



homeless link

# Young & Homeless

Our annual Young & Homeless report explores the reasons young people become homeless, the support available to them, and areas that need to be improved.

**Executive summary**

# Young people who become homeless face increasing challenges

## The issue

Many factors can lead to a young person becoming homeless. When it happens, they often need support with both practical and emotional issues to help them move forward. They become part of one of the most vulnerable groups in society. However, when ready to live independently, many are unable to find somewhere appropriate to live, leaving them stuck in supported accommodation longer than necessary.

Our research indicates that under 25s now account for more than half of people seeking help with homelessness and make up over half of those living in homeless accommodation services in England. While the number of 16 to 24 year olds accepted as homeless by local authorities has steadily decreased since 2006,<sup>1</sup> there has been a recent rise in the number of 18 to 20 year old care leavers accepted as homeless.<sup>2</sup>

Experience of homelessness at a young age is proven to increase the risk of becoming homeless again and developing complex problems in later life. The solution lies in better and more integrated responses from a range of agencies that come into contact with young people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

**211 frontline homelessness services and local authority housing departments helped us compile this annual youth homelessness report<sup>3</sup> – looking at the needs of young people who become homeless, and asking what support they are getting as they transition in and out of homelessness.**

**The issues that lead to homelessness and the needs of young people experiencing homelessness are becoming more complex. Once homeless, it is harder to move on:**

