011).

Almost all of the young people we interviewed reported experiencing abuse before becoming homeless and roughly half reported having experienced physical abuse. One young person explained how the abuse she experienced meant she intentionally left home as she no longer felt safe or comfortable.

“Why did I leave home? I left home because I didn't get along with my parents and I was going through abuse at the time... and then I thought that there was something I had to do about it because I didn't want to be in a situation where I felt like I couldn't be here because it doesn't feel like home.” Laila, Newcastle

This finding is consistent with research showing that young people who have experienced violent abuse from a partner or family member are more likely to become homeless (Homeless Link, 2015; Watts et al, 2015). In many cases, these young people feel that in order to be safe, they have no option other than to leave the family home. This can result in them uprooting themselves from their base to move to a

safer place where they can access support from other family members, or networks outside of their immediate family home.

“I am close to my dad because he saved me from me mam's boyfriend when he was battering us and when everybody called me a liar including my mam. Me dad didn't then he took me away from it to live with him. He is my hero and I will never forget what he's done for me.” Jess, Newcastle

Experts and practitioners particularly highlighted breakdowns in relationships between young people and their step-parents. Similarly, three young people highlighted that their relationships with step-parents had sparked wider family breakdown with some reporting abuse by step-parents.

“Well me and my mum got along quite a lot from about the age of seven and then she met my stepdad which obviously turns the world to shit as most people would say... There was a time where I was actually locked in my room, took the door handles off, they nailed my windows, I wasn't allowed out... for three days...” Ollie, Newcastle

Abuse can also indirectly heighten the risk of a young person becoming homeless, as violence in the home - and the consequent breakdown of familial relationships, has a damaging impact on children's development and wellbeing (HM Government, 2014). Meltzer et al, (2009) shows that the prevalence of emotional and behavioural issues is higher amongst children who have witnessed domestic violence. Meanwhile abuse can also result in mental health problems and a heightened risk of substance abuse. This too can further contribute to relationship breakdown and the risk of homelessness.

The young people we worked with were well aware of how their experiences of abuse had affected them and how this in turn had contributed to further familial breakdown and, eventually, their homelessness.

“I was living with my mum and it was just our relationship was breaking down... My younger sister, because she's so young she doesn't understand a lot of the times why I can be angry at my family, because she hasn't been through what I have, so a lot of the time there's also a breakdown in relationship between me and her. Because she may see me getting angry at my mum for being quite neglectful at times I feel and not understand.” Yasmin, London

“My mum thought, because my dad was hitting me with anything, so my mum would charge out with anything she can get her hands on... because I'd been hit so many times I started to rebel against my mum. Go and laugh in my mum's face... And that's when I started picking up patterns, same behaviour as my dad. Basically being abusive, not listening. My fault, but not listening, stuff like, I can't say it, I'm struggling to say it, overall, physically, emotionally abusive... like I said, I don't want to be like my dad. Said that to my mum when she kicked me out.” Andrzej, Newcastle

Abuse at home, the impact on education

The impact of abuse can start to play out in education long before young people become homeless, as a result of emotional and behavioural problems and social withdrawal or problems with trust.

Children and young people experiencing the after-effects of abuse-related trauma frequently exhibit their internal turmoil behaviourally, by acting out in school or by withdrawing and disengaging in class. Meanwhile social withdrawal and problems with trust are also common responses. This can make it difficult for schools and teachers to engage young people facing such issues:

"If you think about some of the background of the young people that we work with... many of them have been abused whether that's sexually, physically or mentally. Many of them have been brought here in very chaotic backgrounds without a lot of stability. They also have very poor social skills often, and I think a lot of that comes down to confidence. You know that stereotype of somebody with their cap on not making eye contact, until you've built a relationship with somebody then that's what you're going to get. It takes time to develop that and I think a lot of the young people that we see have been disengaged from education at a very early stage." Sharon Brown, Youth Homelessness North East

This was mirrored in the young people's descriptions of how abuse impacted their confidence and willingness to trust others.

"If maybe you've been abused or all kinds of things like it affects you in life because you feel like you're going to have to stick up for yourself in every situation. So you're either quite defensive and untrustworthy and you're kind of not as confident when you're doing things." Yasmin, London

"The trust issues come from because I've seen things that I shouldn't really had to see. With my mum having lot of different boyfriends, I trusted them and they end up beating my mum and doing mad things to us." Josh, Newcastle

2 - Poor behaviour and conflict in the family home

Disruptive behaviour during adolescence and care giver's handling of it can cause conflict which results in young people being asked to leave the family home (Smith et al, 1998).

For young people, especially where parents have prioritised the safety of younger siblings, this can be a difficult experience. As one young woman from Newcastle explained:

"I got kicked out me dad's because of my behaviour... I became homeless because my dad didn't really let me have no leeway, I had to be in for 7:00 and stuff and I never really got to sleep out, so that impacted on my behaviour towards... the family home. And so he got sick of me, and because my eleven year old brother was living there, he had to put him first instead of me, so he ended up kicking me out." Jess, Newcastle

Some research suggests that homeless young people from 'non-disrupted homes', in which young people have grown up with the same parents or step-parents for a long period of their childhood, were more likely to become homeless as a result of the young person's own behaviour. In contrast, young homeless people from 'disrupted homes' - where the household had changed as a result of divorce or a new step-parent were more likely to have become homeless as a direct result of a parent-child dynamic (Smith et al, 1998). For girls, the most

common conflict relating to their behaviour pertained to boyfriends that were deemed undesirable. For boys, issues with behaviour most often stemmed from poor behaviour in school, drug taking or trouble with the police. These themes: conflict surrounding a young person's romantic relationships; young people's behaviour in school; and, drug taking were all reported by the young people we worked with.

Andrzej, for example, became homeless partly because his mother disapproved of him having a British girlfriend after he refused two arranged marriages. Meanwhile others described their poor behaviour in school, sometimes as a result of drug taking (see section 7.1.2.iii) as the catalyst for their transition to homelessness

"I haven't experienced the full gypsy experience because my mum and dad they had an arranged marriage, they grew up from very, very traditional families. My grandma arranged two arranged marriages, which I didn't accept. Family weren't happy about that. And ever since I met my British girlfriend, it went completely downhill." Andrzej, Newcastle

"It's because I used to take all the drugs and that and I used to come in wrecked and that, and my little sister was there once so it wasn't any good, so I got kicked out." Evan, Newcastle



Behaviour in school, homelessness and exclusion

Behaviour that is problematic in the home and the circumstances that lead to it, are frequently problematic in school. Schools' difficulties responding can then further exacerbate problems.

Whilst experiencing homelessness young people are more likely to behave poorly, including by displaying "aggression, impulsivity and hyperactivity" (Harker, 2006). Meanwhile, prior to homelessness, poor behaviour can be a tell-tale sign of issues associated with being at risk of homelessness, such as substance abuse and family difficulties (Stirling and Amaya-Jackson, 2008; Ali et al, 2011). Poor behaviour in turn negatively affects academic achievement and relationships with others in school (Harker, 2006).

Severe behavioural issues can lead to young people at risk of homelessness being excluded from mainstream education. The experience of multiple exclusions from school can generate further instability, leading to a sense of marginalisation and further difficulties engaging in education.

In some cases, alternative provision following permanent or temporary school exclusion is inadequate or in short supply and where necessary support is unavailable the quality of a young person's education is likely to suffer. The resulting poor educational attainment can then hamper transitions into the labour market, in turn placing them at risk of homelessness, as Kim McMaster explained:

"They've got an option of going on to a pupil referral unit, the PRU. So they're much smaller classes. But sometimes with their behaviour, they can't even cope with that sort of setting, so they then end up having one to one sessions and sometimes only being a 45-minute timetable per day and then when you're expecting them to be able to leave school and hold down a job when they haven't been used to getting up, getting themselves sorted, committing to something for 6-7 hours a day, you don't stand much chance of them being in employment."
Kim McMaster, Your Homes Newcastle

"When I moved in to [Pupil Referral Unit], I started going with people who would cause trouble on a daily basis and then I didn't want to get kicked out because that was the last school I would go to, so I changed, but then I ended up getting kicked out for something else. I didn't go to school then, I went to the library for forty-five minutes a day." Emily, Newcastle

3 - Substance abuse

Drug and alcohol abuse is common amongst the young and homeless (Wincup et al, 2003; Culhane, 2005). Furthermore, substance abuse, both by family members and young people themselves can contribute to family breakdown and consequently, homelessness. Roughly a third of the young people we spoke to mentioned a chaotic spiral related to substance abuse and the impact this had on relationships in the family home. Some had become homeless as a result of substance abuse and the strain that this placed on relationships with their parents:

"I got that hooked on LSD that I went to a party and someone offered me this new form of hallucinogenic, and it was called TCBY... And I ended up overdosing on it and taking a bit too much and I couldn't see properly for two weeks straight... And then my dad didn't know what to do with us, my mind was a bit messed up, I was a bit fried, my brain was a bit fried from that drug specifically, and I ended up going homeless for three months"
Ollie, Newcastle

Though some suggest that substance abuse is more likely to be a consequence than a cause of youth homelessness (Hartwell, 2003; Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000), substance abuse undoubtedly puts a strain on family relationships. Homeless Link reported that 9% of homeless young people said their homelessness was in some-way instigated by drug and alcohol issues (Homeless Link, 2015).

As Ollie went on to describe, parents and carers' substance abuse is also linked to youth homelessness due to the resulting tension in the home leading to the breakdown of family relationships (Reynolds and Robinson, 2005; Smith and Bruegel, 1999).

"My stepdad didn't like me very much, my mum loved me to bits but then she started getting into drugs with my stepdad taking coke, my stepdad started becoming abusive."
Ollie, Newcastle

Issues like these can lead to a young person feeling that they have no choice but to leave the family home and thus to become homeless (Reynolds and Robinson, 2005).

Substance abuse, homelessness and education

Whether causing or caused by homelessness, substance abuse has a considerable negative impact on young people's educational experience and success (Mentor, 2013). Drug and alcohol abuse can make it less likely that a young person will effectively engage with activities such as homework or revision outside school. This has clear implications for engagement and attainment. Substance abuse is also likely to result in behavioural difficulties in school as well as negatively impacting attendance.