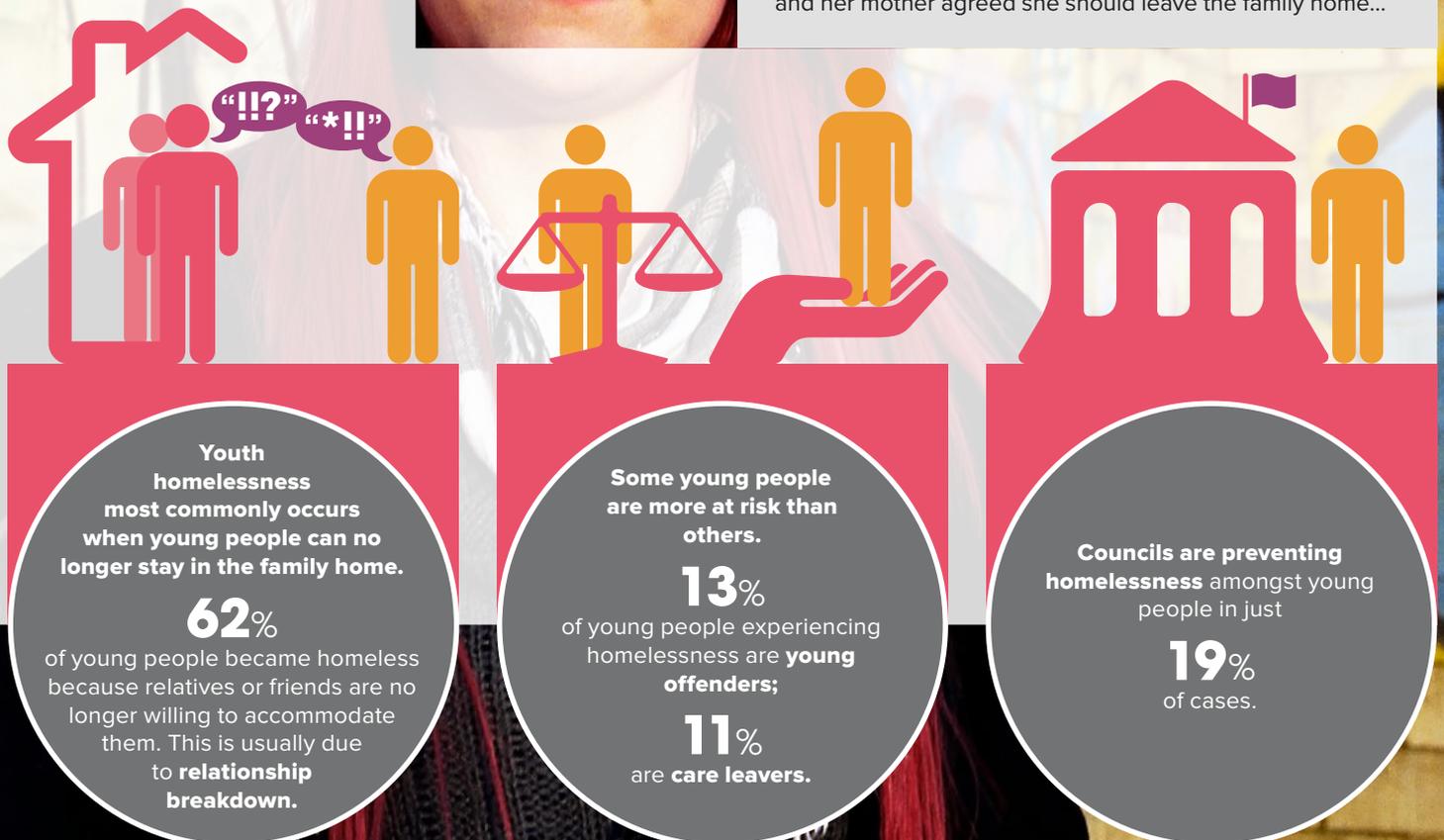


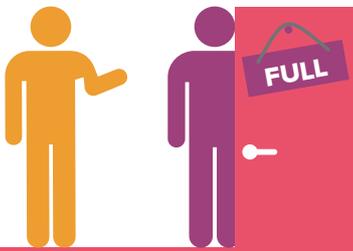
## Hannah's story

Part 1

Hannah was only ten when her father passed away. She had been very close to him and, after his death, she became angry and argued frequently with her mother. The confrontations often became physical and, as the situation at home became more unsettled, Hannah fell behind with coursework and dropped out of college.

By the time her mother gave birth to another child with a new partner, the house had become overcrowded. Hannah and her mother agreed she should leave the family home...





Young people can struggle to find support when they become homeless.

**74%** of providers **had to turn young people** away at some point in August 2014, usually because the service was **full** or the young person's **needs were too high** for the service to manage.



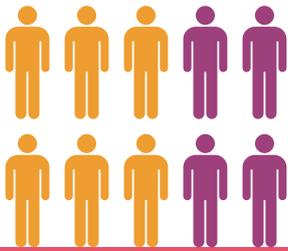
Benefit sanctions continue to be an issue for young people.

**8/10** respondents think young people are affected by sanctions 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit'.



Complex needs are an issue for many.

**6/10** young people have complex needs and **5/10** of respondents think their needs are becoming **more complex**.



Nearly **6/10 (57%)** of homeless young people are **not in education, training or employment**.

**Half** lack the **living skills** needed to live independently.



Households are under pressure and this is having an effect on young people. Causes of homelessness include:

- 11%** due to **unemployment**
- 9%** due to benefit **reductions**
- 5%** due to **overcrowding**.



Young people face additional struggles when trying to access the competitive private rented sector.

This is due to the extension of the Shared Accommodation Rate, capping of the Local Housing Allowance, and difficulties accessing local welfare assistance.

# But some things have **improved**

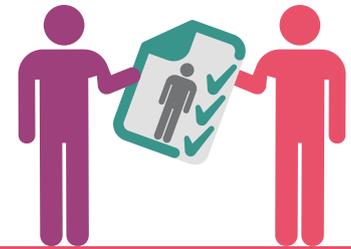
The report shows that councils and services are making improvements to help support young people:



**Half**  
of areas have a **positive pathway model** or approach in their area.



**92%**  
of local authorities now carry out **home visits**, which can help identify those at **risk of homelessness** much **earlier on**.



**Housing and Children's Services are working together** to target support at young people at risk of homelessness.

**97%**  
have a **joint protocol** in place between Housing and Children's services for **16 and 17 year olds**.



**Support for young people has increased.**  
Homelessness organisations are doing more to help young people.

**1/3**  
(34%) of providers reported they had **increased the amount of support** available.

## Hannah's story

Part 2

Hannah was offered accommodation with specialist support for young people in her position.

Staff at the organisation helped her start to rebuild her relationship with her mother. She received emotional wellbeing support to address the anger she had carried since her father died. And she received other life skills training. She and her mother rarely argue now: "Since moving out we have built a relationship, so it is better."