"It's because I used to take drugs since I was 13 or 14, and... it just messed with my head... and I just never really used to listen in school and... I just failed my GCSEs. But at the time I didn't really care about them, I just thought there was no point in them. But now if I was back at school I would stick in now... Then I was offered a job and a course being a prep chef but then I got kicked off that job... I was going out every night, straight after work getting pissed, and I would come to work pissed, come to work off it every day. So I was gutted at the time like, and I still am gutted now, because I could have been a head chef in just under a year." Evan, Newcastle

Schools and colleges - and safeguarding leads in particular - need to recognise the interplay between substance abuse, homelessness and poor educational engagement. They should recognise substance abuse as both a potential warning sign and a risk factor for homelessness.

Mental health in education

Mental illness' impact on attention, concentration, attendance and motivation can make it difficult for a young person to engage successfully with education.

Not only do mental health issues increase the risk of a young person becoming homeless, poor mental health is closely related to negative experiences of education and poor attainment. One in ten children and young people have a diagnosed mental health issue, amounting to three in every classroom. Schools and GP services have frequently and increasingly highlighted the difficulty of accessing support for pupils (Frith, 2016; Thorley 2016).

Certain elements of education and school life can also place pressure on young people which may cause or exacerbate mental health issues. Exam pressure for example is cited as the second most common source of anxiety for young people, after family difficulties (NSPCC, 2015).

Three quarters of students say they have struggled with mental illness (NUS, 2015) and one sector expert we spoke with described her experience working with some young people who became homeless during university due to mental health issues.

"There were a number of young people who I've worked with who've gone to university and not been able to cope, so they've completely dropped out as well. You've also got young people mixed up in this group who have got some very serious diagnosed mental health issues that come out a little bit later. So they might have been high achievers but then they get to a stage where it's all too much for them." Sharon Brown, Youth Homelessness North East

4 - The impact of poor mental health on familial relationships

Poor mental health is associated with youth homelessness (Homeless Link, 2015; Watts et al, 2015) and experts explained that whilst mental health issues could lead to homelessness, homelessness could also result in significant deterioration of mental health, making it difficult for young people to cope or to 'get back on track':

"A lot of street homelessness can be down to people's mental health or if they become street homeless, their mental health does deteriorate because it's a very, very tough time, especially if you're a young person going through that...that affects them on a day to day basis, especially with things like their benefits. Their benefits could be hard for them to gain or get hold of, especially if their mental health is not very good. They get sanctioned and if I'm a young person and I'm not fully understanding, 'Well, what does sanction mean, why haven't I got my money this month?'... a lot of the time they're put into this adult world, if you like, not understanding their rights." Kiri Grant, Cardboard Citizens

Family members' mental health can also put a strain on relationships. Yasmin explained that she did not have access to necessary support or personal coping mechanisms to cope with her mother's mental health difficulties and to remain in the family home:

"I think everybody has a little bit of a mental illness whether it be like Bipolar or whatever it is, and I think my mum kind of had a bit of a hidden mental illness, so when my grandmother died, it came out a lot more, so she was kind of just too much for me to deal with." Yasmin, London

5 - Familial rejection of LGBT young people

As highlighted in section 6.2.2.iii, research suggests LGBT young people are overrepresented in the young homeless population, partly because these young people are generally at a higher risk of rejection and abuse (Watts et al, 2015; Cull et al, 2006). Research from a small-scale study, involving 76 housing providers, 46 LGBT service providers and 139 Pride attendees, estimated that:

- 68% of young LGBT homeless people have experienced abuse, violence and familial rejection
- 77% of young LGBT homeless people felt that their sexuality or gender identity was the cause of their rejection from home
- 69% of young LGBT homeless people left the family home due to parental rejection

Albert Kennedy Trust, 2015

One expert working with young homeless LGBT people explained that although a young person being LGBT is often not the sole reason for them becoming homeless, where family relationships are already strained, it can act as an extra pressure.

"There are some specific issues which make LGBT young people more likely to face homelessness and that can include family rejection. The state of the economy at the moment plays a part...if families are struggling with money then if there is also conflict at home around a young person's sexuality, it can sort of be the straw that broke the camel's back if you like in terms of parents' reactions and ability to cope with an LGBT young person living with them."
Michael Nastari, Stonewall Housing

Furthermore, research also suggests that young LGBT people have a higher risk of mental health issues, self-harm and suicide (Metro Youth Chances, 2014; Williams et al, 2013). These factors can in turn act as risk factors in young LGBT people's becoming homeless (TUC 2016; Albert Kennedy Trust, 2015).

These issues have raised concerns about homelessness prevention and support for young LGBT people (TUC, 2016; Albert Kennedy Trust, 2015). Many service providers have an insufficient understanding of young LGBT homeless people's need and there is evidence to suggest that "an assumption of heterosexuality by some service providers poses further risks of discrimination" (Albert Kennedy Trust, 2015, p.6). These problems are exacerbated by a dearth of legislative requirements for service providers to meet the specific needs of young LGBT homeless people (Albert Kennedy Trust, 2015).

7.1.3 - Bereavement, grief and the loss of support networks

The death of a family member can devastate young people, challenge their coping mechanisms and put a strain on family relationships, further breaking down support networks.

Approximately half of the young people we interviewed explained that the death of a close friend or family member had negatively impacted their relationships with their parents and care givers, as well as their own mental well-being. This was often because they found grief difficult to cope with:

"Well, my head was all over the place because I'd just lost my grandma not long ago and then to lose my granddad as well was too much to deal with. I just thought it was too much to deal with." Laila, Newcastle

As Yasmin explained, grief can also impact on parents' mental well-being and this can put further strain on fragile relationships:

"I was living with my mum and it was just our relationship was breaking down. She was going through a lot of things because her mother had just died, which just, yes, it made us just clash completely because I had a lot of love for my grandmother as well. So, when she's grieving and I'm grieving, it's, like, almost a competition, who can grieve the hardest and she wants to win. So, I, kind of, just left her to it..." Yasmin, London

LGBT and education

LGBT young people are more likely to experience difficulties such as bullying in school. This can impact negatively on their educational experience and achievement, often through high absenteeism. Studies show that 55% of LGB pupils experience homophobic bullying. Of these, 44% skip school, which likely has negative implications on their attainment, and 32% change their plans for future education (Dennell and Logan, 2012).

LGBT young people may therefore be more vulnerable if they subsequently become homeless as their withdrawal from or lack of engagement with their educational institution can mean they do not have access to this potential support network.



Where relationships breakdown between a young person and their parents, the young person moving in with grandparents is a common response. Research estimates that approximately 300,000 children in the UK are looked after by 'friend and family care givers', most often grandparents (Age UK, 2011). Though this is often to the child's benefit, it makes these young people vulnerable to the loss of their main carer at an earlier age. For Jerome, the devastating impact of his grandparents' death ultimately resulted in him becoming homeless due to the impact on his mental health and his inability to support himself financially in their home:

"My world just fell apart, what I knew of my grandparents was gone. My grandmother, how she passed away was very, very tragic...I was really depressed, the family was arguing, who will get their estate and everything...I couldn't really trust certain members of my family... not long after my grandmother passed I became homeless... my [relative] tricked my grandmother to sign away the house... that's probably the main reason why I'm now I'm just hesitant to trust people because my own flesh and blood, my family, my [relative], lied to me and made me homeless." Jerome, London

Bereavement, grief and education

Many of the stresses and tensions explored above in relation to bereavement and grief play out directly in young people's schooling, placing schools at the front line in terms of early response.

Between 3% and 5% of young people experience the loss of a parent or sibling before they are 16 years old. Their grief can have severe and sometimes long-lasting impacts not only on their overall wellbeing, but on their concentration, motivation and attendance. This, unsurprisingly goes on to hamper their attainment (Akerman and Statham, 2014).

"When I was in year 9 I ended up getting kicked out of school and that was because I lost a little cousin, he died... and I started going downhill. I used to be good in school until I lost my little cousin and then I just didn't want to be in a classroom with loads of people anymore and do what the teachers said to do and that...[I felt] angry, upset, heartbroken." Emily, Newcastle

Others felt that their school or college did not support them during their bereavement and that the loss of their care giver had resulted in practical issues, such as a lack of money that made it difficult to engage in education.

"My grandmother died, I lost my job and then I was made homeless. So, it was, kind of, like, there was no-one in college to even go and speak to. When I did go and speak to them, because I had about two to three meetings, it was like, 'I hope things get better,' and that's it, and, 'Still attend college.' It's just like, 'How am I meant to attend when I live miles away and have to pay about £5 every day to get here?' So, yes, it was just like real lack of support, definitely." Jerome, London

For others, bereavement led to other issues such as substance abuse which in turn negatively impacted on their engagement with education and contributed to them becoming homeless.

"I lived with my granddad and I loved my granddad to bits, there was nothing I could ever say bad about him... he died of cancer and it was in the middle of my GCSEs and I actually didn't know that he had cancer, he kept it specifically away from me so I could focus on my GCSEs... I wish I knew so I could spend my time with him. And I guess I was angry at myself for not spending that much time with him because I was so focused at school and I've always made myself very angry for that and I guess that I went towards cannabis and then cannabis led to other drugs, it led to MDMA, mostly LSD... and yes it really did fuck up my life." Ollie, Newcastle

7.2 - Those most at risk: Care leavers and homelessness

Leaving care is a key risk factor for youth homelessness that is consistently highlighted in the literature (Homeless Link, 2015; Barnardos, 2014; Department for Education, 2015). It is estimated that one third of all care leavers experience some form of homelessness 6-24 months after leaving care (Stein, 2010; Wade and Dixon, 2006) and young people who have been in the care system are disproportionately represented in the young homeless population. Rough estimates suggest that care leavers make up only 0.1% of young people in the UK, but 5% of the young and homeless (ONS, 2016a; Department for education, 2015; Homeless Link, 2015).

Over 10,000 young people leave care each year (Department for Education, 2015). Experts we spoke to highlighted the huge pressure to transition to independent living. When young people are not able to do so successfully, they often become homeless.

“You got to have incredible resources as a young person in the care system to make a go of it... Whereas if you have a family home you can go back to and you have family that will keep digging into their pockets albeit reluctantly sometimes, it’s a very different set of circumstances. It gives you that safety blanket to fail and keep trying. Whereas if a care leaver fails and they lose their accommodation as part of it, it’s almost like going back to square one again. It’s enormous pressure on young people.”
Barbara Dann, Grenfell Housing and Training

Some young people in care grow up expecting to leave their foster home as soon as they turn 18 and may therefore perceive homelessness differently to those for whom leaving home early was unexpected. Felix, one of the young people we worked with, did not label himself as having experienced homelessness. He explained that in his mind, leaving care set him apart from other young homeless people who had left their family home. For him, time in a hostel felt like an inevitable stop-gap between leaving care and independent living:

“I don’t really see myself homeless – I don’t. The hostel I’m at now, I see that as me - just somewhere I can stay until I get my flat... I’m only in that hostel because I have left care, I have left foster care that’s the way I have taken it.” Felix, Newcastle

Meanwhile, the experts we worked with suggested that even where young care leavers are not technically ‘homeless’, the chaos and instability of their lives mirrors that experienced by young homeless people. In time, that experience can lead to them becoming homeless.

“[We have to ask] where do young people who are in the care system, fit into homelessness? They are accommodated, they have somewhere that they live but quite often where they live can change quite frequently, and the lack of stability goes with that, with changing placements, building new relationships again. So, although care leavers are inevitably housed, I think a lot of the characteristics that you see with homeless young people are shared by them.”
Barbara Dann, Grenfell Housing Association

Factors contributing to care leavers’ heightened risk of becoming homelessness include:

- Their vulnerability to other risk factors for homelessness
- Inadequate systems
- Less support to prepare for independent living
- Inadequate provision of suitable housing

7.2.1 - Vulnerability to other risk factors for homelessness

Care leavers are more vulnerable than non-care leavers to a number of factors (explored in section 7.1.2.) which increase the risk of homelessness. For example, 62% of care leavers have experienced neglect during their childhood which can negatively impact their mental health later in life (Department for Education, 2015). Many care leavers also experience loneliness, and consequently depression, when living independently (Barnardos, 2014).

7.2.2 - Inadequate systems

As Whalen explains, “care leavers are vulnerable not only because of their own life experiences but as a result of organisational systems and behaviours which do not consistently provide services to meet their needs” (Whalen, 2015, p.7). Experts we spoke to echoed this, expressing frustration that young people in care are often not cared for:

“Looked After Children and I would put that in inverted commas, because quite frankly, some of them are not being effectively looked after within the fostering system.”

Care leavers are also highly vulnerable to the negative impact of policy changes in relation to the benefits system, since their inability to return ‘home’ leaves them with limited options if they struggle to secure the benefits they need in order to pay their rent. Care leavers are exempt from the Shared Accommodation Rate housing benefit cap⁵, and are therefore eligible for higher housing benefits. However, this exemption ends when they reach the age of 21. This leaves care leavers who are reliant on such benefits vulnerable to homelessness (Barnardos, 2014). Experts we spoke to highlighted how many care leavers experience similar instability to homeless young people and it is often difficult for them to transition to independence when support ends.

“It becomes even hard for them to maintain a tenancy once they are moved in to somewhere permanent because social services support are cut off, sometimes at 18, sometimes at 21 depending on what their circumstances are.” Barbara Dann, Grenfell Housing and Training

⁵ Under the shared accommodation rate housing benefit cap, those under 35 are eligible for housing benefit only up to the cost of a single room in shared accommodation.

7.2.3 - Support and preparation for independent living

Research suggests that many care leavers are not given sufficient information and support to prepare them for independent living. Barnardos found that young and homeless care leavers who had inadequate experiences of responsibility whilst in care, faced difficulties in managing their finances once they had left care. (Barnardos, 2014).

New legislation means young people in care can remain in their placement until aged 22 in order to allow them transition more successfully to independence. However, some of those currently in foster care still feel they need to leave at age 18, as explained by one expert we spoke to:

"This is reported from almost verbatim from a care leaver, 'when I moved into that foster care place at 14, right from the start it's only going to be about this isn't permanent. When you're 16 or 18 you're going to have to move out and there are the things that you need to do, so that when you move out you're okay. My whole foster care has been about moving me out of foster care. So, when suddenly the legislation changed and said you can stay till you're 22 I didn't want to. It didn't feel right because then the message to me has consistently been you've got to go.'" Andrew Lorimer, Grenfell Housing and Training

For some young people, University accommodation provides transitional support on the way to independent living (Quilgars, 2011). However, as care leavers are less likely than their peers to be in higher education (Department for Education, 2015), they are also less likely to benefit from the phased independence that university can provide.

Many providers have argued for increased availability of transitional accommodation in order to prepare young people for independent living and reduce the risk of homelessness amongst this vulnerable group (Quilgars, 2011). This might, for example, include local authorities making use of specially designed accommodation frameworks so that young care leavers are able to access suitable accommodation at different stages of their lives (Whalen, 2015; Barnardo's, 2014).



7.2.4 - Access to suitable housing

For a number of reasons, care leavers are particularly likely to face difficulties finding appropriate housing:

- Some local authorities, especially rural areas, have a lack of social housing and many young care leavers are forced to rely on the private rental sector (Stein, 2010).

- The 'bedroom tax' (a reduction in housing benefit if you live in a property with one or more spare bedrooms) means that young, single care leavers are financially penalised for acquiring a home with two bedrooms. This can be problematic in areas, especially those outside of London and the South East (Clarke et al, 2015), where there is a shortage of one bedroom properties due to high demand (Barnardos, 2014).

Care leavers and education

Care leavers are less likely to attain highly in school and this makes it harder for these young people to transition to employment and independent living, placing them at further risk of homelessness (Clapham et al, 2012; Quilgars and Rugg, 2015).

In 2013, only 12% of looked after children attained 5 A*-C at GCSE including English and Maths, compared to 52% of young people nationally (Department for Education, 2015). Care leavers are also at higher risk of not being in employment, education or training (NEET), with 41% of 19-year-old care leavers classified as NEET in 2013/14 compared to 15% of all 19-year-olds (Department for Education, 2015).

"Nationally there's a drive to improve the attainment and the achievement of care leavers... Because if you do have a roof over your head but it keeps changing, it's difficult to engage in anything else." Barbara Dann, Grenfell Housing and Training

Young people in care currently attract additional school funding and are prioritised in school admissions, however this does not necessarily translate into the care and support that will enable them to succeed.



7.3 - Social, political and economic factors

Socio-economic and cultural shifts have resulted in young people living with their parents for longer in the UK than they did in the past (MacInnes et al, 2015; Smith, 2009). In 2016, it was estimated that 39% of 15-34 year olds were living with their parents, compared to 36% of 15-34 year olds in 1996 (ONS, 2016b). This change has been attributed to a range of factors including youth unemployment; rising rents and property prices; and reductions in benefits, all of which have made young people more reliant on their families for accommodation (MacInnes et al, 2015; Smith, 2009). Where young people cannot turn to their families for accommodation, an increasing number fall through the net.

Funding cuts have also reduced prevention initiatives and peripheral support for young people resulting in a shift from early intervention to 'fire-fighting'.

"All of that is gone now... the funding to do that extra work which makes a big difference to whether somebody stays in a tenancy, whether they survive, whether they've got into training and education, that's not there anymore. It's feeling more and more as if we're fire-fighting." Sharon Brown, Youth Homelessness North East

7.3.1 - Welfare support and housing benefit

Since April 2017, young people aged between 18-21 who claim Universal Credit have not been automatically entitled to housing benefit (Wilson et al, 2017). Whilst some exemptions apply to this policy, this is likely to have damaging consequences for young people at risk of homelessness (Homeless Link, 2015; Cole and Reeve, 2015). Experts have also argued that the change will undermine attempts to address and prevent homelessness through the Homelessness Reduction Bill. Crisis for example have warned that cutting housing benefits could have "disastrous consequences" for 18-21 year olds who use this financial support to pay their rent (Crisis, 2017, p.1).

"The current regime of welfare reform that is reducing the income to people, that is taking away housing benefit from some young people as well, is just causing greater and greater hardship." Sharon Brown, Youth Homelessness North East

⁶Where an individual's benefits are reduced or stopped for a period of time because they have not met or are perceived not to have met commitments such as attending meetings at benefit offices or applying for enough jobs.

Research also suggests that young people are more likely to experience benefit 'sanctions'⁶ than their older counterparts (Watts et al, 2014).

"The impact sanctions have on all vulnerable people but also on young people who are homeless is massive. They would literally have no income for a period of time. Some young people had multiple sanctions... not only did they not have money to live on, literally nothing, but they also were accruing rent arrears and getting into massive debt. The research that we conducted shows how detrimental that was in terms of their wellbeing, their mental health as well, their physical health obviously because they're not eating properly as well, they haven't got any heat and all of the stress that involved." Sharon Brown, Youth Homelessness North East

Furthermore, since 2012, single under-35 year olds have only been entitled to housing benefit that is equivalent to the price of a single room in shared accommodation (known as the Shared Accommodation Rate). This can be problematic for young people who are trying to secure accommodation because if they cannot find housing that is priced within the Shared Accommodation Rate, they are forced to pay the difference themselves (Watts et al, 2015). This is particularly problematic given that research by Crisis (Sanders and Teizeira, 2012) has highlighted a lack of housing that is affordable within the confines of the Shared Accommodation Rate.

The Gordian Knot of Benefits and Education

A benefit system that should facilitate young people's access to education frequently does the opposite.