Hannah's confidence has improved, she has a part-time job and she is planning to move into a flat with her boyfriend.

# More needs to be done

Local areas need to build upon and enhance existing good work, to avoid youth homelessness escalating in the current climate. We have a number of recommendations, developed in partnership with the National Youth Reference Group, a forum of young people who advise on youth homelessness issues. These include:



**All local authorities adopt a positive pathway model** to prevent teenagers leaving or losing their homes, and provide appropriate accommodation and services for those who do become homeless.

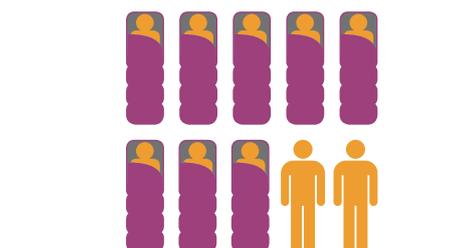


**Investment in timeout projects and suitable emergency accommodation** to allow young people and their parents respite before relationships reach crisis point.



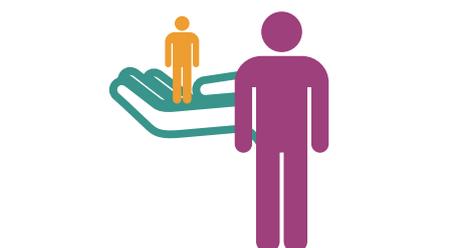
**An improvement in the benefit sanctions process** and consideration given to the impact any future welfare reforms will have on homeless young people.

## Better prevention needed

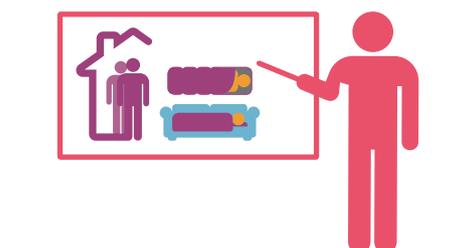


**Homelessness was not prevented by councils in 8 in 10 cases where young people approached them for help.**

While prevention work has increased in the last year, **40%** of councils say they **do not have the tools** they need to prevent youth homelessness.



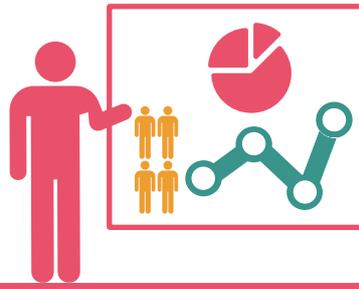
**Free mediation, advice and support services** should be available in every local authority area to families and young people at risk of homelessness.



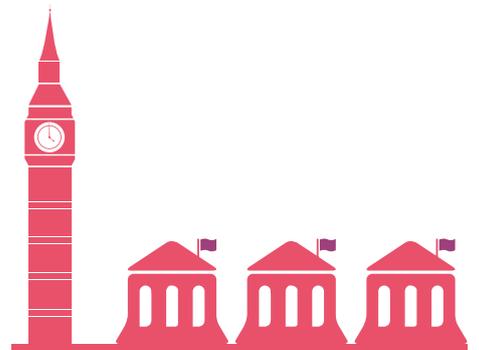
Schools and other types of youth provision should **increase education on homelessness**, focusing on the realities and how to find support.