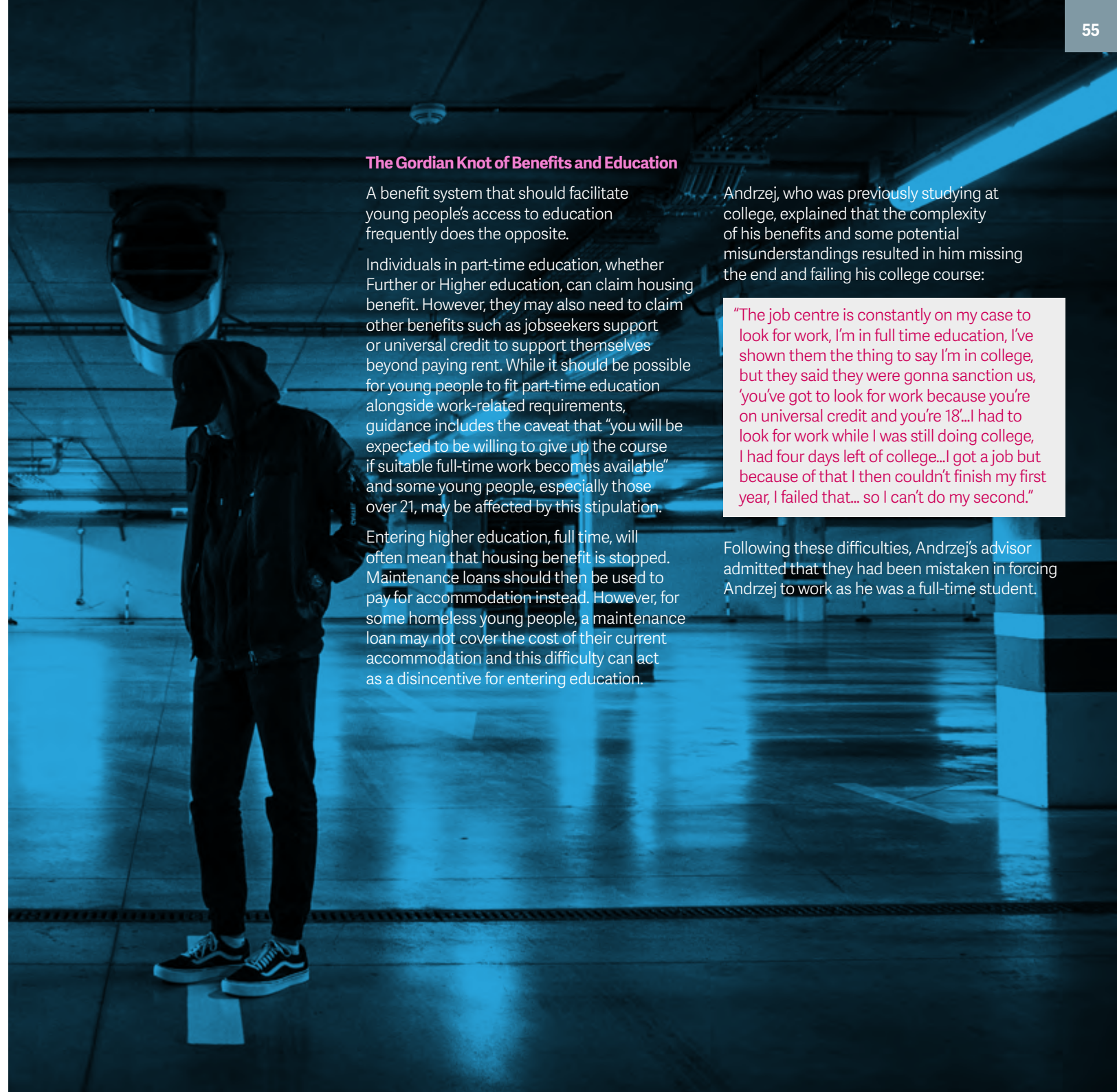
Individuals in part-time education, whether Further or Higher education, can claim housing benefit. However, they may also need to claim other benefits such as jobseekers support or universal credit to support themselves beyond paying rent. While it should be possible for young people to fit part-time education alongside work-related requirements, guidance includes the caveat that "you will be expected to be willing to give up the course if suitable full-time work becomes available" and some young people, especially those over 21, may be affected by this stipulation.

Entering higher education, full time, will often mean that housing benefit is stopped. Maintenance loans should then be used to pay for accommodation instead. However, for some homeless young people, a maintenance loan may not cover the cost of their current accommodation and this difficulty can act as a disincentive for entering education.

Andrzej, who was previously studying at college, explained that the complexity of his benefits and some potential misunderstandings resulted in him missing the end and failing his college course:

"The job centre is constantly on my case to look for work, I'm in full time education, I've shown them the thing to say I'm in college, but they said they were gonna sanction us, 'you've got to look for work because you're on universal credit and you're 18'...I had to look for work while I was still doing college, I had four days left of college...I got a job but because of that I then couldn't finish my first year, I failed that... so I can't do my second."

Following these difficulties, Andrzej's advisor admitted that they had been mistaken in forcing Andrzej to work as he was a full-time student.



7.3.2 - Rising rents

Rental costs have risen in the UK by 14.5% since January 2011 (ONS, 2017a) and are expected to rise by a further 25% in the next five years (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, 2017). As a result, many young people find it difficult to enter the private rental sector after leaving the family home (Fitzpatrick et al, 2017; Tinson et al, 2016; Shelter, 2016).

“The inability to access secure, long term accommodation in the private rented sector prevents people from breaking out of homelessness and has huge personal costs to the individual” Gousy, 2016, p.5

High costs mean that once a young person has become homeless finding appropriate and affordable accommodation can be extremely difficult, especially in London, as Michael Nastari explained.

“I did a piece of research recently to look at if I could find a room available within the local council housing allowance rate on Gumtree. So I looked and I did manage to find one property, but it was servitude so you’re allowed to stay there, but you’re expected to cook and clean [for others]. So actually for young people who are on the lower rate of, you know, it’s about £70 a week, to try and find somewhere to live in London is ridiculous.” Michael Nastari, Stonewall

Increasing rents have also contributed to rising poverty for working families, exacerbating the issues explored in section 7.1.1 (Fitzpatrick et al, 2017).

7.3.3 - Reduction in support services

Vulnerable young people who depend on government funded support can be at a further risk of homelessness when services do not, or cannot, provide sufficient support. As a young carer for example, Jerome struggled to make sense of the complex benefit systems and received little support in attempting to do so.

“I spent most of my childhood being a young carer for my grandparents, right and [social services] didn’t care at all. They probably visited me like once or twice a year. There was this one social worker who actually did help me, helped me to go to a place in this church, and then they stopped. Then they kept stalling saying, ‘we will... we might help you with a young carer’s allowance’, but as soon as I turned 16, no, you’re no longer eligible for it and blah, blah, blah...and they just bombarded me and my grandparents with information. I’m a kid, my grandparents are elderly...so they couldn’t understand and I couldn’t ... Then when they decided to help...it was too late.” Jerome, London

Practitioners argued that cuts to local authority budgets have further exacerbated these problems, placing vulnerable young people like Jerome at heightened risk of homelessness.

“The financial crisis hit... well one local authority... just cut all its funding to young people’s services, pretty much overnight... youth accommodation based services ‘it’s too expensive, let them stay with their parents because that’s better than going on the street, we’re not going to fund it anymore’. That is the extreme but it’s not the only one that made significant cuts overnight.” Andrew Lorimer, Grenfell Housing and Training

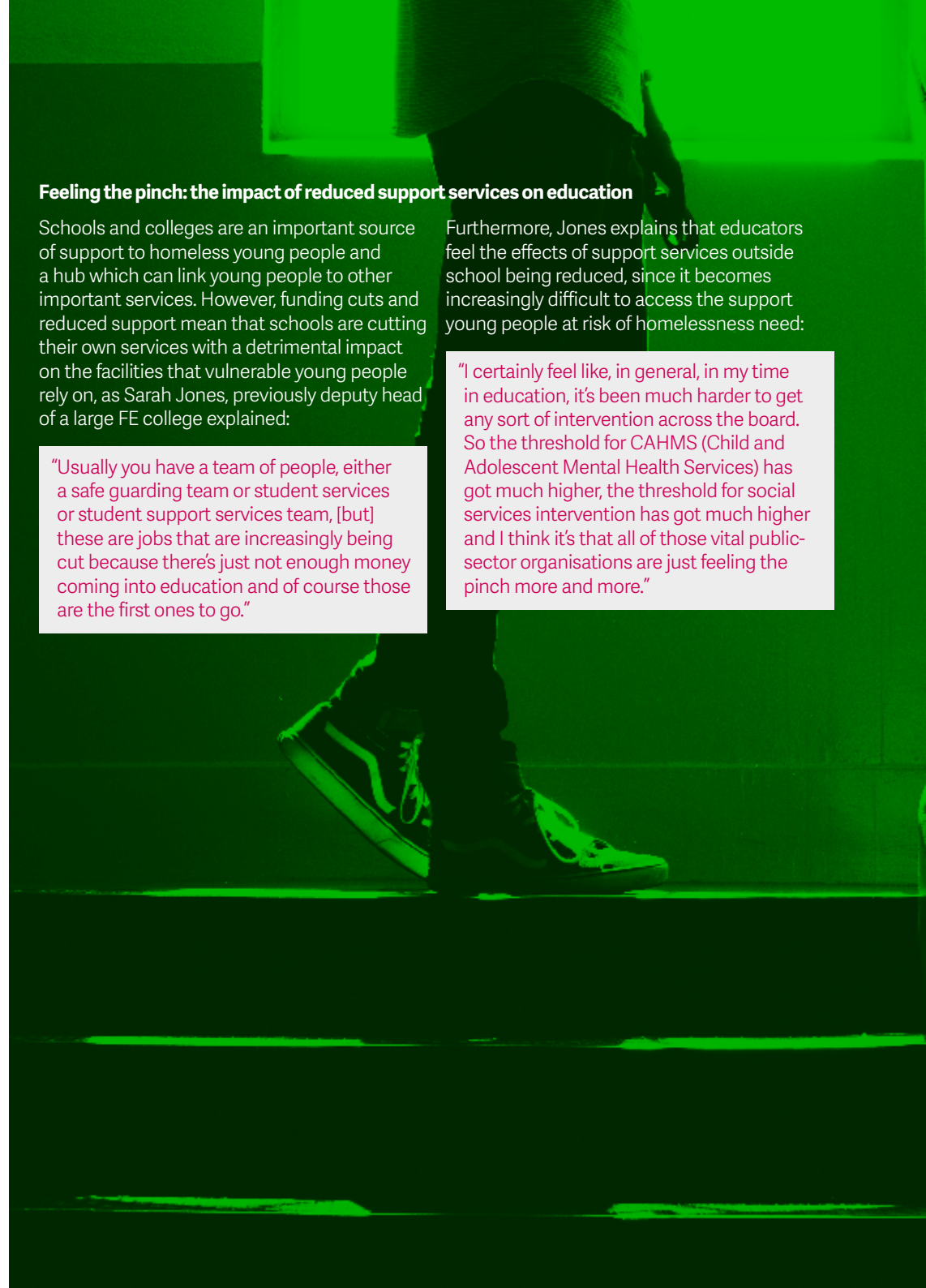
Feeling the pinch: the impact of reduced support services on education

Schools and colleges are an important source of support to homeless young people and a hub which can link young people to other important services. However, funding cuts and reduced support mean that schools are cutting their own services with a detrimental impact on the facilities that vulnerable young people rely on, as Sarah Jones, previously deputy head of a large FE college explained:

“Usually you have a team of people, either a safe guarding team or student services or student support services team, [but] these are jobs that are increasingly being cut because there’s just not enough money coming into education and of course those are the first ones to go.”

Furthermore, Jones explains that educators feel the effects of support services outside school being reduced, since it becomes increasingly difficult to access the support young people at risk of homelessness need:

“I certainly feel like, in general, in my time in education, it’s been much harder to get any sort of intervention across the board. So the threshold for CAHMS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) has got much higher, the threshold for social services intervention has got much higher and I think it’s that all of those vital public-sector organisations are just feeling the pinch more and more.”



7.3.4 - Youth unemployment

The recession, and continuing weaknesses in the economy have led to limited employment prospects for many young people and this scarcity can make it yet more difficult for young people to support themselves if they become homeless.

Over one in ten 16 to 24 year old were unemployed in winter 2016-17 (12.4%, 558,000) making them the age group are the most likely to be unemployed (ONS, 2017b; ONS, 2017c).

High youth-unemployment can exacerbate poverty and the risk of familial relationship breakdown (Watts et al, 2015), both of which are key causes of youth homelessness, as highlighted in section 7.1.

"Being out of education or being unemployed can be quite an aggravating factor. Because if for example someone's parents are kicking them out of home, a lot of time it is because that young person is around and under their feet a lot. If they are out a lot or at school and doing productive stuff it can be a relief to any fractious relationships in the household... [also] also if they are sixteen and not in education then benefits get cut, child benefit and the others, and that might affect their housing benefits. So all of a sudden there are big arguments with parents....All of a sudden they need to be out of the house, parents can't afford for them to be there as they are not getting all those benefits. And all of a sudden they turn up at our office as they have not got anywhere to stay." Sharon Brown, Youth Homelessness North East



8 Education and homelessness



8.1 - Homeless young people's education experiences

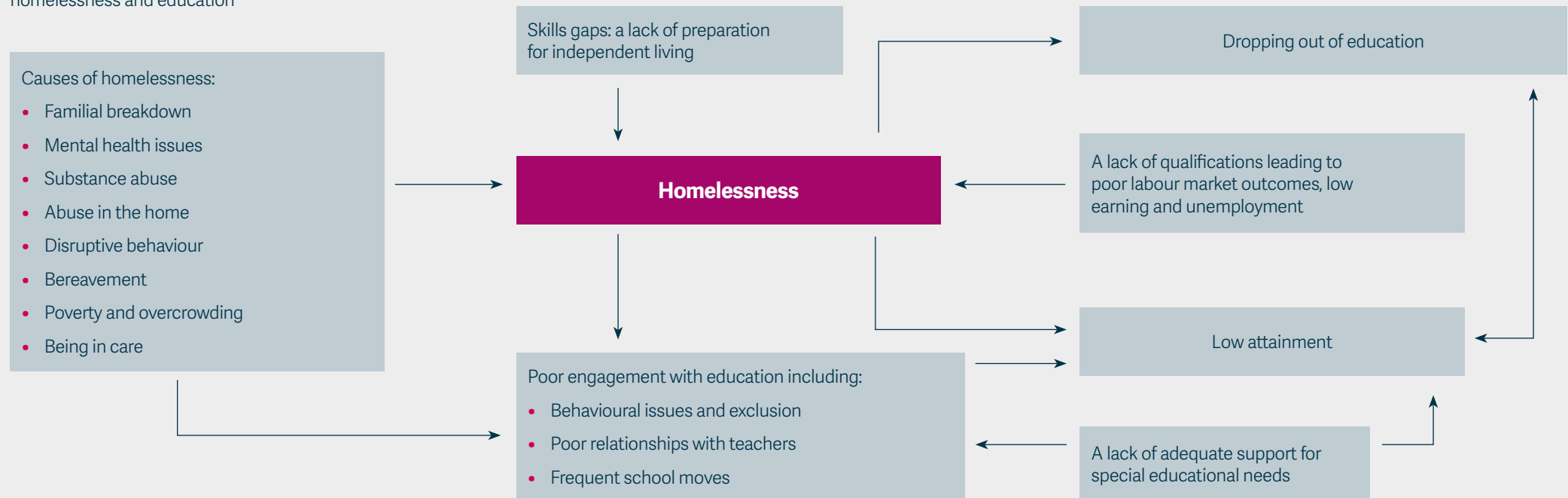
Our analysis of the link between homelessness and education throughout section 7 showed that most of the main factors that cause homelessness have profound implications for education. Yet for many homeless young people like Jess, struggles with education remain an ongoing source of regret:

"If I could change things I would be good from the start of year 10 and I might have got my C's... it impacted my life a lot because it's always going to be there and I am going to struggle getting a job." Jess, Newcastle

We now explore the educational experiences of the young people we worked with in more depth, showing how their transitions to homelessness played out in their education. We draw heavily on their narratives since there is a lack of literature specifically focused on young homeless peoples' experiences of education. We find that six main themes characterised the experiences and attitudes of the young people we worked with and in the following sections, we explore each theme in turn:

- Educational outcomes: whilst levels of attainment at school varied, successful progressions to further or higher education were uncommon.
- Negative experiences: young people's experiences were frequently negative and relationships with teachers were often difficult.
- Changing school: frequent school moves were followed by difficulties with transitions.
- Behaviour: Poor behaviour and exclusion were common.
- Special educational needs: several young people had a history of unaddressed needs.
- High educational and employment aspirations: Despite the above, young people often aspired to continue their education so they could achieve fulfilling employment and become financially independent.

Figure 10:
The complex relationship between homelessness and education



8.1.1 - Educational outcomes

"It's incredibly difficult to focus on your education when you don't know where you're going to sleep. And you know, that ranges from the kind of practical side of things, from kids who left their books or their work in one house and they won't be able to go back to that house because they're unsafe in that house." Sarah Jones, Former Deputy Head of FE College

Maintaining high educational achievement in the face of insecure housing is struggle. As Josh explained, his engagement with education waned when his mother fled her abusive partner and he became homeless. Previously he had had his own space at home to study and research his assignments online, but once he began sofa-surfing and moving frequently between his grandmother and his father's house he no longer had a computer. As a result, he increasingly struggled to focus and dedicate time to studying. Eventually, as his college work became more challenging, he ended up dropping out.

The instability and chaos of homelessness also impacts on young people's mental state and attitude to learning, as Yasmin explains:

"Another thing about being homeless or being in a hostel is the passion and all of that stuff just gets taken out of you... because you can't think about anything else but where you're going to sleep or what you're going to do tomorrow?"

Despite this, homeless young people achieve a range of educational outcomes before and after they became homeless as one practitioner explained:

"Just because somebody's homeless that doesn't mean that their qualification levels or educational levels are very low. That's not the case at all. [Some are] well educated or have been to school or have been to college and I think that could be actually the assumption sometimes, 'Oh, maybe it's because they don't know this', or, 'They're finding school difficult.' No. Anybody can become homeless." Kiri Grant, Cardboard Citizens

1 - School and college attainment

Roughly half of the young people we worked with described attaining at least some qualifications in school and reflected upon this achievement positively. For example, Jerome was able to stay in school while he cared for his elderly grandparents and achieved a number of A levels. "I did my A-levels in history, religious education and economic statistics. I did really well. I got an A star in history." He explained. For Jerome, this has remained one of his proudest achievements.

On the other hand, the literature reveals that in general, homeless young people make less educational progress and achieve less highly compared to their peers of similar prior attainment (Power et. al 1995, Diaz 2005, Harker 2006). Consistent with this, other participants had not achieved basic qualifications during school, or had struggled academically and lost interest.

2 - Progression to further and higher education

Further and higher education can dramatically improve outcomes and life-chances for young people (DBIS, 2013a; 2013b). In theory, such qualifications could provide a route out of poverty and homelessness for young people. Yet, homelessness acts as a considerable barrier to progression.

Only two of the young people we worked with said they saw university as an option for them. Leila, for example explained that despite attending college, homelessness creates extra pressures for the future alongside considerations about university:

"I think I'm going to stick in college and get all the grades I need for childcare and finish my qualifications and then hopefully I'll be at uni, do a degree. Likewise, with my flat, I think I just need to, obviously budget money well and just do what I've got to do; like all the basic skills you need to get into a flat, like budgeting your money, make sure you are tidy and clean and can look after yourselves. Because they are the main roles and responsibilities you need to move on." Leila, Newcastle

Dr Beth Watts, Senior Research Fellow at Heriot Watt University, argued that young homeless people's poverty and reliance on benefits means that the prospect of transferring from benefit support to a loan based system, as well as the additional costs associated with moving to a university, acts as a disincentive to them progressing to higher education.

3 - Dropping out

Even where homeless young people do progress to FE or HE, many drop out. Indeed, over half of the young people we worked with had dropped out of college:

"I finished level 2. But then what happened was I went on to level 3... level 3 is a lot more time, a lot more effort. So when my mam went into a refuge I just went to the college...I didn't explain to them because I didn't really want to talk about it. I just dropped out of college... and that got me nowhere." Josh, Newcastle

Unfortunately, a lack of literature and data makes it hard to gauge completion and drop-out rates. Better tracking of young people through the system is therefore needed.