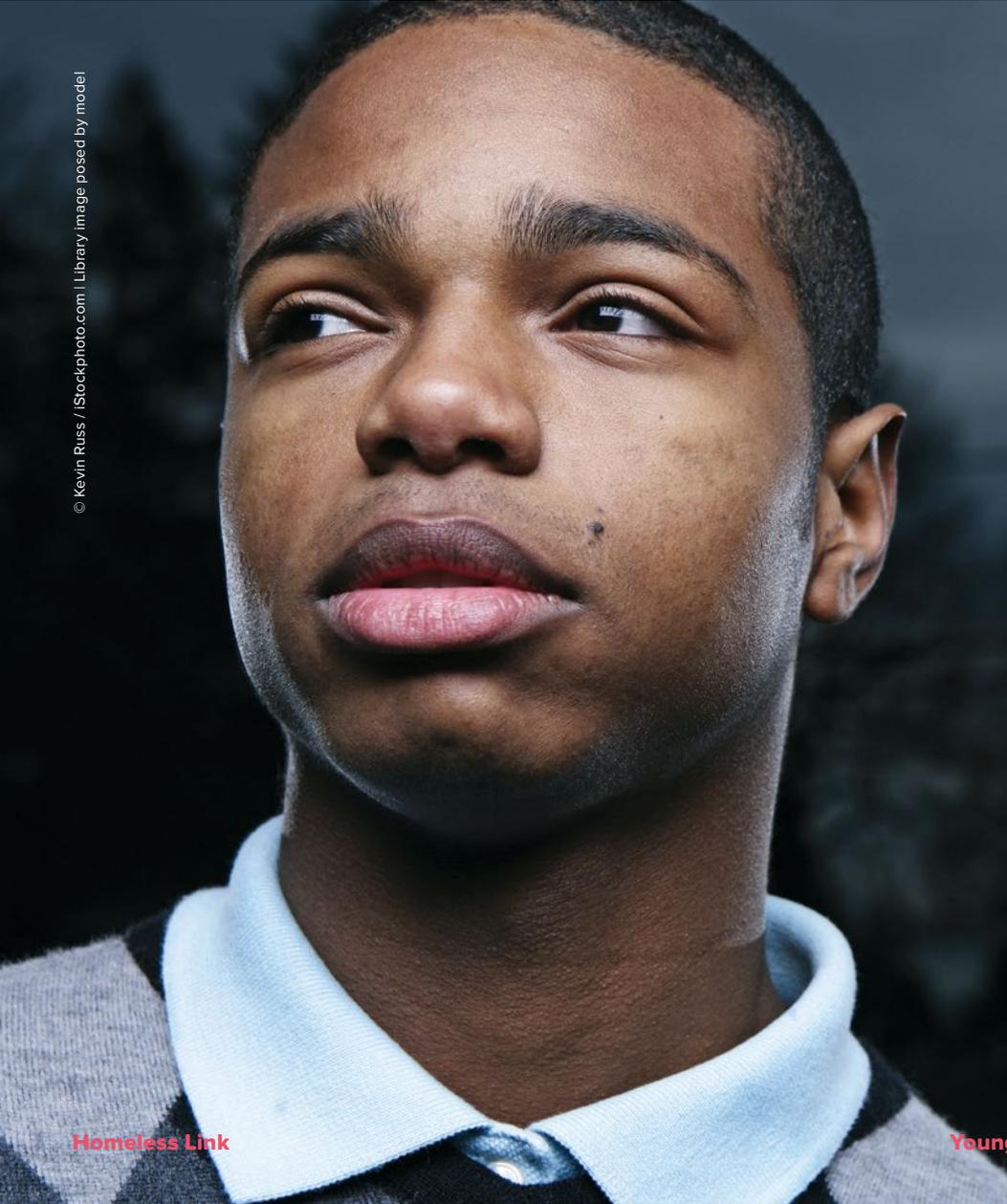
**Use the expertise of young people who have experienced homelessness** wherever possible, for instance within mediation services, as part of peer mentoring schemes, and through paid and voluntary work within the sector.



**Government and local authorities to improve data recording and monitoring** in order to help ascertain the scale of youth homelessness, monitor trends and observe the impact of prevention work.



**National Government to build on its commitment to young people who become homeless** with continued investment in homelessness prevention and support services so that local authorities can adequately meet their local need.



## End notes

1. Table 781 Homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities, by age of applicant England, 2006 to 2014. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/358205/Table\\_781.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/358205/Table_781.xls)
2. Detailed local authority level responses: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>
3. In total, we received 211 usable responses from both surveys; this consisted of 116 usable responses from providers of homelessness services and 95 usable responses from local authorities. This represents response rates of 25% and 30% respectively. 71% of local authorities responded with either exact or exact and some best estimate figures, for providers of homelessness services this was slightly lower at 64%.



## What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless in England. We work to make services better and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness.

Let's end  
**homelessness**  
together

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