8.1.2 - Negative experiences of education

Although some young people we worked with spoke positively about some aspects of their education, particularly in relation to friendships and extra-curricular activities, almost all emphasised negative experiences of education. Bullying and poor relationships with teachers were common themes and exacerbated an, at times profound, disengagement with school.

On the other hand, other young people maintained positive relationships within their school when they became homeless and, for them, school or college provided a source of support during a difficult and traumatic time.

1 - Bullying

Half of the young people we interviewed highlighted school bullying, prior to their becoming homeless. Some described being bullies themselves, sometimes in retaliation to the bullying they experienced. Josh for example explained how, after experiencing bullying in his first primary school, when he was moved, he 'picked on a couple of people' himself to avoid getting bullied again. For him, this eventually led to a cycle of difficult peer relationships and frequent school moves after bullying incidents.

Jerome also had a difficult time at school, he struggled to form relationships with peers and experienced extreme bullying. He explained that bullying weakened his support network by throwing into question his trust in authority figures:

"I began to realise I shouldn't trust... be so trusting... I shouldn't have so much trust in justice as well because more often than not if I fight back I'll always get into the trouble. But at the same time if I don't fight back then people take advantage of me and I just feel like I'm in a catch 22... I feel like if I trust people I'm screwed." Jerome, London

Around a third of the young people we spoke with described physical bullying, and for some, this had serious consequences for their attainment and their enjoyment of school.

"Then it got so bad that one of the bullies smashed my head against the ground in PE and like I was concussed, I was bleeding out of my ear... ambulance [came] - and the school decided instead of excluding that bully, because this bully was gifted and talented, they instead put me in the learning support centre and isolated me from the rest of the school where I couldn't learn anything, for my last year, when I was in Year 11. So I hated school. It was just one of the worst experiences of my life." Jerome, London

2 - Poor relationships with teachers

Poor relationships with teachers can intensify negative experiences of school and weaken fragile support networks. Whilst some young people had negative relationships with teachers before becoming homeless, for others, becoming homeless had a more direct negative impact. In the case of Yasmin, and others like her, the way teachers reacted to her becoming homeless and the impact this had on her behaviour and engagement led to her feeling frustrated and isolated:

"I think that teachers didn't understand the change [when I became homeless]. So instead of working with me going through the change, they decided to judge me. And I've had teachers call me a gangster, I've had teachers call me a thug and then you kind of just have this mentality you are like well forget school then, I will go and be what you're telling me I am... So, if a child's acting like some kind of negative thing in society, maybe you can help to understand why... because there's probably a reason why they're like that." Yasmin, London

8.1.3 - Changing school

1 - Primary to secondary transitions

The transition between primary and secondary school was problematic for around half of the young people we worked with. This is particularly problematic given that many events and circumstances that can precipitate homelessness, such as substance abuse, mental health issue and disruptive behaviour, are more likely to take place once young people reach secondary school age.

Losing the support of a single class teacher and becoming the youngest pupils in school were two of the most commonly highlighted issues by both practitioners and young people:

“They may have a form teacher in name, but they’ve lost their classroom teacher, so they’re going from one session to another to another, with a different member of staff and each one is going to have a different take on that child; some will be great with them and others will not.” Chris Henwood, Foundation Futures

“Before in primary, you’re fine, you know what’s going on. In secondary, it’s like all of a sudden you’re little again and it just makes it hard. It’s like that small fish in a big pond thing, whereas primary was the opposite.” Josh, Newcastle

Chris Henwood also argued that for children with complex needs, (including needs that are also risk factors for homelessness), the transition between primary and secondary school represents a loss of personalised support due to a shift to a more rigid structure.

“The key point of change is the transition from primary to secondary. Some of these young people are identified in primary schools, the staff know the child well and the family quite well, but primary education is different to secondary education. You’ve got far more consistency of staff, it’s a smaller school, the classroom teacher will know that child and will manage that child’s needs as effectively as he or she can because that’s the way it works in a primary school... it’s a slightly more flexible learning environment, it’s more integrated collaborative learning, there’s more play involved. But they go from that to a very, very rigid regime in a secondary school.” Chris Henwood, Foundation Futures

2 - High school mobility

Over half the young people we worked with referred to moving schools’ multiple times. This was due to a range of factors including bullying, problematic behaviour and turbulent home lives. Although these moves occurred before young people became homeless they are characteristic of childhood instability and several young people explained that frequent moves made it difficult to engage with education.

“Imagine being the new kid in three different schools in the space of ten year. You’re like what the hell am I doing here?” Andrzej, Newcastle

8.1.4 - Behavioural problems and exclusion

As discussed in section 7.1.2.ii, a young person’s difficult behaviour in the family home can lead to a breakdown in relationships and ultimately homelessness, but troubled behaviour is unlikely to be confined exclusively to the home. Where it occurs in school, poor behaviour has a detrimental impact on attainment and relationships and can result in a young person being excluded and referred to a pupil referral unit (PRU).

A third of the young people we worked with had experienced exclusion as a result of their behaviour.

“I was still naughty at my secondary school and tried to be a class clown, tried to be the centre of attention. And then my headteacher basically got sick of me and was like, ‘Right then, this is what we can do. We can send you to [a pupil referral unit]’. I didn’t want to go [because it’s] a place where really naughty kids go.” Josh, Newcastle

Given the complex issues lying behind their exclusion, young people who are referred to a PRU frequently need specialist support. Good and outstanding PRUs do this by working with different agencies and a range of support services. However, only 1% of children who are excluded from school achieve five good GCSEs including English and Maths (DfE, 2017). Consequently, young people who attend PRUs are at increased risk of unemployment and, thus, homelessness.

“Their experience, and this is from their mouths, is that they feel excluded, forgotten about, tossed on the scrapheap, nobody gives a toss about them... some of the places in which they’re taught are horrible... one is in the back end of an old primary school and when you go in the door, you can see the damp up the walls and it’s got that horrible damp smell and the paint’s peeling... So what these young people feel is that they’re not worth anything, nobody cares, they can’t fit in to an academic classroom, so they’re turfed out and they’re just pushed out and pushed aside and they haven’t got a voice at all.” Chris Henwood, Foundation Futures

In Newcastle-upon-Tyne, at the time of writing, all PRUs are currently judged inadequate by Ofsted. Kiran Gill, Founder of The Difference,⁷ argues that this is “worse than anywhere else in the country.”

8.1.5 - A history of unaddressed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

1 - The prevalence of SEND

Young people with SEND are significantly over represented in the homeless population. Recent figures are unavailable, but a 2004 study, based on a previous SEND classification system showed that 11% of homeless pupils had a statement for SEND - the highest level of need under the old system, compared to only 3% of pupils nationally at that time (Mitchel et al, 2004). Meanwhile, around half of the young people we worked with had some form of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

⁷ an organisation which will place teachers in PRUs for a two-year secondment in order to improve their ability to work with the most vulnerable pupils in mainstream schools

There are a number of reasons for the high prevalence of SEND amongst the homeless population. Firstly, there is a strong link between poverty and SEND (Figure 9) and children who live in poverty are “more likely than their affluent peers to develop some forms of SEND, such as behavioral difficulties” (Shaw et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the stress and costs associated with having a child with SEND status means that families affected by SEND are more likely to move into poverty (Parsons and Platt, 2013).

2 - SEND support and homelessness

The young people with SEND who we worked with had experienced varying levels of support prior to becoming homeless. For example, Jerome, described feeling unsupported and given up on. He felt that teachers did not know about or recognise his ADHD or learning difficulties and did not provide him with support. He remembered overhearing conversations between school staff about putting him in low sets or groups of pupils with SEND needs and feeling that he had been consigned to “a group of people that can’t be helped”.

On the other hand, Felix described positive experiences of receiving SEND support and how this helped them to engage in, and enjoy, school:

“I felt like there was something for me and obviously I have got mild learning difficulties myself and obviously I got the support that I wanted in that school...” Felix, Newcastle

The disparity between different young people’s experiences illustrates the patchy, inconsistent support available for young people with SEN (Bernardes et al., 2015).

8.1.6 - High educational and employment aspirations

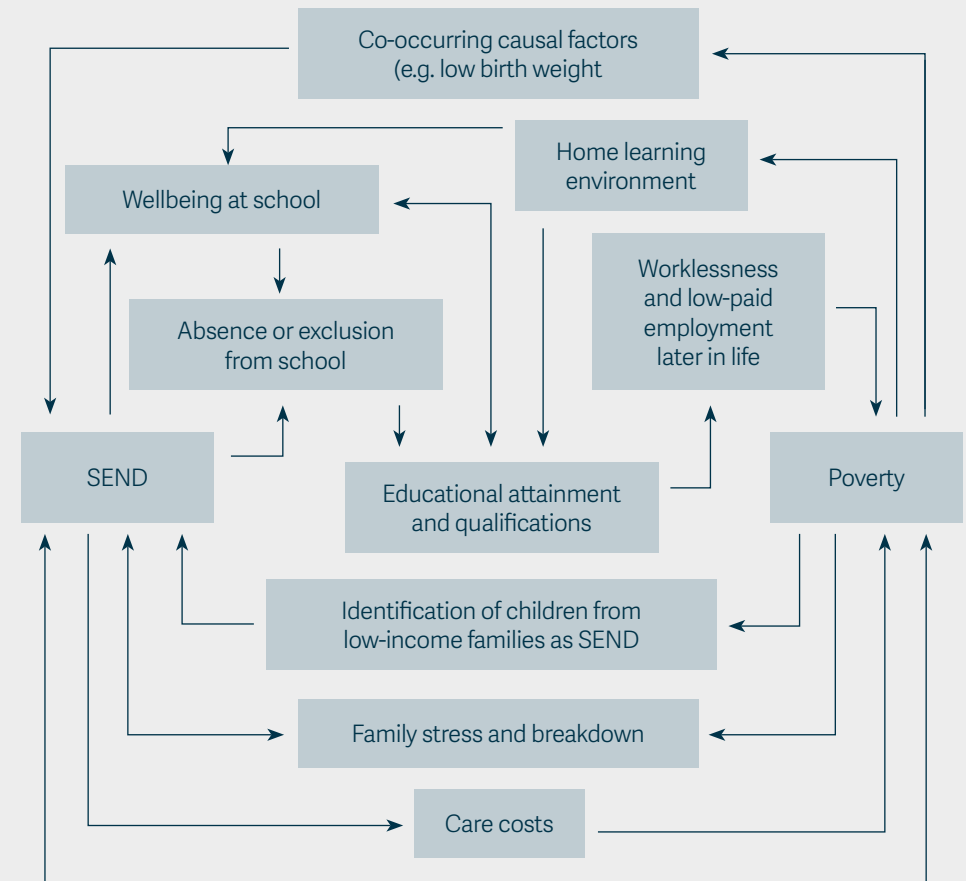
Despite the experiences described above, all of our participants were highly aspirational for their future. They described plans to work in a variety of careers, to become financially independent and to own their own home. This is consistent with research showing that the vast majority of young people are aspirational for their future (Menzies, 2013).

Not only were the young people we worked with ‘aspirational’, but they also believed education would play a key role in helping them achieve their goals. For Felix, a short placement working with Autistic children had inspired him to work toward a career as a carer. He therefore planned to do a caring course and work with wheelchair bound people in the future. On the other hand, Josh, was unsure about the specific direction of his future career but aspired to get a ‘decent’ job and his own house. He recognised that achieving his GCSE grade C in English would be crucial for him to gain the kind of employment he was looking for and therefore planned to return to college and retake this qualification.

Meanwhile for others, what mattered more than anything was securing a job that would allow them to sustain their housing:

“Hopefully in a couple of months’ time I’ll have my own tenancy, my own flat, so then I will need to get a job before that, so I can actually pay for the flat as well, instead of just being on benefits all my life. So I want to actually get a job and then I want to be a head chef just in an Italian restaurant preferably. But anything really, any job just to keep me going. I’m not really bothered what it is, I’ll do it.” Evan, Newcastle

Figure 11:
Factors affected with SEND (Shaw et al., 2016)



8.2 - What role do educational establishments play in addressing youth homelessness?

8.2.1 - Preventing youth homelessness

The best way to reduce youth homelessness is to prevent it. Though the role of schools does not necessarily extend to preventing youth homelessness specifically, the experts we spoke with highlighted the need for early intervention.

"In my mind if you don't intervene as early as possible then you've missed the boat... So all this Surestart work, all of the work around the common assessment framework was aimed at identifying and flagging up the people that were most at risk and putting in place early interventions... trying to identify children and young people that were at risk, much earlier." Sharon Brown, Youth Homelessness North East

Meanwhile, when a young person becomes homeless, educational institutions can either be sources of support or an additional pressure depending on how they respond.

"Did my first and second year of A levels, but didn't finish it because I was just going through a lot at the time and it was hard to concentrate. But I did have the support from the school and they did support me a lot, but obviously I just couldn't do it, it was getting too much for me to do the second year of A levels." Leila, Newcastle

At present education in schools and other youth provision is "the least commonly cited prevention tool" used by local authorities (Homeless link, 2015). Over 60% of surveyed local authorities used education work in schools as part of prevention but other, more reactive strategies such as access to short term funds (95%), advice services to young people presenting as homeless (98%) and referring to other services (99%) were used more.

Furthermore, where school based prevention does occur, it is not clear whether it is effective. There is limited evidence in relation to effective school-based homelessness prevention programmes. Evaluations of school-based programmes to prevent youth homelessness tend to take place immediately after a session has been delivered and be based on participant feedback that merely provides a 'snap shot' of the young person's understanding. Longer term tracking and evaluation is therefore sparse and there is therefore a limited evidence base in relation to 'what works'. A recent study of youth homelessness interventions highlighted the "lack of any evidence of the impact of school-based programmes on youth homelessness" (Centrepoint, 2016b).

1 - Recognising the warning signs

In order to prevent homelessness and signpost young people to appropriate services, education professionals need to be aware of risk factors and warning signs for homelessness. One key warning sign is high absenteeism, which is often a result of taking on additional responsibilities in a troubled family.

"As they get older, it's the role that kids take in looking after insecure families... they take on a role working obviously to take money and to pay rent or to find more housing and particularly if they've got parents who don't speak very good English then they'll end up being the ones who do the work with the officials so they end up having to miss school to go to council appointments... [it] can be stressful, there are also kids who have taken on responsibility for you know incompetent parents, or unwell parents, or parents who don't speak much English, or younger siblings." Sarah Jones, Former Deputy Head of an FE college

Two of the young people we worked with reported having adult responsibilities including caring for siblings and grandparents.

"I had to take on the dad role...So I would be the one changing the nappies, my mum couldn't do it, because my mum had to go out. I'd look after my sister all day, all night." Andrzej, Newcastle

These young people described needing more support from school to help them deal with these responsibilities alongside their education, but felt their needs had not been identified or they did not know how to access support.

"It would have made a difference if the teachers actually knew that I was a young carer. Only a couple of the teachers knew I was a young carer but didn't act upon it." Jerome, London

2 - Signposting towards information, advice and guidance

Once schools and educational institutions have spotted the warning signs, their most important role is to signpost to services which can provide support, whether with mental health issues, substance abuse or family breakdown. A focus on effective signposting ensures schools can support pupils while avoiding adding extra load to the school curriculum or stretching school funding:

"I think education providers should be tasked with becoming more aware of what facilities are available locally to support a young person in that situation. If you start imposing old things on education without funding it, you are going to be probably having a negative impact on education budgets which have been targeted anyway, but also you risk duplicating services. So, I would be reluctant to say education should be doing this or that...[but] providers need to make education aware of what's there so young people who are at risk can access suitable and appropriate services." Andrew Lorimer, Grenfell Housing and Training

Type	Description
Primary prevention	Working with young people and their families to prevent new cases of homelessness well before the point of crisis.
Secondary prevention	Early identification and treatment of current cases of homelessness (e.g. supporting a young person at the point of family breakdown)
Tertiary prevention	Working with young people who are already homeless to prevent long term, entrenched and repeated homelessness.

There are commonly three types of prevention (Centrepoint, 2016) and schools and educational settings tend to primarily be involved in the first.

Signposting is particularly important for schools since advice must be provided in a timely manner (Centrepoint, 2016) and schools are well placed to respond quickly. However, this approach can only work if high-quality advice and guidance is readily available, whereas Watts et al. (2015) found that information and advice was patchy and inconsistent.

Some school based preventative programmes involve individuals who have experienced youth homelessness, working with school pupils to raise awareness and encourage young people to stay at home. However, evaluations of the approach are unavailable.

“Some of the other prevention work that we do is we were delivering a homeless prevention programme in schools. So we’d have young people who had been through the service, train them to be peer educators and they would then go into all of the schools in Newcastle to talk to young people about what it’s like to be living independently. And it was an anti-promotion video really... It certainly emphasises if you can build relationships [at home], no matter how difficult, it’s better to do that than be living in your own.”

Kim McMaster, Your Homes Newcastle

Schools also feature in the Birmingham based housing association St Basil’s “Positive Pathways model”. Schools play an essential role in step 1 of this model (universal information and guidance about housing options for young people and their families). However, the impact of distributing this information depends on suitable housing being available, and schools are unlikely to be able to influence this.

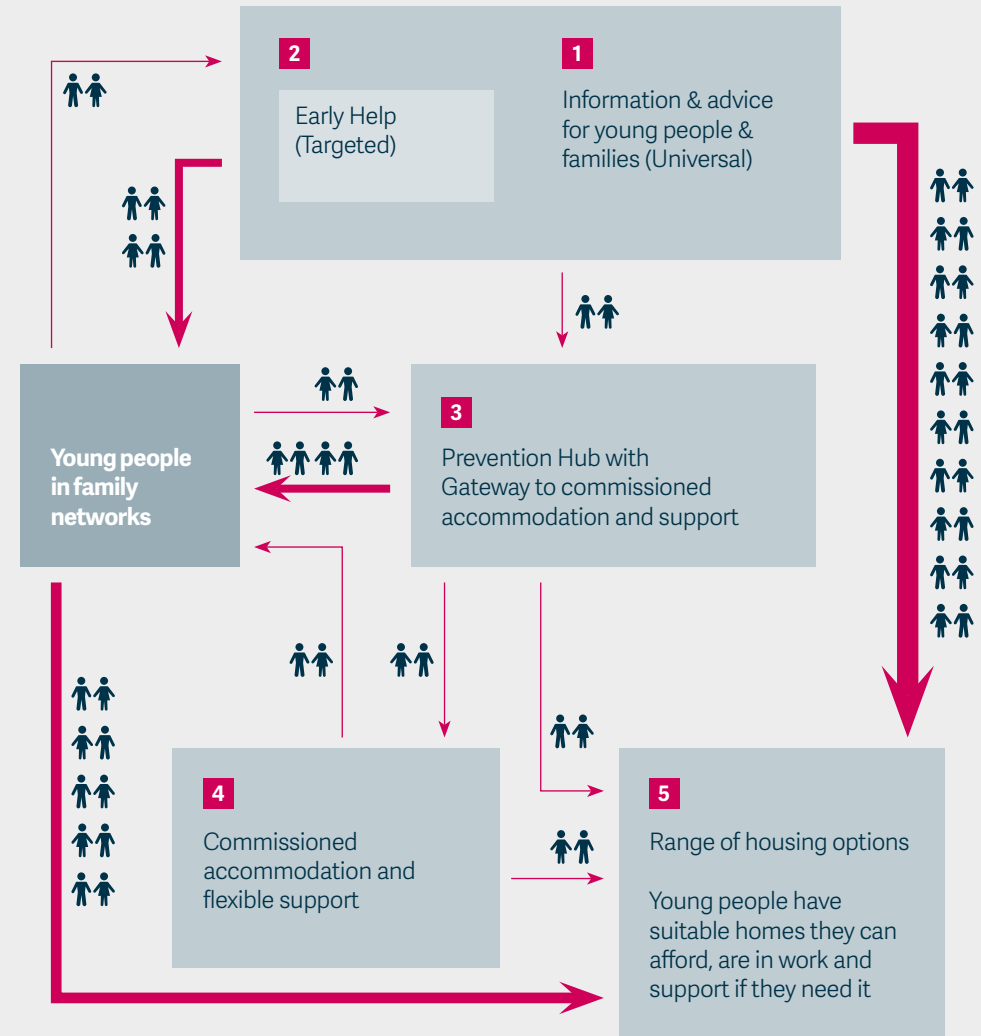
3 - Mediation services

There is evidence to suggest that mediation is a particularly effective way of preventing youth homelessness (Homeless link 2014, Dickens and Woodfield, 2004). Schools and other educational settings can therefore be useful in helping to initiate and refer young people and their families for mediation when they identify a risk of family breakdown.

Kim McMaster particularly highlighted one programme in Newcastle which worked with school pupils and encouraged them to seek support to address family conflict before it reached ‘crisis point’. Yet, if pupils are to act on this advice, mediation services need to be readily available and all schools need to signpost towards such support. Unfortunately, though, support is currently scarce and a lack of widespread research and evaluation means that the mechanism of change is not well understood. For example, the evaluation of one London-based programme that included ‘family support’ as one of three prongs of support, found that family relationships improved for some young people. However, the study was unable to attribute this solely to the ‘family support’ element of the programme as other positive changes in the young people’s behaviour had also occurred (Dickens and Woodfield, 2004). This may indicate that mediation and approaches which involve families are useful but are best used alongside other support.

Figure 12:

Figure 12: Positive pathway model (St Basil’s, 2015)



8.2.2 - Supporting homeless young people

Young people who become homeless whilst in education will not necessarily voluntarily share what is happening with staff. However, they are likely to exhibit behaviours that should act as warning signs to teachers and pastoral staff.

Signs might include:

- low or declining attendance;
- lack of engagement and concentration;
- disruptive behaviour;
- tiredness; and,
- appearing 'dishevelled'

As with all safeguarding concerns, school and college staff need to be aware of these warning signs and alive to the prevalence of youth homelessness if they are to respond promptly.

1 - Preparing young people to live independently

Young people and practitioners suggested that schools should teach young people skills that would help them cope better with independent living at a young age, however, there is some debate as to whether schools are best placed to deliver this support.

Young people experiencing homelessness or moving into supported accommodation following a period of homelessness are likely to need information about how to set up a home (Diaz, 2005) and where young people are unexpectedly forced to leave the home, the literature suggests schools and colleges should increase life-skills provision (Homeless link 2015, St Basil's 2015). Such provision could also include how to cook and access basic health services (Centrepoint, 2015).

Many of the young people we spoke to explained that their lack of independent living skills, including financial budgeting skills and how to look after themselves, made their transition

to homelessness, or living independently in supported accommodation difficult. Andrzej explained that his lack of knowledge and skills about how to look after himself made his transition to homelessness and living in supported accommodation stressful.

"Money was definitely the biggest issue and moving in, lacking life-skills. Just lacking basic what most people would know... clueless how to use a washing machine... I didn't know how to use a vacuum, I didn't know how to use a cash point. I put my card in and it sucked. I was like, 'Oh shit, I've lost my card.' What did I do, it asked for a pin, what's my pin? What's a pin? Was clueless about direct debits, clueless how to pay water. I didn't even know you had to pay for your water." Andrzej, Newcastle

Other young people felt that they lacked emotional and social skills and suggested that education should include teaching young people these skills.

"I think [education should include] basic things about life, life self-esteem, confidence, how not to be anxious. Things like getting a job. Things like how to deal with different people that you meet in life because everybody has to go to work, everybody has to cross people in the street...some young boys don't know how to pass each other without being...threatening and making it a hostile situation... So, that's why I think it would be important for the young people to learn really, how to deal with life" Yasmin, London.

While some may argue that young people should learn these skills at home, the most vulnerable young people, most in need of independent living skills often have difficult and unstable home lives. They are therefore the most likely to have problematic skills gaps. On the other hand, schools face curriculum content pressures and whilst some 'life-skills' can be taught through school culture and PSHE, there is not sufficient time in school timetables to include a full versing in the skills needed for independent living, without considerable compromise on other curriculum content.

"I think there's a limit to what you can do in a 9-3:30 curriculum...there aren't enough hours in the day. I think the best way to prepare people...is to do all the things that a good education should do anyway, which is give young people confidence, give oracy and articulation skills, give language skills. A good education does that and puts you in a position when you would then be able to find out for yourself and research things." Sarah Jones, Former Deputy Head of FE College

Councils and homelessness support services should therefore assess all homeless young people to identify any support they need in building independent living skills. They should then provide an intensive package of support to help them do so.

2 - Supporting homeless young people to achieve in education

Since homelessness has a detrimental impact on young people staying in and achieving in education, and thus on longer term life outcomes, keeping homeless young people in education and supporting them to achieve well is one of the most important forms of support that educational institutions can provide.

The practitioners we spoke with suggested that the main strategy educational institutions should adopt to support homeless young people was to flexibility.

"They should be having this open door policy and understanding that actually this young person may not be able to commit Monday to Friday the times, it would need to be more flexible for them, until they are in a better stable environment to be able to really commit to that education." Kiri Grant, Cardboard Citizens

Where educational institutions are able to get this right, it can offer real hope for young homeless people who might otherwise miss out. Andrzej, for example, described how despite his college trying to support him, the chaotic nature of his time in the hostel had led to him failing his first year. However, the supportive attitude of his teachers had resulted in him being able to enrol again on a new course. He now feels hopeful for the future.



9

Conclusions and recommendations



9.1 - Conclusions

Youth homelessness is a growing problem that is too often invisible. Yet the impact it has on young people's education and future lives is hard to overstate.

Despite all the challenges they had faced, the young people we worked with were positive and aspirational. How we respond to the challenges they shared will have a profound impact on our society long into the future. Yet it is absolutely clear they deserve the support that will enable them to flourish.

9.2 - Recommendations

Ending youth homelessness and ensuring that young people have the support they need is not only possible, but it is also our duty as a humane and modern society. It is a mission everyone has a role to play in.

9.2.1 - Identifying and supporting all young homeless people

Current statistics from the Department for Communities and Local Government and Local Authorities do not give an accurate, or sufficiently detailed picture of the extent or characteristics of homelessness in the UK. As a result, many young people who are homeless are invisible in official statistics. These young people too often miss out on the support they desperately need.

The Department for Communities and Local Government should:

Commission research into:

- Potential improvements to data on the young homeless population's demographics, for example by including information on ethnicity, care leavers, offending history and gender identity and sexual orientation.
- How public services - including health, security and education - can collaborate to ensure all hidden homeless young people are identified and tracked.

Businesses and funders should:

- Campaign to raise awareness of hidden youth homelessness.

9.2.2 - Tackling the causes of youth homelessness

1 - Relationship breakdown within the family

Factors such as poverty, abuse, poor behaviour and rejection of LGBT young people cause conflict in the family home. All too often, this leads to youth homelessness.

Government funders and businesses should:

- Fund expansion of local family support services and encourage employees to train as volunteers in new, and existing mediation services.

Local authorities and social services should:

- Offer counselling, parenting classes and/or parent groups to guardians who are struggling with a vulnerable young person's behaviour.
- Ensure that all vulnerable young people experiencing family conflict have access to family counselling or mediation.
- It is important to note that family counselling should not take place between young people and family members who have committed abuse, in such cases young people should be prioritised for housing support and given intensive support once rehoused to help them deal with the traumatic after-effects of abuse.
- Ensure all parents and young people can access specialist support where families are struggling to come to terms with a young person's sexuality or gender identity.

2 - Bereavement

Bereavement can be devastating to young people and put considerable strain on family relationships. In some cases, this exacerbates behavioural issues and constitutes a tipping point in young people's journey to homelessness.

Businesses and funders should:

- Provide funding for new pilots of school-based bereavement services following a review of existing services.

Statutory and non-statutory youth services should:

- Provide specialist bereavement support for young people. Such support should be administered by experts in response to referrals from educational institutions and social or homeless services.

Schools should:

- Help all bereaved young people access specialist services. These services should form an integral part of schools' mental health policies.

3 - Leaving care

Leaving care can result in many young people finding themselves devoid of a stable support network and a home.

All local authorities should:

- Develop or deploy pathway plans (such as the Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework from Barnardo's and St Basil's) to assist young care leavers in finding and retaining accommodation.

9.2.3 - Making education accessible

1 - Travel

- The expense of travelling to and from an educational institution can stop some young homeless people who live in temporary accommodation from continuing their studies.

The Department for Education should:

Create a new targeted travel bursary for young homeless people living in temporary accommodation. This should be paid to schools and colleges where these young people are enrolled.

2 - Welfare support and continuing education

The current housing benefit system makes it hard for many young people living in supported accommodation to access and benefit from Further and Higher Education. As a result, too many young homeless people feel they have to abandon their education to maintain their place in supported accommodation.

The Department for Work and Pensions should:

- Adjust regulations to allow all young homeless people to retain housing benefit if they enter full-time Higher or Further Education and choose to remain in supported housing. In such circumstances, young people should receive housing benefit in place of a maintenance loan, but retain eligibility for Special Support Grants.
- Require all Job Centres to designate a 'Young Person Lead', who is trained to work with young people who are receiving welfare support and adjust benefit requirements to enable young people to continue in education.

- Collaborate with the Department for Education to create a database that tracks young homeless people through the system to ensure they are able to access to Further and Higher Education.
- Review procedures for recalculating benefits when young people begin apprenticeships to ensure homeless young people are not vulnerable to debt and a loss of wages.

Businesses should:

- Ensure homeless young people are able to access apprenticeships by systematically reviewing processes for applying to them and targeting organisations that work with these young people.

Independent living skills

Young people who become homeless often feel that they lack the necessary skills to live independently.

Government and funders should:

- Identify the most effective way of supporting young homeless people to gain life-skills by commissioning research to evaluate the impact of existing programmes.

Schools should:

- Provide or broker support for pupils and students who are experiencing homelessness to mitigate potential damage and help them to remain in education. This may include access to support with independent living skills and financial advice.

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